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## Destabilising Citizenship Practices?

### Social work and undocumented migrants in Sweden

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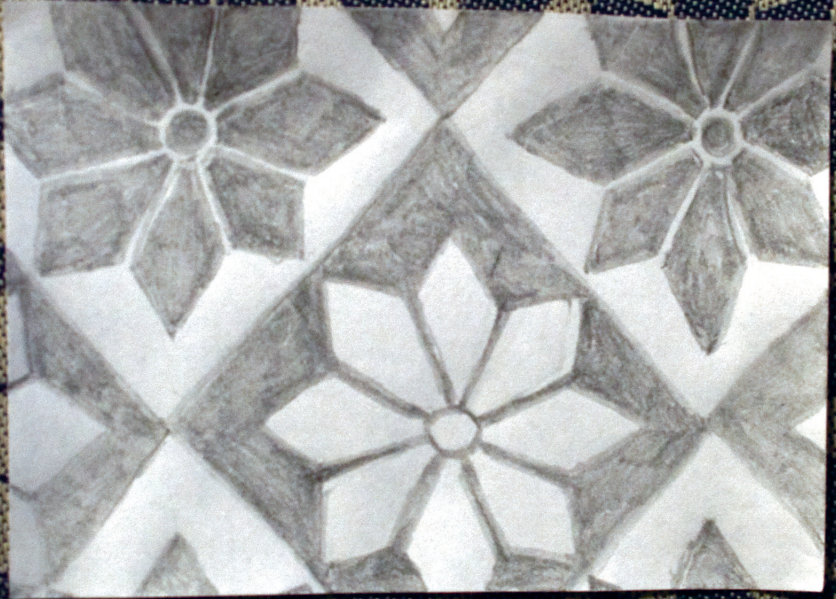
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migrants in Sweden



Vanna Nordling

LUND DISSERTATIONS IN SOCIAL WORK



Destabilising Citizenship Practices?



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migrants in Sweden

Vanna Nordling



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Globalisation of the economy, as well as movement of people and increasing securitisation of borders, have challenged and to different degrees destabilised forms of national belonging and solidarity. Such developments produce new borders and boundaries, separate citizens from non-citizens and create hierarchies of "deservingness". This dissertation contributes to the analysis of these developments by investigating the role of social work in relation to undocumented migrants in Sweden.</p> <p>The dissertation rests upon two case studies where social work is performed in support of undocumented migrants, a group most often excluded from the social services. The first case focuses on the guidelines on social assistance in Malmö municipality and the second case focuses on social workers working with unaccompanied minors in different parts of Sweden. The analysis rests on interviews, document analysis, news media material and previous experiences of the researcher. Critical citizenship theory is used to analyse if and how social work practice contributes to destabilisations as well as reinforcements of the present citizenship regime.</p> <p>The cases are analysed in terms of actions (within the present order) and acts (that go beyond or against the status quo). In the Malmö case, three forms of actions are identified: codification of the law, confirmation of existing practices and disregard of the issue of undocumented migrants in political debates. In the second case, three forms of acts are identified: acts of "professionalism", acts of "compassion" and acts of "activism". The acts analysed are not described as straight forward forms of change, but rather as destabilisations. The presence of undocumented migrants at a local level in Malmö and in front of the social workers (face to face) in the case of unaccompanied minors sometimes could lead to that social workers experienced a responsibility, albeit conditioned, beyond what was formally expected of them. In the analysis it is also highlighted that the understanding of the support practices studied changes with context and time perspective.</p>		
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# Destabilising Citizenship Practices?

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Vanna Nordling

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*For Gertie*

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Dearest Kei. You have taught me so much already. I can't wait to see what will come next!

# Translation of Terminology

Accommodation centre for unaccompanied minors	Boende för ensamkommande barn
Administrative Court	Förvaltningsdomstol
Administrative Court of Appeal	Kammarrätt
Caring for Individuals and Family	Individ och familjeomsorgen
Development secretary	Utvecklingssekreterare
Emergency support	Nödstödet
Guardian	Gode man
Lay judge	Nämndeman
Migration Court	Migrationsdomstol
Migration Court of Appeal	Migrationsöverdomstolen
Municipal legal advisor	Stadsjurist/kommunjurist
National Board of Health and Welfare	Socialstyrelsen
Social worker at accommodation centre	Boendestödjare på HVB-hem
Social assistance	Ekonomiskt bistånd
Social assistant	Socialsekreterare
Supreme Administrative Court	Högsta förvaltningsdomstol
Swedish Migration Agency	Migrationsverket
Swedish Public Employment Service	Arbetsförmedlingen
The Social Services Act	Socialtjänstlagen



# 1. Introduction

In recent decades, questions of social inequality have been raised in relation to the European welfare states. Forms of solidarity-building and ideas of national belonging are challenged, and to various degrees destabilised, by a globalisation of the economy, as well as the movement of people. Among other things, intensified movements across national borders have actualised debates concerning an increasingly differentiated access to welfare services and social rights (Anderson 2013, Fink and Lundqvist 2010, Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006). It has been argued that there is an idea of social responsibility in the European welfare states that clashes with the situation of a growing population of asylum seekers, guest workers and undocumented migrants (Schierup et al. 2006). The recent development can be described in terms of increased securitisation and border controls, but also as a search for new forms of inclusion and challenges to exclusionary politics. Also, “migrants” is a differentiated group, and a national border that is close to eradicated for some travellers may be almost impossible to cross for others (Isin 2012, Sassen 1999). Today’s discussions on who is included and who is not lead some authors to talk about migration politics as central in defining the nation states (Brochman and Hagelund 2010, Kalm 2008, Balibar 2004). In a Swedish context, an idea of “Swedish exceptionalism”, defending human rights and being relatively open to refugees, is today challenged (Schierup and Ålund 2011). The latest developments in Swedish migration politics have given rise to assertions that Swedish solidarity is in crisis (Dahlstedt and Neergaard 2016).

Social workers are engaged in negotiations of the boundaries of citizenship, in relation to migrants’ access to social service and benefits, and this puts social work practice at the forefront of up-to-date understandings of social rights (Björngren Cuadra 2016). The role of social institutions has been thoroughly studied as a marker of borders and boundaries, separating citizens from non-citizens and producing hierarchies of “deservingness”

(Nyers 2008, Balibar 2004, Kamali 2002, Johansson 2001). However, social workers also meet the everyday consequences of exclusionary migration policies in their work, and in some cases their practices aim at new forms of inclusion – although these are often arbitrary or ambivalent. This dissertation seeks to explore these, perhaps more exceptional, moments when social work responds to matters of international migration through giving support to undocumented migrants, a group most often excluded from the social services. Social work practices of giving support to undocumented migrants take place in a context where migration has been centred in political debates on the Swedish welfare state and where the role of social workers within this welfare state is disputed, not least due to developments of neoliberalism and new public management, as well as globalisation. As various authors argue, today's social work is not always organised in ways adequate to meet the processes of globalisation or new social issues related to international migration (Björngren Cuadra 2016, Montesino 2015, Gruber 2015, Kamali 2015, Jönsson 2014, Righard 2008). The study can be placed within a field of critical citizenship and migration studies, but at an empirical level it also addresses questions important to the development of social work in a Swedish context. Central concepts to the study are social rights and responsibilities, undocumented migrants, citizenship and social work; these are all presented in this introductory chapter, followed by a presentation of the study and, after that, a contextualisation of social work in Sweden.

## 1.1 Social Rights and Responsibilities in a Changing Welfare State

What has been seen as a common responsibility and who has been included in a certain society or community have taken different forms in different times. Much debated at the beginning of the last century, this *social question* has today been integrated into the welfare state projects (Hort 2014a, Brodie 2008). However, a neoliberal development towards individualisation and marketisation has effected changes as to how the social question is dealt with and understood; the erosion of the welfare states as grantors of social rights implies challenges to earlier forms of solidarity (Lorenz 2016, Rose

1996). At the same time, today's understanding of the social question has expanded. From having a main focus on the unequal distribution of wealth linked to early industrial capitalism, a wide range of issues, from environmental questions to LGBTQ or antiracist movements, are today discussed in relation to social rights (Isin et al. 2008). In this process, different social movements have contributed in putting new issues on the agenda. For example, movements such as *Sans-Papiers* and *No Border* question the exclusion of undocumented migrants from the welfare states, as well as ideas of national belonging as a basis for inclusion (Balibar 2004, Squire 2009). In a Swedish context, this has meant that undocumented migrants have become more visible as potential rights-bearers in political debates (compare Nielsen 2016). At the same time, there has been an increased focus on migration control both at a national and an EU level, and undocumented migrants live under a constant risk of deportation. In EU debates on migration, social rights have not been a central issue – rather, the emphasis has been on (low-paid) labour migration, border controls and securitisation (Hansen 2012).

### **1.1.1 Views on Social Rights**

The welfare state can be described in terms of a social contract, whereby citizenship has been understood as bound to the nation state. It can also be described in terms of a moral contract between the welfare state and its citizens, whereby citizens have access to social rights and benefits if proven to “deserve” them. Rights can be understood as the “substance of citizenship” (Isin 2009:376), an entitlement given to citizens. The formal access to rights such as being equal before the law (civil rights) or voting (political rights) is tied to citizenship status. In the study of social work, special attention is given to *social* rights, a set of rights that also implies duties from others and where social workers are one of the actors. The formal access to social rights, such as education, social security or healthcare, is given as a responsibility of the community (in this study, the welfare state). This on the one hand means that social rights imply a codified set of rights, instituted through social reforms and guaranteed through national legislation and international human rights. This definition largely ties access to social rights to residence status (membership in a

national community). On the other hand, it is well established that such rights come into existence through practice: the access is given *by* someone in response to a claim (Fassin et al. 2015, Janoski and Gran 2002). This opens up for an understanding of social rights not only as based in legal systems but also as *practised*, and this is the perspective that I draw on in this study. More concretely this means that I focus mainly on how social rights are interpreted and practised by civil servants, politicians and welfare workers in the area of social work, rather than focusing on the formal legal framework.

Pierre Bourdieu (1998:2) has described social workers as “the left hand of the state, the set of agents of the so-called spending ministries which are the trace, within the state, of the social struggles of the past”.<sup>1</sup> This indicates that social work practice has been formed through struggles and conflicts over social rights and responsibilities. In a Swedish context, it has been formed in close relation to the welfare state and has a history of categorising citizens in terms of “deservingness”, connected to the willingness to work. Dealing with issues related to poverty, such categorisations have historically been made between “deserving” and “undeserving” poor, a practice that many authors argue prevails in today’s welfare state (Davidsson 2015, Johansson 2001, Sjögren 1997). The social contract has hence mainly been debated in relation to societal processes such as unemployment and poverty, but today the subject of international migration has been foregrounded as a central issue. .

## 1.1.2 Undocumented Migrants and the Swedish Welfare State

During the last decades we have seen a development of EU migration politics that can be described in terms of securitisation and surveillance (Sager, Holgersson and Öberg 2016). Stricter migration controls, in combination with a growth in border crossings, have led to an increase in the migration that becomes irregularised<sup>2</sup> (Jordan and Düvell 2003). Today

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<sup>1</sup> According to Bourdieu, this function can be contrasted to the state’s “right hand”: an apparatus that puts economic concerns first (ibid.).

<sup>2</sup> In this text I talk about the *group* of “undocumented migrants” and the *phenomenon* of “irregular migration”. See Chapter 2 for a development of this. In order to stress the fact that migration is restricted due to national (or regional/transnational) policies, many

we see the consequences of this at the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, with migrants dying in the effort to make their way to Europe; we also see undocumented migrants in precarious situations in the European labour markets. Simultaneously, claims on legitimising the presence of undocumented migrants have been made throughout Europe both by citizens and by self-organised undocumented migrants. The incorporation of undocumented migrants into some parts of the European welfare states (especially in the case of healthcare) and the creation of support structures within the civil society have been put in connection to such claiming of rights (Sager 2011, Squire 2009). This means that access to social rights can be practised in ways that are not directly tied to citizenship as a legal status. However, undocumented migrants are still marginalised and exposed to deportation, and this has made some authors talk about a *partial inclusion*, or an inclusion that at the same time works in the direction of exclusion (Karlsen 2015, Sager 2011, Bosniak 2006). Studying the position of undocumented migrants draws our attention to the parallel processes of how the boundaries around the welfare state are sometimes destabilised, but also upheld and reinforced.

The Scandinavian countries, while similar in many other ways, have taken different approaches to irregular migration. Sweden's and Norway's have been more ambivalent than Denmark's (who has not been explicitly addressing the issue to any further extent), both wanting to control migration and to adopt humanitarian values (Jørgensen 2012). The interplay between discourses on securitisation on the one hand and humanitarian support to undocumented migrants on the other has been thoroughly discussed (Squire 2015, Eastmond and Ascher 2011, Fassin 2012, Huysmans 2000). Undocumented migrants put the idea of universality, which is often linked to the Swedish welfare state (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990), to the test. The level of welfare provision in Sweden has been relatively high, and the official approach to migrants already in the country rather inclusive. Such inclusionary politics have led to a greater concern with boundaries around rights and welfare access, and they have also been used as a motivation for migration control (Sigvardsdotter 2012,

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authors talk about an *irregularisation* or *illegalisation* of migrants; the situation is created by political decisions rather than by the migrants themselves (Thomsen 2010, de Genova 2002, 2010).



Hammar 1990). This has meant that welfare services and social rights in Sweden have been more restricted for undocumented migrants compared to many other European welfare states (Sager et al. 2016). The ideas of universality on the one hand, and the restricted access to welfare services for persons without residence permit on the other, have been described as features of the Swedish citizenship regime with regard to undocumented migrants (Nielsen 2016). However, regional and municipal policies have addressed undocumented migration, and there has been a variety of civil society initiatives in support of undocumented migrants, for example underground clinics. Migrants' own networks have also been important providers of social support. Through the increased presence of undocumented migrants and through the campaigning of professional groups and activists, undocumented migrants' non-access to welfare services has been destabilised. In 2013, new laws were introduced, granting undocumented children healthcare and schooling, and undocumented adults access to urgent healthcare. This has been described as "a change, although minor, of the Swedish citizenship regime" (ibid. 173). However, these changes did not include the social services.

The development towards a partial inclusion has been accompanied by an increased focus on deportations and search for undocumented migrants (Sager et al. 2016). During the last year before finishing this text, there have been changes in both discourses and political decisions concerning migration, and migration has increasingly been restricted and described in terms of "crisis". This "crisis talk" includes arguments for even harsher measures against migration; but it has also been contested, not least by a wide range of practitioners such as medical personnel, teachers and social workers meeting the direct consequences of the new migration politics for asylum seekers in their daily work (VLT 2017, Svenska Dagbladet 2016a, SVT 2016a, Vi står inte ut 2016).

### **1.1.3 Citizenship as Enacted**

In discussions on undocumented migrants, *citizenship* is a central concept. Having a citizenship status or permanent residence can give access to welfare systems and voting rights, but there are also inhabitants lacking such rights. Thomas Hammar (1990) terms long-term residents without

citizenship *denizens*. This is a diverse group; some may have access to citizenship rights and others may have little such access (an example being temporary labour migrants, see Krifors 2017, Schierup et al. 2006). In the Swedish case, permanent residence to a large degree equals citizenship as a legal status in regard to access to rights; nonetheless, permanent residence can be withdrawn, for instance if a person resides for a longer period outside of Sweden.

Citizenship can however also be approached in terms of participation in a community rather than as a legal status, and there are vivid debates on how to understand the term. In this text, I engage in debate with a theoretical perspective that allows for investigating citizenship as changing over time and as closely linked to the exclusions of groups defined as outsiders or strangers. I draw on Engin Isin (2002, 2008, 2012, see also Isin and Saward 2013), who sees citizenship as *enacted*, not only through legislation and political reforms, but through struggles performed close to people's social worlds. This view on citizenship and rights can be grouped among other theories within critical citizenship studies that rather focus on what people *do* to change their circumstances than on state-citizen relations (Ataç, Rygiel and Stierl 2016, Clarke et al. 2014, McNevin 2011, Squire 2009). A central conceptualisation in Isin's work is *acts of citizenship*. Here, Isin (2008) distinguishes between *actions* in line with the present order and *acts* creating new forms of political subjectivity. In my analysis, I make use of this understanding of *acts* as potentially creating new citizenship practices and *actions* as reaffirming the status quo, but I draw the attention to acts at an everyday level that are not creating grand changes. Rather, I see acts as destabilising citizenship norms and practices, and I argue that our understanding of them may change depending on time, place and political context.

Isin et al. (2008) argue that we need to understand struggles over rights as inherently *social*. Struggles over citizenship rights, such as same-sex marriage, to wear headscarves in public places or rallies against welfare cuts are, according to the authors, social struggles. Arguing that such struggles should be read as social, rather than as struggles mainly over cultural recognition, the authors want to denaturalise difference – and instead socialise it. Citizenship, they argue, “involves the art of being with others”, and through social struggles we “develop a sense of our rights as others’

obligations and others' rights as our obligations" (ibid. 7). Inspired by Isin, I do not see the Swedish welfare state and its institutions as fixed, but as taking form through practice – although in a historical context and with institutionalised forms of action (compare Fassin et al. 2015). Similarly, I focus on citizenship and social rights as practised and social work as one example where such practices take place.

In analyses drawing on Isin, the open claiming of rights by undocumented migrants has been understood as an enactment in the direction of new forms of citizenship (Isin 2009, Saunders 2008, McNevin 2006). Such analyses can be placed in a broader tradition analysing undocumented migrants' rights claims in terms of political acting, extending the language of citizenship or going beyond it (Isin 2009, Krause 2008, McNevin 2006, Balibar 2004). Many critical studies on migration start from migrants' perspectives and argue that such claims are central for potential shifts of who can be understood as a political subject (McNevin 2011, Gunneflo and Selberg 2010, de Genova 2010b). In this study, I instead focus on the experienced responsibilities of citizens, or persons with permanent residence in Sweden, who act in support of undocumented migrants. The relation between citizen and non-citizen is by definition an unequal one. Furthermore, I focus on welfare state representatives, a group that takes part in the deportation apparatus and acts within an organisational framework, and not on outspoken activists participating in social movements supporting undocumented migrants. This has implications for my analysis. Helping practices, such as social work, are loaded with unequal power relations and the social workers that I study have the power to categorise and differentiate among lives (compare Fassin 2007, Butler 2009). Also, social work has a history of categorising and controlling migrant populations (Montesino 2015). This means that social work should not be studied in terms of straightforward forms of change: acting within a context of social inequality often implicates reproducing hierarchies of power.

I see the discussions on helping practices and power hierarchies as contributing to the theoretical debates on (destabilisations of) citizenship practices, and I argue that politics and forms of resistance take different forms and take place at many different levels. Welfare workers have received less attention in studies of irregular migration, but are of interest when we want to understand the access to social rights and responsibility as practised

within the welfare state. Explicit political stances of inclusion or exclusion regarding undocumented migrants in relation to the welfare state by politicians and social movements exist parallel with (and intersect with) less visible practices (re)drawing the lines around citizenship and social rights. Such practices, performed at an everyday level (compare Holgersson 2011) are studied here. Rather than focusing on grand changes, I analyse citizenship as produced through social work (among other things): social workers deal with questions of social rights and responsibilities in their daily practice.

#### **1.1.4 Social Work Practice**

The study of social workers' support to undocumented migrants directs this study towards social responsibilities, as a way of granting or denying rights. Instead of a focus on social work as a profession, the use of citizenship theory helps me to explore the position of social workers as possibly redrawing and/or marking the limits of citizenship through their practice. I therefore understand social work in a broad sense, as a form of practice rather than as performed only by professionally trained social workers in official roles. In this study, more bureaucratic positions such as social assistants are studied together with a social work performed closer to voluntary work, such as the position of a guardian. The social workers studied, however, do have similar positions in that they are expected to be a link between service users and the welfare state and they are assigned their missions through the welfare state organisation. Their positions admit different frames for acting, but this study is not concerned as much with these frames as with the practice of giving access to social rights (such as economic support or housing) to undocumented migrants.

There is extensive research on the role of social workers in the reproducing categorisations, social hierarchies and/or postcolonial relations (Montesino and Righard 2015, Eliassi 2013, Wikström 2013, Svensson ed. 2007, Kamali 2002, Sunesson 1985). For many service users this means a reluctance to have contact with the social services. This is true not least in the case of undocumented migrants fearing that social workers will contact the police. Earlier research has shown different interpretations regarding social work and undocumented migrants in Sweden, and that social

workers' views on migration control affect their approach when in contact with this group (Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012, Jönsson 2014, Björngren Cuadra 2016). Recently, the Swedish social services' responsibility to protect service users versus cooperating with the police has been debated, as the social services have given out addresses of undocumented migrants to the border police; a practice that was criticised for attacking a space where undocumented migrants had felt relatively safe. Critics have drawn on professional autonomy and ethics, arguing that the social services should act in accordance with rationales other than migration control (Centrum för sociala rättigheter 2017a, Fria Tidningen 2016, Sydsvenskan 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, Socialhögskolan 2016).

As argued by Didier Fassin et al. (2015), state institutions are not to be understood as neutral but as made through their agents, who make assessments and have feelings. Fassin (2015:256) argues that “the agents think and act simultaneously with what is said and done in the public sphere and the political world”. According to Masoud Kamali (2015:21), Swedish social workers “are, in their daily occupations, struggling with the contradiction of being an ‘official profession’ mainly engaged in applying laws, while also being a ‘fellow human being’ who, irrespective of laws and routines, wants to help people with social problems”. Social work can be placed at the intersection between the private and the public spheres, as social workers address problems at an individual level that also can be defined as social problems (Svensson 2017). Meeting citizens *face-to-face*, and often mediating between state policies and individuals, many social workers occupy a position where they can extend or restrict access to the welfare state (Hasenfeld ed. 1992). As formulated by Michael Lipsky (1980/2010:4) in his work on street-level bureaucrats, social workers and other state functionaries “hold the key to one dimension of citizenship”. There is room for local practices and interpretations, but also for different practices at an individual level in the meeting with service users. This room can be described as a “discretionary space” within the frames set by a professional autonomy (Wallander and Molander 2014:1). What this space consists of is a debated question, and the space also varies between different roles and occupations. Rather than undertaking an interpretation of the law or formal organisational frames, this study at an empirical level contributes to the discussions on discretion in the case of undocumented migrants.

Social work practice is “placed at the fault lines of society” (Lorenz 2013:279) and this means that social workers’ practices can be understood as a form of “social shims” (see Svensson et al. 2008:22, Tilly 1999:53), compensatory actions between individual and organisation/society. Social work can therefore be understood as *upholding* the present order, through dampening the negative effects it has on citizens. For example, social work contains emotional labour and an ethos of caring, a dimension (not seldom coded as feminine) that may lead to situations where some social workers work extra-hard for service users even when organisational conditions are poor (Lauri 2016, Weinberg 2014, Hasenfeld ed. 1992). In a context of cutbacks and heavy workloads, this may create dilemmas for social workers as they are expected both to do their best for the clients and to adapt to financial demands (Astvik and Melin 2013). Social workers respond to such dilemmas in various ways, some through lowering the expectations on their work, others voicing critique, still others through leaving the social services (ibid., Tham 2007).

In addition to compensatory work, social work contains a “*minimum moralia*” of working against injustices in society (Kamali 2015:22). Claiming an ethos of caring can also be seen as a form of resistance, for example against organisational expectations on cost efficiency (Lauri 2016). To some extent, this logic has been used in emerging forms of protest among social workers against work conditions seen as harming the service users (ibid., Ryan Bengtsson 2015). Ideals of social change are not least visible in recent organisation on behalf of unaccompanied minors through the practitioner-based initiative *Vi står inte ut – men vi slutar aldrig kämpa* (“We can’t stand it any more – but we never stop fighting”), protesting the consequences of the recent Swedish migration policies (Vi står inte ut 2016). However, in many cases the protests seem to be of a more silent character, and there are studies showing that social workers fear reprisals if voicing protest (Lauri 2016, Hedin, Månsson and Tikkanen 2009). This indicates that social workers’ protests need to be studied in more ways than studying public forms of protest. For instance, one way to express protest has been through anonymous blog posts (NBTV 2015, Bryta Tystnaden 2011) or performing social work in the “borderlands” between the welfare state organisations and civil society activism (Aracena 2015:187). I argue that the tensions between organisational demands and a wish for social change, as well as the dimensions of categorising and social control, in

social work practice contribute to the study of citizenship as both inclusionary and exclusionary.

## 1.2 Aim and Questions of Investigation

The purpose of the thesis is to analyse if and how social workers' encounters with irregular migration destabilises practices within the present citizenship regime. At a more concrete level, I study how Swedish social workers' responsibilities are enacted, challenged and upheld through social support to undocumented migrants, in local policymaking and everyday social work practice. The following question guides the analysis: *In what ways can social work practices in support of undocumented migrants be understood in terms of actions and acts, and to what extent do they destabilise practices within the present Swedish citizenship regime?*

This is investigated in two case studies where social work is performed in support of undocumented migrants; at a local policy level and at an individual level. In both cases, the responsibility of social workers is expanded beyond what is formally demanded. Rather than being representative of Swedish social work practice, the cases are chosen because they explicitly address the (partial) inclusion of undocumented migrants, and as they contain an effort to act in what is perceived as responsible ways. Both cases take place during 2010–2014, a period when social rights for undocumented migrants were on the agenda in Swedish debates (Nielsen 2016, Sigvardsdotter 2012).

*The first case* concerns Malmö municipality's guidelines on social assistance implemented in 2013–2014 that directly address undocumented migrants and give them partial access to means-tested economic support handled at a municipal level. The issue of social assistance to undocumented migrants is a case where practices and opinions diverge, which makes it interesting to explore in relation to citizenship practices. Ideas about "deservingness", as well as belonging (to the nation state or to a local community), are brought to the fore as social workers need to make an assessment. It is a case that highlights the boundaries of present citizenship practices and that, to some extent, also may destabilise these practices. I explore how the guidelines came about, connecting them to a specific local context and period of time

(2012–2014 and, to some extent, the years just before and after), and how they can be analysed in terms of action and acts (Isin 2008).

In *the second case*, I study social workers working with unaccompanied minors in different parts of Sweden and the case is located in 2010–2013. I focus on social workers who in different ways have given support to minors risking deportation (often due to the Dublin II Regulation<sup>3</sup>, which was applied to minors before 2014). I analyse interviews with social workers in different parts of Sweden who have acted in support of the minors that they were expected to relinquish. Unaccompanied minors is the only group of asylum seekers having contact with the social services from the day they make their presence known to Swedish authorities, therefore the social workers' contacts with this group is of special interest to study in relation to citizenship practices. The Swedish Migration Agency formally decides who is entitled to the support of the social services, and this sometimes created difficulties for individual social workers who felt a responsibility also for minors who were not formally within their mandate (an example being minors who were to be deported). In some of these cases, the social workers expanded or went beyond/against what they perceived as their formal assignment in relation to the minors, and I discuss the different rationales behind such acts.

Based on my two cases, I will address the following, more detailed questions:

How do the involved actors understand the rationales behind Malmö guidelines for social assistance? How can the guidelines be understood in terms of change and continuity, as well as new practices of inclusion and exclusion?

How do the social workers understand the rationales behind their acts in support of unaccompanied minors? In what ways can the social workers' support be understood in terms of enactments of social rights and responsibilities?

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Dublin II Regulation, every person seeking refuge should do so by filing an application in the first country of arrival. This means that Sweden at this time was deporting minors to other EU countries placed at the EU borders, such as Malta, Italy and Hungary.



I find it important to underline that new exclusions are brought about through the social work practices studied. As is often the case when trying to act upon a situation, the consequences are difficult to foresee. However relevant to address in relation to current understandings and theories of citizenship, new forms of inclusion often bring about new exclusions and are often partial and/or arbitrary. Such a movement between compensatory actions and acts that go in new directions is central to my analysis.

### **1.2.1 Two Cases Combined**

The social workers in this study belong to different occupations, such as social assistants (working with economic support or with unaccompanied minors), social workers at accommodation centres for unaccompanied minors or guardians, in different ways employed by the Swedish social services/municipalities. My choice of material is based on a theoretical interest in acts that challenge norms and expectations, and the empirical material touches different areas of social work where such acts are actualised. At the same time, I have not chosen empirical examples in order to illustrate the theoretical framework, but the other way around: I want to explore how two rather complex empirical cases can be understood using a specific theoretical lens. The two cases in this study can be seen as forms of partial inclusion at two different levels: the municipal policy level and the level of everyday social work practice. The Malmö case study (Part I) serves as an example of a local context and the case of social work with unaccompanied minors. Part II focuses on practices in different local settings. At the policy level, I study how the local frames for social work practice are negotiated and interpreted in relation to undocumented migrants. Here, the responsibilities of the municipality are negotiated in political discussions as well as through the direct formulation of guidelines by civil servants and through the practices of social workers. At the individual level, I study how the social workers engage in such frames and try to act in ways that they find to be responsible both within and outside of the formal framework. Here, I study how the social workers negotiate their own role in relation to the minors. The support studied mainly concerned social rights such as economic support (for example, social assistance) and housing, but also different forms of advice and other

social support. In both cases *children* is a central category. Children are perceived as a vulnerable group, and social work should be based on the Principle of the Best Interest of the Child. This affects the social workers' assignments and formal responsibilities. Together, the cases illustrate how social rights and responsibilities are enacted at an everyday level within the Swedish welfare state. The partial inclusion studied is, however, not straightforward; when including undocumented migrants as a responsibility, or addressing the group as rights-bearers, the approach of the social services is sometimes contradictory. At the practice level new boundaries are drawn around the welfare state.

### 1.3 Context of This Thesis: The Swedish Social Services

Although having roots in the civil society, social work today is to a great extent an institutionalised practice within the Swedish welfare state. To most migrants arriving in Scandinavia, the welfare state institutions are central; many newcomers learn about society through healthcare clinics or social service centres (Olwig 2011). In Sweden, the reception of asylum seekers is managed by the Swedish Migration Agency (with the exception of unaccompanied minors). Since 2010, when granted a residence permit migrants are referred to the Swedish Public Employment Service, which takes care of language studies and different forms of employment measures in order to “establish” migrants in Swedish society. The social services are therefore not central for newly arrived migrants, but function as a “last resort” for those migrants who do not access other forms of societal support. This makes the social services, and especially the economic support called *social assistance*, interesting when it comes to undocumented migrants, a group who does not “fit” into the ordinary system. In the case of social assistance, the social services have experienced challenges related to undocumented migrants, which has been the subject of several studies (Björngren Cuadra 2015, Jönsson 2014, Staaf 2013, Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012, Socialstyrelsen 2010). The other arena addressed in this study, *social work with unaccompanied minors*, is also one where social workers may encounter migrants becoming undocumented. Unaccompanied minors

have been described as “a particular borderline case” within social work practice; the phenomenon took time to identify and local and national responses vary widely when it comes to their reception (Lorenz 2006:73, see also Christie 2002). There has been a growing interest in this group among Swedish researchers (e.g. Söderqvist 2017, Lundberg and Strange 2014, Stretmo and Melander 2013, Stretmo 2014, Wernesjö 2014, Lundberg and Söderman 2015, Lind 2016), but more research within the field of social work has been inquired for (Lundström and Sallnäs 2014). Social work with social assistance and unaccompanied minors will be further presented in the contextualising chapters in Part I and Part II. Below, I will briefly introduce the Swedish social services and some of the general recent developments that are important contexts as to the social workers and policymakers participating in this study.

### **1.3.1 The Swedish Social Services**

In Sweden, social work is to a large extent tied to the welfare state institutions, and the number of civil society organisations is small in comparison with many other European countries. The Social Services Act regulates the social services and encompasses municipal activities within two large areas: caring for individuals and families (IFO) and caring for the elderly and people with disability. It is a framework law, meant to be adapted to local conditions in the 290 Swedish municipalities. Within IFO, there are three areas: social assistance, care for children and youth, and interventions for people with addiction. The Social Services Act was implemented in 1982, and it was based on new visions for the organisations grouped into the “social services”: they should be holistic and give “clients” or service users a stronger position (Pettersson et al. 2014). The first paragraph in the Social Services Act states the objectives of the social services:

The social services shall, based on democracy and solidarity, promote the people's:

Economic and social safety,

Equality in life conditions,

Active participation in society.

The social services shall, with concern to the persons' responsibility for his/her and others' social situations, be focused on liberating and developing the resources of individuals and groups.

The activities shall build upon respect for the persons' right to self-determination and integrity. (The Social Services Act 1§, *my translation*)

Being a framework law, the Social Services Act places the responsibility on the municipalities. This means that local conditions regarding politics, economy, demography and administration may affect actual access to social rights (Johansson 2001). In most areas of the social services there are, however, national guidelines provided by the National Board of Health and Welfare to steer the decisions. The possibility to make claims through the legal system also means that there is a national legal praxis covering some areas that are not specified in the Social Services Act. Municipal guidelines are one important document consulted by practitioners. Such guidelines vary locally and are decided upon by local politicians, and in turn social workers are delegated by the politicians to make decisions (Kjellbom 2014, Stranz 2007). In a study on how the social services deal with renting liabilities, Pia Kjellbom (2009) shows a development towards a more detailed steering through decisions in administrative courts and praxis recommendations in local guidelines.<sup>4</sup> This development is of relevance when studying the Malmö municipal guidelines in Part I.

The initial holistic view in the Social Services Act, containing the idea that social workers should be generalists, has gradually been dissolved. Today

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<sup>4</sup> The decisions of the social services can be appealed to in the Administrative Court, in the Administrative Court of Appeal (often after a leave to appeal) and, after a leave to appeal, in the Supreme Administrative Court.

most Swedish municipalities have specialised units working with social assistance, drug abuse or families. Apart from specialisation, Ulla Pettersson et al. (2014) point to two trends that have affected Swedish social work in recent years: marketisation of services and evidence-based practice, indicating a stronger focus on market models and on evaluating the work. As mentioned above, this development can be linked to the implementation of new public management (Pettersson et al. 2014, Lundström and Sallnäs 2014). The objective of new public management is to achieve “greater efficiency and effectiveness in producing and delivering public sector services”, but it has been criticised for encouraging standardisation and a discourse of control (Evetts 2009:250). Of direct relevance to my case in Part II is the increased privatisation of some sectors of the social services (see also Lundström and Sunesson 2016). One such sector is the reception of unaccompanied minors, and some of the social workers in this study worked at private accommodation centres or had contacts with minors living at these centres.

### **1.3.2 The Best Interest of the Child**

A concern with children and childcare has been central throughout the development of the Swedish welfare state as well as the development of social work practice (Sandin and Sundkvist 2014, Andresen et. al. 2011, Johansson 2011, Ponnert 2007). This is an important context for both my cases since both focus mainly on work with children.

The idea of childcare and child protection as public matters was established in laws and reforms in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was in the beginning based on a moralistic discourse of certain children (and workers) being a risk for society (Ponnert 2007). Children have had a central place in the welfare policies of all Nordic countries and the welfare state has played an increasingly important role in the life of children, through legislation, economic interventions, and professionals in schools and nurseries (ibid.). Social policy regarding children has developed in relation to how social problems have been constructed; a case in point is nurseries, which from the beginning were a support for single mothers specifically but later developed to be a universal right. The expansion of public childcare was linked to ideas of gender equality and that children would benefit from care outside

of the home (Lundqvist and Roman 2010). In legislation regarding children, age is an important factor, and age limits have varied somewhat over time. For example, age eligibility for voting today (18 years) is lower than for a hundred years ago but higher for children in societal care (21 years) (Andresen et al. 2011). However, as will be further developed in Chapter 8, unaccompanied minors who are awaiting a decision on asylum are removed to reception centres for adults the day they turn 18.

Since 1982 the Social Services Act has regulated social interventions regarding children.<sup>5</sup> Today, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is to be implemented as Swedish law, but, during the time of the two case studies, the social workers were guided mainly by the formulations in the Social Services Act. Still, the principle of the Best Interest of the Child was incorporated into the Social Services Act in 1998, and the most recent version of the Act (2001:453, implemented in 2002) made some adaptations to the UNCRC in that children's right to express their opinion was strengthened and that the Best Interest of the Child should guide all decisions (Socialstyrelsen 2012, Ponnert 2007). However, the interpretation of the principle of the Best Interest of the Child varies between different authorities depending on their mission, different roles and competencies. In a study on the principle of the Best Interest of the Child in the asylum process, Anna Lundberg (2009:14) distinguishes between the principle as "policy" and as "practice". She argues that the formulations on how to use the principle are often vague and have little bearing on the practice of Swedish Migration Agency officials. Lundberg (2011) also finds that the Swedish Migration Agency officers are rarely guided by the principle of the Best Interest of the Child and that it is often used in a negative way: legitimising deportations of children with the argument that the deportation does not interfere with the principle. A recent Swedish Governmental Official Report (SOU 2016:19) investigating the conditions for incorporation of the UNCRC into Swedish law comments that the definitions and wording regarding the principle today vary in different laws. As one example, the Swedish Migration Agency can assess that a deportation of a child together with the parents would not go against the Best Interest of the Child, while the social services can argue,

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<sup>5</sup> However, coercive measures are regulated by a specific law: the Care of Young Persons Act (LVU).

with reference to the same principle, that the child should be placed outside of her/his family due to, for instance, neglect (ibid. 168). Similar differences between the migration authorities and the social services are present in my two case studies.

## 1.4 Structure of the Text

The text will proceed as follows. In Chapter 2, I will further introduce the context of irregular migration and the Swedish welfare state, in terms of concepts, background and earlier research. In this chapter the main features of the Swedish citizenship regime are introduced. In Chapter 3, I develop the theoretical framework of citizenship as enacted, and address the tensions of acting in solidarity or on behalf of others. I especially focus on the movement between citizenship as a status and citizenship enactments. In Chapter 4, I introduce my methodological perspectives, and the methods used in my two cases, which mainly consist of a combination of interviews and document studies. My own position in relation to the field is also discussed. In Part I, I thereafter analyse the study on the Malmö municipal guidelines on social assistance. The analysis is presented through an introductory contextualising chapter (5), followed by two empirically based chapters (6 and 7) presenting my analysis on the Malmö guidelines on social assistance and drawing on my theoretical perspectives, especially discussing *actions* versus *acts* and the *presence* of undocumented migrants at a local level. In Part II, I analyse the individual acts made by social workers in contact with unaccompanied minors risking deportation. Also in Part II there is a contextualising chapter (8) on the work with unaccompanied minors in Sweden. This chapter is followed by an empirically based chapter (9) analysing interviews with social workers who act in support of unaccompanied minors who have become undocumented. In the analysis I present three analytical reconstructions based on the rationales that the social workers describe as behind their acts. Finally, the last chapter (10) draws on both my empirical cases and analyses them together, addressing potential new forms of citizenship (both in terms of inclusions and exclusions).

## 2. Irregular Migration and the Swedish Welfare State

A development towards securitisation, restrictive migration politics and border controls at an international level has contributed to increased numbers of migrants becoming undocumented (Andersson 2016, Jordan and Düvell 2003). The issue of irregular migration has been brought into Swedish debates during the last 10–15 years, and this is an important context to this study. In this chapter, I give a brief overview of the research on irregular migration and recent political developments regarding undocumented migrants. In the first section below, I discuss “undocumented migrants” as a categorisation, and how irregular migration is linked to and produced by border controls. In the second section I present the Swedish welfare state and migration policies. Amanda Nielsen (2016:17) has analysed this Swedish *citizenship regime* (with reference to Neergaard 2009) as made of “both legal frameworks, that regulate access to membership and rights, and of conceptions of how one is supposed to be and act in order to be (perceived of as) a citizen”. Using this term, she brings together the dimensions of migration and welfare, which are often analytically separated into different regimes. This is a concept that I also draw on in my analysis, when studying practices potentially destabilising the boundaries of this regime. In the third section, I present irregular migration in a Swedish context. In a Swedish context, a large proportion of the undocumented population consists of former asylum seekers, something that directly links debates on undocumented migrants to debates on asylum politics. While the subject of undocumented migrants has been addressed in debates and campaigns on healthcare, and partially included into some parts



of the welfare state, social work with undocumented migrants has not been a central debate. My study contributes to the discussions on social workers' responsibilities towards undocumented migrants as well as how the Swedish welfare state deals with this group in practice.

## 2.1 Undocumented Migrants: a Disputed Category

In this section, I begin by outlining my understanding of the category “undocumented migrants”, in relation to recent research. There are vigorous discussions concerning the ethics of categorising, counting and researching undocumented migrants (for some examples see Sager et al. 2016, Wahlström Smith and Ascher 2016, McNevin 2011, Düvell et al. 2010). This has implications for the research conducted and how researchers write about the phenomenon of irregular migration. Like many authors in this field, I see irregular migration as a product of structural forces, linked to border controls, securitisation and unequal distribution of wealth, rather than produced by the movement of people (Anderson 2013, Sager 2011, de Genova 2005). In the second section below, I outline how external and internal borders differentiate rights and the distinctions they make between migrants.

### 2.1.1 Naming and Counting

Undocumented migrants can be described as a group who does not have formal permission to stay within a specific territory or jurisdiction. Nicholas de Genova (2005) has described the group as “deportable”; persons who live their lives always with the risk of being deported. This risk structures the everyday life in a way that is unique for non-citizens residing in a country without permit (see Holgersson 2011 for the concept “deportable” in a Swedish context). A migrant can be undocumented due to various reasons. The entry into a country can be made irregularly but later be regularised by the seeking of asylum, or a person can be overstaying an expired visa. There are also many cases of semi-compliance with the rules –

for example, a person with a valid tourist visa can be working irregularly. With reference to Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (2005), Trine Lund Thomsen (2010) notes that there is a tension between migration that is seen as illegal/legal on the one hand and illicit/licit on the other; by way of illustration, a hidden refugee can stay in a country illegally, but be understood by a large part of the population as having licit reasons to stay (e.g. due to restrictive asylum policies). Migrants working irregularly can also be integrated into the economy and much needed, even if migration is restricted (Schierup et al. 2006). The liberalisation of the common EU market is an important factor structuring the need for cheap, informal labour. Entering the EU in regular ways but staying irregularly in order to work has become an option for many labour migrants, and undocumented migrants are in many EU countries (especially in Southern Europe) an important part of the national economy (Hansen 2007, Schierup et. al. 2006). This means that there is sometimes a fine line between irregular migration and labour migration. The tightening of migratory policies experienced during the last few years and the diversification of the category of the asylum seeker have also been described as further challenging the distinction between asylum seekers and economic migrants (Mezzadra 2015:5).

The understandings and classifications of different groups of migrants are highly dependent on the practices of different institutions within the nation states, which use such categorisations when sorting among citizens and “others” (Anderson 2013). The terminology used is often linked to political position and discursive strategies and there is a wide range of concepts (Anderson 2013, Holgersson 2011). For example, far-right and racist parties may choose the word “illegal”, while the Swedish asylum rights movement often have talked about “hidden refugees” – words with very different connotations (Holgersson 2011, Sager 2011). Most researchers today agree that the word “illegal” is not appropriate to use when talking about a human being; the migrant who illegally crosses a border is not an “illegal person” (Anderson 2013:117, de Genova 2010a). A widely used term, both in research and policymaking, is instead “irregular migrant” (or “irregularised migrant”) (McNevin 2011, Thomsen et. al. 2010, Jordan and Düvell 2003). This term avoids the highly criticised language of “illegality”, but at the same time there is a marked difference from “regular people” that is sometimes seen as problematic. Anne McNevin (2011:20) argues that she

uses this term as the “best of the bad bunch”, but that there is a “conceptual underdevelopment of modes of political belonging beyond state-centric ones”. Also I use this term, as it is widely established. In this text, I have chosen to talk about *irregular migration* as a phenomenon, meaning border crossings and overstaying of visas in ways that are not regular. However I avoid writing about migrants themselves as “irregular”, as I find this concept easy to misinterpret as a description of the migrant instead of a description of the situation the migrant is in.

Another word that is used in much literature, as well as in policymaking, is “undocumented migrant”. “Undocumented” comes from the French “sans-papiers” and is the word used by self-organised migrant groups throughout Europe (as well as in Sweden, *papperslös*) aiming at challenging both the term “illegal” and the picture of the “hidden refugee” as a victim, instead representing a variety of life stories and agency (Sager 2016, Holgersson 2011). A common critique of this concept is that it indicates that the solution of the problem is “documentation” rather than highlighting that (the wrong kind of) documentation might be a source of the problem (Anderson 2013:117). A difficulty for many migrants is not that they lack documents – only that the documents that they hold are not the ones required. Nevertheless, this is the word used both in the local policy discussions that I study and by the social workers participating in this study. Therefore, I have chosen to use the concept *undocumented migrant*, knowing that it is not very precise but arguing that it does coincide with the present categorisation and therefore is easy to understand and relate to both in relation to Swedish debates and for the participants in this study. Also, describing a migrant as undocumented – in the meaning “lacking the required documents” – is less likely to be read as a personal characteristic of the migrant.

Many researchers are, for good reason, careful with numbers in the case of undocumented migrants (Vollmer 2011). There are many difficulties in counting a group that is by definition not registered in population statistics, and there are also ethical concerns regarding the task. A central question here is: in whose interest are we counting? A large European research project, Clandestino, has resulted in a database on irregular migration in Europe (Clandestino 2014). The Clandestino project estimates the numbers of undocumented migrants in the EU to be between 1.9 and 3.8

million (year 2008, in EU-27). According to other EU estimates, there are around 8 million undocumented migrants in EU-25 (Hansen 2012). The numbers in the Scandinavian countries are estimated by Clandestino to be very low in comparison with other EU countries (Düvell 2010). In their final report, the authors state that irregular migration is a highly politicised issue and that numbers play a discursive role in the picturing of this migration as a threat as well as arguing for stronger protection of undocumented migrants (Triandafyllidou 2009:17). The report also addresses the danger of speculative “number games” that may arise when having no reliable data, warning that a realistic assessment of numbers is important for the enabling of an inclusion of migrants in basic social support. This has also been the case in a Swedish context, where much-cited numbers stem from reports concerning healthcare and social issues (Socialstyrelsen 2010, SOU 2011:48). The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare estimated in 2010 that there were 10,000–50,000 undocumented migrants in Sweden (Socialstyrelsen 2010), and in a government report on healthcare in 2011 the number was estimated to be between 10,000 and 35,000 (SOU 2011:48, the report refers to Socialstyrelsen 2010). In my study, I make use of available numbers when such numbers are relatively established – for example, in Swedish policy documents. However, as I am not focusing on numbers but rather on irregular migration as a *phenomenon*, I use such information only in order to contextualise.

### **2.1.2 Borders**

As discussed above, irregular migration can be understood in terms of deportability: in relation to the border of the nation state, with a constant threat of deportation. There are different types of borders producing deportability. The most obvious is the *external border* that separates two states from each other. In the case of the EU, these borders have been further externalised through treaties with neighbouring countries stopping asylum seekers from entering the EU. Since the 1990s the Schengen Agreement, later incorporated into the Amsterdam Treaty, implies that the countries within the EU have a common external border and the Schengen countries have intergovernmental cooperation on migration. Frontex, the

EU agency for external border security, since 2005 has operated by coordinating national border guards. The EU borders are not fixed in place, due to a further *externalisation* of border controls to southern EU countries (through the Dublin II Regulation, stating that every person seeking refuge should do so by filing an application in the first country of arrival) and to a third set of countries outside of the EU (Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi 2013). The EU cooperation also means that the Swedish border to a large degree is moved to Southern and Eastern Europe, or to countries neighbouring the EU.

Due to visa restrictions inter alia, many people fleeing war zones or persecution (i.e. forced migrants) cross borders irregularly, in order to reach the offices of UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) or to apply for asylum in a new country (van Liempt 2007). Some authors, as well as civil society organisations, have observed a violent control of borders when it comes to EU immigration controls (Finotelli and Sciortino 2013, Fekete 2011). The statistics bear this out; according to the UN, 23,858 migrants lost their lives trying to cross European borders between the years 2000 and 2013 (UN Dispatch 2014).<sup>6</sup> In addition, there is the practice of detentions and deportations (Andersson et al. 2016). Focusing on the exclusionary aspects of today's citizenship regimes, Nicholas de Genova (2010a:34) argues that deportation has “emerged as a definite and increasingly pervasive convention of routine statecraft”. He describes deportation as “a virtually global *regime*” (ibid.). The external border also has a symbolic dimension that both contributes to the creation of an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) within a nation state and that marks state sovereignty. This symbolic dimension has been argued to create fantasies of control rather than marking state sovereignty (Brown 2010), and the external border can be described as “porous”: “unwanted” migrants do pass the borders despite controls (Bosniak 2006). There are also in-depth descriptions of “illegal” border crossings; for example, in Sharam Khosravi's (2010) auto-ethnographic work that skilfully combines theories of migration with lived experience. What is clear in these studies is that the practices of people migrating from one country to another are marked, but not stopped, by irregularisation at the borders. The external border can

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<sup>6</sup> And these are, of course, only *registered* deaths.

hence be described both as symbolic, but also as highly material in its consequences – as it produces deportability, deaths and distinctions between people who migrate.

Another kind of border is the *internal* border. This is the border as it appears in the everyday lives of undocumented migrants, leading to a situation of constant deportability (compare de Genova 2005, Holgersson 2011). Police controls at workplaces, controls in the streets or on public transport are different manifestations of this border. The border materialises in explicit ID controls, but also in stricter rules criminalising employers who contract undocumented migrants and through social policy that denies access to welfare services. The internal border means a decentralisation of enforcement; for example, public sector workers are sometimes obliged to report undocumented migrants (Anderson 2013). The deportation apparatus is therefore present in welfare work, no matter the intentions of individual welfare state employees (Nyers 2008). De Genova (2002:437) argues that the production of migrant “illegality” requires a differentiation between nation states that is “socially inscribed upon the migrants themselves – embodied in the spatialized (and racialized) status of ‘illegal alien’”. In a European context, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants have increasingly been described in terms of a threat and are being produced as economic migrants, different from the ideal image of political refugees (Pinson, Arnot and Candappa 2010). Khosravi (2010:98) describes how the border may be racialising, selecting “suspicious people” by (what is perceived as non-European) appearance; selective ID controls in public places or encounters with welfare state officials are visible examples. Also Balibar (2004:x) describes the internal border as stigmatising of certain populations of Europe whose presence “is nonetheless increasingly massive and legitimate”. The internal border hence produces distinctions and categorisations, and actors in public institutions take part in this process; this happens also at individual and everyday levels (Sigvardsdotter 2012).

The study of irregular migration in relation to a welfare state means that different dimensions of the border become visible. In the encounters between the social services and undocumented migrants the border is materialised and there is a threat of deportation. However, as my study discusses, there is also access to rights – even if it is produced in contradictory and ambiguous ways, often marking new borders. The social

workers in this study are confronting borders in their everyday practice and this sometimes creates dislocations in their understandings of what is a responsible way of acting. Arguing for a rethinking of borders, beyond their negative powers of exclusion and governing, Maribel Casas-Cortés et al. (2015:57) would like to see a more open-ended analysis:

By rethinking the logics of borders beyond their apparent role as tools of exclusion and violence, we intend to signal the more open and complex ways in which borders react to diverse kinds of migrant subjectivities and thereby operate to produce differentiated forms of access and “rights”.

I find this view on borders to be useful when understanding undocumented migrants as a category challenging assumptions of responsibility within the Swedish welfare state. By way of example, it could mean a focus on how borders form new distinctions between groups of migrants in relation to ideas of “deservingness” and vulnerability, such as “economic migrants” or “asylum seekers”. A differentiation of rights is also made in accordance to different forms of legal statuses (permanent residence, temporary visa, being undocumented). Borders, in this view, participate in forming new subjectivities, and this is of central importance to explore.

## 2.2 Swedish Migration Policies

In this section, I give a brief introduction to Swedish migration politics. This is a framework for understanding how irregular migration is produced and dealt with and an important dimension of the Swedish citizenship regime (Nielsen 2016). The development towards securitisation and the distinctions of rights described above can be linked to policies regulating migration. As noted by many authors, this is also what produces irregular migration. In a Swedish context, there has been a development towards more restrictive migration policies, but at the same time a gradual access to welfare systems for undocumented migrants. There is an established view of Swedish asylum policies as being more “generous” and the Swedish approach more inclusive than in many other EU countries, a view that has gradually began to change as Swedish migration policies are harshening and

the welfare state at the same time is being scaled down (e.g. Schierup and Ålund 2011). Swedish migration policies have been developed towards becoming more restrictive over a longer period of time. According to Hammar (1999), the Swedish approach to social policy, where immigrants should be included in the welfare state, has brought about a concern that Sweden's share of immigrants should not be so large that it endangers the living standards of the current population. Inclusionary policies have hence been used as a motivation for migration control. This has implications for undocumented migrants and will be discussed below (see also Sigvardsdotter 2012).

Swedish migration policies over the 20<sup>th</sup> century are often divided into five periods, with reference to Thomas Hammar (1999). Before 1914, Sweden had free migration and emigration was larger than immigration.<sup>7</sup> During the following period (1914–1945) a gradual legislation came about, by way of a control system with passport and visa requirements in 1917 and the first Aliens Act in 1927. 1917 has been described as a breaking point, as “the principle that the state has a primary responsibility to protect the interest of its citizens was established” (Nielsen 2016:67). After World War II (1945–1972) the right to asylum was recognised through the 1954 Aliens Act, following the Geneva Convention. This was also a period of labour market immigration, and the Swedish approach was that these migrants should be established in Sweden on a permanent basis. During this period, “immigration” became an issue of concern for Swedish social work – as it was established as a problem discourse in the 1960s (Montesino and Righard 2015). According to Montesino (2015:50), the defining of migrants as a “problem group” has been central in the development of the Swedish social services’ work with refugees and other migrants, and migrants’ needs have been described in terms of culture, ethnicity or religion (see also Gruber 2015, Wikström 2013, Hertzberg 2003, Kamali 2002).

The fourth period (1972–1989) can be described as gradually more restrictive and with a shift from labour migration to asylum seekers. During this period there were efforts to develop an integration policy for immigrants already in the country. Hammar (1999) describes a fifth period

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<sup>7</sup> Before 1860 there had been a demand for passports (see Johansson 2008).



from 1989 with a restrictive turn, which also goes in line with a general similar development in the EU. This, he indicates, is related to an increase in asylum seekers going underground during the 1990s. As the coordination of border controls within the EU has been developing, the formation of EU policies on labour migration has focused on temporary visas and circular migration; arrangements with few social commitments from the EU (Hansen 2012). In 2006, a new system of migration courts was introduced in Sweden, where asylum applications were dealt with by the Swedish Migration Agency, and could be appealed against in a Migration Court and then, after a leave to appeal, in a Migration Court of Appeal.

Amanda Nielsen (2016:66) suggests a sixth period of Swedish migration policies from 2008, with the introduction of a new labour market policy combining a liberal labour policy with restrictive asylum politics. Among other things, the policy offered the possibility of a change of tracks, where rejected asylum seekers should be able to apply for work permits. This policy change has been described as an opening-up for migration to Sweden, but has also been criticised for exploitation of workers (Calleman and Herzfeld Olsson 2015). In 2010, the Swedish Public Employment Service was delegated the responsibility for newly arrived migrants who had obtained a residence permit (instead of, as earlier, the municipalities).

Nielsen also indicates a shift taking place from November 2015 when new temporary asylum policies were suggested by the government. This shift has become even more visible and accentuated during 2016, since increasingly harsh asylum policies have been introduced and Sweden has applied border controls in order to keep asylum seekers out. With an interim three-year legislation implemented in June 2016 (Swedish Code of Statutes 2016:752), residence permits given to asylum seekers are temporary and the possibility for family reunion is severely restricted. The new rules create a heavier focus on employment in order to be able to stay in Sweden or reunite with family members, and can therefore be seen as a continuation of a development of policies towards temporal labour migration. An increase of asylum applications being rejected has led to migrants becoming undocumented, and an intensified focus on finding and deporting this group is another consequence (Migrationsverket 2016, Sager et al. 2016). The new directions of politics must be taken into account in the understanding of the Swedish welfare state (Nordling, Sager and Söderman

2017, Dahlstedt and Neergaard 2016). Historically, restrictions on immigration that were initially introduced as “exceptions”, such as increased possibilities to deport or detain asylum seekers, have later developed into established parts of the migration policies (Jansson 2016).

## 2.3 Irregular Migration in a Swedish Context

In a Swedish context, irregular migration was first spotlighted within the civil society and has gradually been moving into public debates. The presence of persons who are “undocumented” is more visible in today’s Sweden than it was only ten years ago. Maja Sager, Helena Holgersson and Klara Öberg (2016:30) describe a “double” development of irregular migration in Sweden during the last two decades. On the one hand, a broad social movement, including activists with and without residence permits, has been campaigning for the rights of undocumented migrants, with real effects on laws and access to welfare. Such social movements have also given support to undocumented migrants by way of healthcare, legal advice, and help to stay away from the authorities (often while awaiting an opportunity to apply for asylum). On the other hand, demands on closed borders and exclusion of undocumented migrants have been made by such groups as the nationalist right-wing party, the Sweden Democrats, which has become the third-largest party in Sweden. There has also been an increased focus on finding and deporting undocumented migrants (i.e. Andersson et al. 2016). This double development has also been visible in 2015–2016, with a large civil society organisation in support of asylum seekers and municipal efforts to increase the capacity for receiving refugees on the one hand, and politicians talking about a system collapse and introducing border controls on the other (see Rosengren 2016). How irregular migration should be understood is hence currently an issue with parallel developments in these different directions.

Below, in section 2.3.1, I present some of the characteristics of irregular migration in a Swedish context, and in section 2.3.2 I present undocumented migrants’ access to different forms of social support.

### 2.3.1 Undocumented Migrants in Sweden

The phenomenon of irregular migration is by no means new in Sweden. Norma Montesino (2015:46) describes how the movement of people was stigmatised as deviant in laws on vagrancy in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; “poor strangers” were treated separately in legislation and could be deported (see also Jansson 2016). However, it can be said that undocumented migrants were “discovered” as a category within the civil society in the early 1990s, and established as a category in public debates through a campaign for amnesty for rejected asylum seekers in 2005 (see Sager 2011). Irregular migration has been established rather recently as a field of research in Sweden. Early publications on the theme have been made outside of academia (Vestin 2002, 2006, MSF 2005). In 2006, a Swedish governmental report (SOU 2006:73) addressing structural racism had a chapter on undocumented migrants written by the anthropologist Sharham Khosravi. At the time, undocumented migrants had no formal rights in Sweden (except to unsubsidised, urgent healthcare) and Khosravi (2006) argued that the rights of undocumented migrants were territorialised, reducing human rights to citizenship rights. Since then, and after many activist campaigns and political debates, undocumented migrants have been addressed in laws concerning healthcare and schooling. Also, a number of doctoral projects have focused on the issue (Baghir-Zada 2009, Sager 2011, Holgersson 2011, Sigvardsdotter 2012, Öberg 2015, Nielsen 2016, Keshavarz 2016). In Swedish research, various words are used, but the most common ones are “undocumented” (*papperslös*, using a vocabulary close to the Swedish debate) and “irregular” (*irreguljär*, marking an analytical distance from everyday discourses) (see Sager et al. 2016:14).

A comparatively large proportion of the undocumented migrants in Sweden are likely to live in the bigger cities, where they have access to migrant networks, might have opportunities to find a job, and can organise their everyday lives (Holgersson 2011, 2016). However, the group is differentiated and aspects such as age, gender or country of origin structure the possibilities to access work or to get community support (Sager 2011). Just as in most countries, undocumented migrants come to Sweden in different manners and for different reasons; the largest group is former asylum seekers (a group that can be expected to increase even more due to latter developments), but there are also other groups, such as labour

migrants. No matter which ways to irregularity, undocumented migrants are today part of the Swedish irregular labour market and it can be estimated that most undocumented migrants staying in Sweden are working in one way or another in order to make a living (Mosknes 2016). Nonetheless, it has been difficult for undocumented migrants to make legal claims in the labour market (Inghammar 2010). Through the exploitation of undocumented migrants as a “reserve army” of labour, it has been argued that deportability has become one tool of social stratification and erosion of social rights (Selberg 2016, Öberg 2015). Which groups of undocumented migrants are present during different periods of time can be related both to national migration policies (regarding asylum and labour) and to international conflict zones. Many rights claims on behalf of this group have been made on a basis that Swedish asylum policies are too strict or that the asylum reception system is not working as it should (see Thorburn Stern and Wikström 2016; for another recent example see Malmquist 2016, who criticises the Swedish Migration Agency’s handling of LGBTQ cases). Staying in Sweden as undocumented, many asylum seekers hope to be able to renew their asylum applications, something that is possible after four years when the decision is prescribed (or after 18 months, in the case of persons subject to the Dublin Regulation). In Sweden, helping a person to stay irregularly is not a crime as it is in some other countries, and there are various organisations campaigning for the rights of undocumented migrants and/or giving different forms of social support to them (FARR 2016). However, there are of course also actors arguing for a stronger focus on deportations and less access to rights.

Undocumented migrants have sometimes participated in formulating the different demands of the asylum rights movements (Sager 2015). For example, during the amnesty campaign in 2005, many families and individuals from countries in the former Yugoslavia participated, as this was a group that experienced deportability after the end of the Yugoslav wars (see Sager 2011). The campaign (that also gathered other groups of migrants) had some success, in that families with children got a second chance to apply for asylum through the new system of migration courts established in 2006. In the years following the campaign, undocumented migrants of different backgrounds, both former asylum seekers and labour migrants, gathered in the initiative “Papperslösa Stockholm” (“Undocumented migrants in Stockholm”), advocating for a broader

regularisation (Sager 2015, Gunneflo and Selberg 2010). Also, the syndicalist union SAC started to organise undocumented workers (Mosknes 2016), and undocumented workers became a visible group in the Swedish debates. Later, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) together with the Swedish Confederation of Professional Workers (TCO) started a support centre for undocumented migrants with encouragement from the Swedish Building Maintenance Workers' Union (Fastighetsanställdas förbund) (ibid.). It has, however, been difficult to gain support for including undocumented migrants into the Swedish trade unions.

In later years, unaccompanied minors, especially from Afghanistan and Somalia, have been addressed by, and have participated in, different asylum rights movements. Some examples are the Association for Unaccompanied Minors, the Asylum Relay and the No Border Musical, all initiatives organising unaccompanied minors with and without residence permits (Djampour and Söderman 2016, Keshavarz 2016). The situation of unaccompanied minors has also led to an organisation among professionals and campaigns against deportations (see for example Barnets Bästa Främst 2010 and Vi står inte ut 2016). Another group that has been present in public debates during recent years is the so-called “EU migrants” or “vulnerable EU citizens”; citizens of other EU countries living as homeless in Sweden and in some cases overstaying their temporary residence permits, becoming undocumented (SOU 2016:6, Åberg 2015). This is a group that has been met with ambivalence by authorities, but that has also taken part in mobilisations concerning social rights (Mešić 2016, Centrum för sociala rättigheter 2017b). A recent governmental report (SOU 2016:6) recommends that the children of this group of EU citizens should as a rule not be offered schooling; the report has been criticised by the organisation Civil Rights Defenders among others for its restrictive approach and for a lack of human rights perspectives (Svenska Dagbladet 2016b, Lind and Persdotter 2017). In recent Swedish debates, poor EU citizens begging in the streets have often been portrayed as illicit, but there is also a struggle over definitions (Centrum för sociala rättigheter 2017b, SOU 2016:6). Begging has a history of stigmatisation, and the debates on migration as well as on poverty are often based on distinctions between “deserving” or “undeserving” parts of the population (Anderson 2013, Swärd and Egerö 2006).

### 2.3.2 Gradual (and Partial) Access to Welfare Services

This study focuses on support to undocumented migrants from welfare workers employed within the Swedish welfare state. However, as also discussed above, relatively extensive programs granting access to social rights have in Sweden been tied to citizenship status or permanent residence (Sager et al. 2016). This has meant that undocumented migrants have had difficulty in accessing the Swedish welfare state services. For example, in a project investigating undocumented migrants' access to healthcare in different EU countries (NowhereLand), Sweden was ranked as one of the countries with least access in 2011 (Björngren Cuadra 2011). Countries with a larger proportion of undocumented migrants integrated into the labour market tended to have more far-reaching access, according to the study. Over the last years, the boundaries within the Swedish welfare state have somewhat shifted. As we will see below, in the case of healthcare and schooling available to undocumented migrants (especially children), it is possible to trace changing boundaries of citizenship. This shift means that to some extent undocumented migrants have been recognised as rights-bearers (Nielsen 2016).

Before 2013, Sweden gave access only to urgent healthcare and at full cost. This meant in practice that undocumented migrants received healthcare mainly through civil society initiatives and voluntary clinics. The “civic registration number”, or *personnummer*, has been (and is still) of crucial importance in Sweden, not only for contact with different authorities but also in everyday procedures such as getting a library card or entering a gym. Lacking this number presents a person with difficulty when communicating with institutions, be they public, private or civic (Sigvardsdotter 2012). Because of the limited access to Swedish welfare services, social support to undocumented migrants has mostly been performed outside of the Swedish welfare state bureaucracy, often within migrants' own networks or civil society organisations. Civil society organisations' share of the organising of welfare has been small in Sweden, but in relation to undocumented migrants Swedish organisations are often working outside of the welfare state. Salient examples are Rosengrenska Stiftelsen in Gothenburg, working with undocumented migrants since the 1990s, Läkare i världen and Médecins Sans Frontières in Stockholm, and Deltastiftelsen in Malmö, who have also been providing healthcare to undocumented migrants for many

years. Other support structures are migrants organisations, asylum rights groups (such as No One is Illegal) and different religious institutions. Many of these organisations help undocumented migrants with medical care, legal advice, access to schools and other issues related to welfare, as the migrants' position of being without residence permit often prevents them from accessing welfare arrangements. The umbrella organisation for Swedish asylum rights groups is called FARR (Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups).

Underground clinics and medical personnel have had a strong voice in the movements giving support to undocumented migrants. In 2006, the UN Special Rapporteur on Health, Paul Hunt, visited Sweden and criticised the Swedish practices of healthcare in relation to undocumented migrants (Sandberg and Fryknäs 2010). This fueled public debates, inter alia through the campaign "Right to Health Care Initiative" that gathered healthcare professionals and other groups from 2008 and onwards (Vård för papperslösa 2016). The question of healthcare for undocumented migrants was also dealt with by welfare institutions at a regional level (the level managing healthcare). In 2010, 17 out of 21 Swedish counties had regional guidelines concerning undocumented migrants (Sandberg and Fryknäs 2010). Scania (Skåne)'s county council was the first one out, granting undocumented migrants (but only former asylum seekers) the same healthcare as for asylum seekers. Not all county councils followed Scania's initiative. Only seven county councils (including those where the largest cities – Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö – are situated) equated undocumented migrants with asylum seekers, and only three of them (including Sörmland, where Stockholm is situated) extended the right to healthcare to groups of undocumented migrants other than former asylum seekers (Sigvardsson 2012). However, access to healthcare remained uncertain despite regional guidelines, partly because adults only had access to subsidised urgent healthcare and care that could not "be deferred". In a study on nurses working with urgent healthcare in the county of Scania, Frida Gullberg and Monne Wihlborg (2014) concluded that many problems for the healthcare staff remained. The vague entitlement to care gave the healthcare personnel an arbitrary power in judging who "deserved" access to healthcare. Furthermore, the authors argued, the presence of the police at hospitals obstructed access to healthcare in practice (compare Lundberg and Söderman 2015). When it came to schooling,

undocumented children could gain access before 2013 through individual headmasters accepting them at their schools, although the access was often arbitrary (Lundberg and Strange 2014).

The Swedish approach to undocumented migrants has gone through changes over the last years. In 2013, the right-wing government together with the Green Party introduced new laws on healthcare and schooling for undocumented migrants in Sweden. The laws can be seen as a result of years of campaigning, not least among professionals. A governmental report presented in 2011 (SOU 2011:48) suggested subsidised healthcare should be available for all undocumented migrants and asylum seekers at the same premises as persons with residence permits in Sweden, but in the end the law granted full access only to subsidised healthcare for undocumented children<sup>8</sup>. Just as in the case of Scania presented above, adults were granted urgent healthcare and care that could not “be deferred”, something that leaves room for differences in interpretation, and only partial access to healthcare. A law concerning access to schooling was also implemented in 2013<sup>9</sup>, preceded by a governmental report in 2010 (SOU 2010:5). This law granted all undocumented children access to schooling and implied that personnel at schools and in the social services were no longer to report to the police when in contact with undocumented migrants (however, as discussed in Part I, the social services had to give out information when contacted by the police). In a study of the debates preceding the laws, Nielsen (2016) argues that reports on implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the 1990s and early 2000s paved the way for further claims-making regarding social rights in Sweden. She sees a shift following the UN evaluation of Swedish policy and practice by the UN Special Rapporteur Paul Hunt. The articulation of the demands on healthcare for undocumented migrants shifted “from a humanitarian gesture to a vulnerable group to a universal right that should be granted to all regardless of legal status” (Nielsen 2016:146).

In studies investigating undocumented migrants’ health and wellbeing, it has been highlighted that healthcare and schooling are not enough in order to promote good health among undocumented migrants (Wahlström Smith

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<sup>8</sup> Swedish Code of Statutes 2013:407.

<sup>9</sup> Education Act, Chapter 29.



and Ascher 2016, Lundberg and Söderman 2015). This is an argument used also by asylum rights groups arguing for broader social support to undocumented migrants (e.g. FARR 2014). It is sometimes argued that economic support of some kind would be needed in order to comply with human rights; especially to comply with the UNCRC that declares the responsibility of the states for each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind (FARR 2014, Lundberg and Söderman 2015). But in the case of the social services, the gradual access to the welfare state has not experienced development to the same extent as in the areas of healthcare and schooling. As I will argue in Part I, this can partly be because giving subsidies has been more difficult to obtain/justify politically than providing service. The social services' responsibility for undocumented migrants is today a debated area and concerns a variety of issues. One such issue is the guest-workers'/berry-pickers' (non-)access to support in northern Sweden, where municipalities have argued that they do not have a responsibility for the group (Mešić 2016, Wikström 2015). Another is the so-called "EU migrants" or "vulnerable EU citizens" in different Swedish municipalities, also discussed above, claiming social rights but also being denied healthcare and schooling (Åberg 2015, Carlsson and Ekblad 2014). An issue that has met with some success is the drive for access to women's shelters through the campaign "Ain't I a Woman", which is now granted in some municipalities (Bexelius 2016). The issues of social assistance and support given to unaccompanied minors have also been addressed in some debates (although not very comprehensively) in relation to undocumented migrants; these are analysed in Parts I and II respectively.

## 2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented undocumented migrants as a disputed category produced by restrictive migration policies and border controls. Migrant irregularity is not static and a person can shift from being categorised as an undocumented migrant to have a regularised status and the other way around. As will be developed further in the analytical chapters, this is also the case in my study; many of the families having contact with the social services in Part I were former asylum seekers who

had their children in local schools and were therefore seen as licit members of the local community. The unaccompanied minors whom the social workers in Part II met could move between different statuses from one day to the next, as the migration authorities made a decision on deportation or assigned the minors a new age (above 18). Distinctions of “deservingness” and differentiation of rights interplay in the exclusion of the group from welfare services, and this provides a context to my analysis. I have also presented the Swedish *citizenship regime* as having inclusionary ambitions towards citizens, but in most cases excluding undocumented migrants. We can however see a gradual change from an exclusion marking definite borders of the welfare state to a partial inclusion into some areas, such as healthcare and schooling. This change has been brought about in a context of debates and campaigns regarding undocumented migrants, in recent years focusing on human rights discourses but also with politicians suggesting restrictive measures. Additionally, it has been preceded by civil society initiatives, most notably underground healthcare clinics, but it is also conditioned by deportability. In the case of the social services, there has been less debate and fewer studies performed. In my analytical chapters, I will further discuss the partial inclusion of undocumented migrants in relation to social work with social assistance and unaccompanied minors respectively.



### 3. Theory: Citizenship as Enacted

In this study, I have chosen to understand support to undocumented migrants in terms of *citizenship practices*, as the issues of irregular migration are closely tied to the production of borders and boundaries of citizenship and the nation state. The theoretical framework for this study directs the attention to social work as a practice in the borderlands of citizenship, distinguishing between groups perceived as “deserving” or “undeserving” and giving or denying access to the welfare state. Seeing citizenship as a practice, rather than as a status or as belonging, this study can be placed among those that contest the naturalisation of the relation between the nation state and citizenship (Walters 2008, Nyers 2008, Balibar 2004, Isin 2002). As described by John Clarke et al. (2014:1):

Citizenship is conventionally understood as a form of relation, most often as a relation between the citizen and the state, but also a relation of membership (of a society or a political community). But citizenship acts as a point of connection – indeed, a point of mobilisation – for many individuals and groups who identify themselves as citizens when they act, name themselves as people who would be citizens in demanding citizenship, or demand that citizenship be enlarged, enhanced or transformed to engage with other issues, identities and desires.

Clarke et al. (2014:5) argue that citizenship does not have a “proper meaning”, but is marked by the “history and complexity of meanings” (ibid. 5). This view requires a careful contextualisation and an analysis that is attentive to the social and historical variation of citizenship. In my analysis, I make use of such views, studying citizenship as practised at an everyday level. In both my empirical cases, the phenomenon of irregular

migration sheds a light on the borders and boundaries present in social work practice. This is sometimes responded to through actions in line with the present citizenship regime and sometimes with acts going beyond and potentially breaking with the status quo. The position of social work is of interest to study, as the citizenship practices taking place bring about forms of both inclusion and exclusion. The act of helping implies a relation where, to varying extent, the migrants are dependent on the goodwill of the social worker; this creates tensions in relation to citizenship theory that I find interesting to explore in my two empirical cases.

In the first section below (3.1), I present classical views on citizenship and some of the main recent developments within citizenship theory. Especially, I focus on the challenges to citizenship theory represented by feminist scholars and by scholars in the field of migration. In the second section (3.2), I present Engin Isin's (2002, 2008, 2012) understanding of citizenship as enacted, and how this has been useful in my analysis. In the third section (3.3), I relate Isin's theorisations to studies of support to undocumented migrants. Further, I discuss studies that have made use of Isin's theories in the study of the city and in relation to different professions, two areas that have become important to my analysis in Parts I and II respectively. I conclude with a section (3.4) outlining the central concepts of my study.

### 3.1 Critical Citizenship Theory

Citizenship studies have been established as a de facto field during the last decades, and the extent, content and depth of citizenship are today being redefined. The language of citizenship often has positive connotations and it has become legitimising for a variety of contemporary rights claims (Bosniak 2006, Isin and Turner 2002). But citizenship is also a contested concept that has been both challenged and developed by critical scholars (Ataç et al. 2016, Mezzadra 2015, Kivisto and Faist 2007, Isin and Turner 2002). Just as in my analysis, the figure of the undocumented migrant has been used in many such challenges. Below, in section 3.1.1, I begin by introducing two central traditions in citizenship studies: the liberal and the republican traditions. In section 3.1.2 I then comment on feminist critiques

of these traditions, among other things putting forward aspects such as caring and citizenship in arenas perceived as private. Another challenge to citizenship is globalisation; in section 3.1.3 I comment upon ideas of rights as tied to citizenship and as beyond citizenship. Finally, in section 3.1.4 I discuss how irregular migration in particular has been discussed as a challenge to citizenship and as both a way to destabilise and to identify the borders and boundaries of citizenship.

### **3.1.1 Classical Views on Citizenship and Social Rights**

One way to understand citizenship is as a membership or a status. When understanding citizenship as a status, we often refer to the *liberal* view on citizenship as a contract implying certain rights and responsibilities (Marshall 1992/1950). In the liberal tradition, citizenship means membership in a nation state, with access to rights that are politically asserted and that are the content or the substance of citizenship. Many contemporary citizenship theories in the West follow Thomas Marshall's (1992/1950) definition, which first includes civil rights (grounded on equality before the law), then political rights (participation in elections and political parties) and finally social rights. According to Marshall, social rights have been developed through the welfare states, with social reforms during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Which rights are instituted by the state is influenced by different interest groups, and there are continuous discussions and negotiations on what rights should be instituted as citizenship rights. It has been remarked that social rights differ from the other two sets of rights as they imply a redistribution of wealth and thereby a transformation of social hierarchies (Turner 1993). The possibility to actually institutionalise social rights, which are highly material, into legal principles has also been questioned. As Bryan Turner (1993) remarks, access to social citizenship is dependent on social practice (and bureaucratic practice, see Johansson 2001). It is also dependent on financial circumstances, as societies are required to balance scarcity and social solidarity (Turner 1997). This means that social rights are to some extent dependent upon local practices and that there is a space for discretion (Johansson 2001).

Which social rights should be guaranteed by the state is one aspect that has been broadly debated during the last century. Not least within social work

studies, this is an aspect that has been central and the discussions on the role of the welfare state have a long tradition within this field of study (Villadsen and Turner 2016). There are various studies on the effects of marketisation (Panican and Hjort 2011, 2014, Bain 2008), activation policies (Betzelt and Bothfeld 2011, Johansson and Hornemann Møller 2009), migration (Lorenz 2006, Jacobson Pettersson 2008), service user involvement (Karlsson 2007), care management (Österholm 2016, Blomberg and Petersson 2007), and other recent societal developments on access to social rights. As many of these studies also observe, the emphasis has shifted substantially from social rights to social obligations (compare Isin et al. 2008). As discussed in Chapter 2, the Swedish welfare state has had a comparatively inclusive approach towards citizens but a greater gap between citizens and undocumented migrants compared with many other European countries; this has been analysed in terms of a Swedish citizenship regime (Nielsen 2016, Sigvardsdotter 2012, Holgersson 2011). Just as in most Western welfare states, the Swedish case shows a development towards neoliberalism that has been described as eroding the welfare state and thereby access to social rights (Schierup and Ålund 2011).

As many of the studies on social rights note, citizenship rights are not simply something that you have; they indicate claims on others' duties (Janoski and Gran 2002). Access to rights implies belonging to a politically defined community. This means that many social rights "require generalized reciprocal ties among citizens"; for example, pension systems have a generations agreement and social assistance is based on a "diffuse solidarity" within a community (Faist 2001:41). To address this, some studies draw on a *republican* understanding of citizenship. In such an understanding the citizen is seen as shaped by the community. This requires a view of the citizen as an active participant in community and can be contrasted to today's dominating neoliberal idea of a worker-citizen and the state as a protector of freedom (Isin and Turner 2002). The republican view focuses more on obligations than on rights: the citizens' active participation is what ensures citizenship and political agency is emphasised. In a Swedish context, it has however been noted that a focus on employability and an obligation to work has been increasingly linked also to the idea of the active citizen (Dahlstedt 2015). The idea of the active citizen instead of the more passive member has inspired various developments of citizenship theory presented below, challenging the view of citizenship as a status that one

either holds or does not hold. The republican view opens up for an understanding of citizenship as practised that is important to my study. The negotiations of citizens' rights and obligations and the role of social citizenship are also at the core of my analysis. However, both the liberal and the republican traditions have been criticised for neglecting power hierarchies. Such critiques put forward that citizenship is differentiated, both in relation to status (denizen/citizen) and to participatory aspects. This is important to my understanding of citizenship and will be developed below.

### **3.1.2 Differentiated Rights and the Public/Private Divide**

A feminist critique of traditional views on citizenship is that they often have an understanding of the citizen as white and male. The views presented above have, for example, been described as “blind to group differences” (Young 1989:267). Citizenship can be described as exclusionary at two levels: from without and from within (Lister 1997a). Citizenship is exclusionary from without when it comes to migrants and from within when it comes to social divisions such as class, gender, “race”, sexuality and ability. The exclusionary character of citizenship *from without* has been much studied in relation to migration in regard to limited access to formal rights (e.g. Anderson 2013, Squire 2009, Schierup et al. 2006), and will be further developed throughout this chapter. The exclusion *from within* concerns limits to participation and limited access to rights; what the citizenship contains in practice. This is often discussed in terms of boundaries (e.g. May, Modood and Squires 2004). People's citizenships are affected by their location (e.g. gender, class, “race”, sexuality) and therefore citizenship can be seen as embodied and situated: it has different meaning for different groups of citizens. For example, there is often a sharp distinction between public and private arenas that favour some kinds of participation before others. It can therefore be questioned as to whether the institutionalisation of rights means a guaranteed access for all citizens.

Many feminist theorists argue for an understanding of other modes of participation than traditional male ones (performed in public, formalised arenas) as forms of political agency (Siim and Borchorst 2010, Lister 2009, Yuval-Davis 1999, Somers 1995). When discussing citizenship as *belonging*



to a community, membership in a nation state can be seen as multi-layered: Nira Yuval-Davis (1999, 2011) contends that an individual belongs to different layers of collectivities, affecting the mode of participation in society. Ruth Lister (1997b) argues that the idea of the active citizen, present in the republican tradition, is useful when understanding citizenship not only as a status but as a practice. She emphasises that the politics of marginalised groups are often practised in arenas that are perceived as informal, and thereby challenges the traditional split between public and private arenas. Departing from the republican tradition, she says that “citizenship politics can be oppositional and disruptive” and not only to be understood as participation in areas that are traditionally seen as political (Lister 1997b:33). Hence, such belonging does not have to be limited to the nation state or what is understood as public political life. What is political cannot, in this view, be separated from social and/or economic dimensions. Activities of social reproduction such as caring for others, that often take place in arenas traditionally seen as “private”, should be taken into account in the citizenship project (Yuval-Davis 2011, Lister 1997b). This means that the public/private divide is blurred, especially in relation to social care (Daly and Lewis 2000).

The feminist critiques of classical citizenship theories give me tools to understand the possibilities to participate in public life as differentiated and citizenship as situated and depending on context. Also, they point to an understanding of politics as produced in arenas other than the traditional male ones. This is highly relevant to my analysis presented in Part II, where the social workers move between arenas that are perceived as public and as private. Studying forms of caring for others is a project with roots in a feminist tradition that I find to be highly relevant for studies of social work practice. An ethos of caring is present in social work practice, and relation-building is often central (Lauri 2016, Hasenfeld ed. 1992). In my empirical cases, such relations of care sometimes put the social workers in a position between what they understood as private and what they saw as professional. Some forms of social work were performed in arenas described as “private” or “secret”, in contrast to public arenas where the social workers could openly criticise the migration authorities and/or the organisation of their work.

### 3.1.3 Rights Beyond Citizenship?

There is a strong link between citizenship and nationality that is historically rooted. As Benedict Anderson (1991:3) remarked, nationalism is “the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” and is seldom questioned in public life. The idea of a delimited territory belonging to a specific people is central to ideas of citizenship and to the views of foreigners as more or less welcome in this territory (see for example Sassen 1999). As discussed above, this means that access to full citizenship rights is often differentiated in various ways, for example due to racialisation of certain migrant groups. However, in regard to access to rights, some authors see an erosion of the sovereignty of the nation state. Migrants with weak legal status in the nation state might be included in some local and transnational spaces such as healthcare institutions or the labour market (Weiss 2005, Faist 2001). Some authors suggest a post-national membership (e.g. EU citizenship) or cosmopolitan citizenship based on universal personhood (Soysal 1994, Appiah 2006). In this context it has been argued that the line between citizens and non-citizens has been blurred due to international human rights discourses putting nation states under pressure to extend access to rights (Soysal 1994). It has however been argued that many migrants are deprived of human rights, as such rights in the end need to be guaranteed by a state<sup>10</sup> (Sigvardsdotter 2012, Noll 2010, Khosravi 2006). This means that the nation state still has an important role when it comes to protecting existing rights. National borders that are blurred or lose significance for some (e.g. professionals travelling across the world, holders of a Swedish passport<sup>11</sup>), are very real for others (e.g. asylum seekers and poor labour migrants). This not least concerns the social rights protected by the welfare states. In a study on EU social policy, Peo Hansen (2012) argues that migrants’ social rights have been a blind spot in the debates on EU migration, in which (circular) labour migration and border

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<sup>10</sup> In a much-quoted formulation Hannah Arendt (1951) equals citizenship with the right to have rights.

<sup>11</sup> Having a Swedish passport means few demands on travelling with a visa and enables the holder to travel in a fairly unproblematic way. However, border control strikes in differentiated and racialised ways, and someone who holds a Swedish passport may be subject to extensive controls if defined as not belonging (Khosravi 2010).

controls have been dominating themes. As Bridget Anderson (2013:179) puts it:

Migrants are caught between life and work in liberal democracies as imagined and rhetorically portrayed—free labour, justly rewarded—and the harsh realities of low-waged labour in those same liberal democracies—the only realistic option.

The idea of the active citizen as a working citizen and social rights linked to performance in the labour market is therefore highly visible in relation to migration.

As we have seen, scholars question the link between state and nation and argue that we need to think beyond the nation states when we consider citizenship and try to imagine other forms of belonging (Stevens 2010, Isin 2012). Others question the importance of the citizenship concept altogether and argue that today's challenges posed by migration need to be described using another language (Ataç et al. 2016, Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). In this view, the exclusionary tendencies of citizenship towards migrants (among others) make other vocabularies more suitable. The critiques of the link between state and nation, and between nation state and citizenship, are relevant to my analysis; I do not see the nation state as pre-given but as constructed throughout history. Still, the nation state and its effects on access to rights are central to my both cases. In relation to the discussion on citizenship as a concept, Anne McNevin (2011:101) suggests a "third way". She argues that contestations of citizenship both generate new interpretations and exceed the concept of citizenship. Inspired by Butler (2008), she identifies a tension between expanding existing normative concepts on the one hand and calling for alternative vocabularies on the other. In a similar manner, I find the citizenship language relevant when studying social work practices that are marked by the present citizenship regime. This means that I do not see citizenship as pre-given or something that will always exist, but that I find citizenship theory to be suitable for my analysis of social work practices situated in the framework of the Swedish welfare state.

### 3.1.4 Undocumented Migrants: Political Subjectivity and Partial Citizenship

In recent years many scholars have been critically engaging with irregular migration, as a way to study potential change but also the borders and boundaries of citizenship (Walters 2008, Squire 2009, de Genova 2005). On the one hand, some authors argue that undocumented migrants' claiming of rights calls into question present modes of belonging and, on the other hand, new forms of inclusion into citizenship in particular are described as partial.

When studying efforts to challenge borders, irregular migration has been seen as a potential to develop citizenship theory, going beyond understandings of what it means to be a citizen (Isin 2009, Nyers 2008, McNevin 2006, 2011, Balibar 2004). Some authors argue that undocumented migrants' struggles call into question our understanding of the legal and the political subject (Djampour and Söderman 2016, Keshavarz 2016, Nyers and Rygiel 2012, de Genova 2010a, Gunneflo and Selberg 2010). For example, de Genova (2009:250) draws parallels between marching undocumented migrants and the American civil rights movement, in that both manifested a "physical manifestation of the utter absence of citizenship". Various similar argumentations are made, often with reference to Jacques Rancière (2010/2001) and Hannah Arendt (1968/1951). In such argumentations the undocumented migrant puts state-centred thinking into question, and thereby appears as a political actor (Lundberg and Spång 2016, Krause 2008). This understanding of the undocumented migrants' struggles has inspired a broad theoretical debate where politics is understood as a way to produce a different subject, rather than as a way to possess power (Rancière 2010/2001). For example, in an article comparing the undocumented migrants' movement in the US with the queer movement, de Genova (2010b) draws on Rancière's understanding of politics as the radical disruption of an order. He argues that the statement "*we're here, we're illegal, get used to it!*"<sup>12</sup> unsettles the order and that the migrants claiming their belonging may not be reduced to any one previously existing identity (de Genova 2010b:109).

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<sup>12</sup> This slogan is analogous to the slogan "we're here, we're queer, get used to it" (de Genova 2010b:101).

At the same time, various writers studying irregular migration point to the presence of the nation state border in the everyday life of undocumented migrants (Sigvardsdotter 2012, Holgersson 2011, Nyers 2008, de Genova 2005, Balibar 2004). The nation state borders have been described as “dispersed everywhere” and at the centre of the public sphere (Balibar 2004:1). Thus a citizen can be defined by “exemption from expulsion”: citizenship is defined by its borders (Anderson 2013:129, Balibar 2004). Linda Bosniak (2006) describes external exclusion and universalist aspirations as two dimensions of citizenship impossible to split. In an analysis of US citizenship, Bosniak shows how non-citizens are included through universal and nondiscriminatory ideals, but at the same time excluded from nation state membership. She argues that aliens can aspire only to *partial citizenship*. As undocumented migrants have been more visible in a Scandinavian context too, various empirical studies have addressed the issue in relation to the Swedish welfare state (Nielsen 2016, Lundberg and Söderman 2015, Björngren Cuadra 2014, Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012, Sigvardsdotter 2012, Holgersson 2011, Sager 2011, Khosravi 2010). Following feminist critiques of citizenship, Maja Sager (2011) suggests that in a Swedish context undocumented migrants’ participation within civil society may be seen as forms of active citizenship. Sager develops the notion of “clandestine citizenship” as a conceptual tool to understand the temporary inclusion of undocumented migrants both within local communities and in, for example, the healthcare system. She also notes that nation state borders mark the everyday life of undocumented migrants. In her view, clandestinity is therefore marked by an “included exclusion” (ibid. 232). Such a partial inclusion through the welfare state is also described in a Norwegian context: Marry-Anne Karlsen (2015) describes what she calls a “precarious inclusion” of undocumented migrants. She argues that undocumented migrants are not necessarily excluded from the welfare state; however, the inclusion is arbitrary and focused on bodily survival.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the concept aims at illustrating “how sovereignty as a practice in everyday situations can involve simultaneous and contradictory processes of inclusion and exclusion” (ibid. 10). In these

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<sup>13</sup> Also Carin Björngren Cuadra (2014) argues in a Swedish context that the present moral economy gives room for supporting undocumented migrants in situations of emergency, excluding them from other welfare services.

views, the mechanisms of the deportation regime (discussed in Chapter 2) are understood as limiting the extent of inclusion.

## 3.2 Enacting Citizenship

In this section, I will present the approach that has come to be my main theoretical influence: Isin's (2008, 2009, 2012) work on citizenship as *enacted*. In this project, he argues for "a dynamic understanding of citizenship that is performative" (Isin 2012:109). Isin's theorisations are centred around citizenship, but at the same time challenging the naturalisation of the concept. This means to investigate citizenship as enacted through struggles for rights, but also "to recognize that citizenship is in flux" (Isin 2009:383). In Isin's work, citizenship is understood in relation to historical and social contexts and as the result of struggles and conflicts at different levels and by different social groups.

In section 3.2.1 below, I begin with Isin's genealogical approach to citizenship, where he develops the strategies and technologies of *being* and *becoming* political: how different social groups constitute themselves as citizens. After this, I present one of Isin's most influential concepts, *acts of citizenship*. In Isin's work, *acts* are contrasted to *actions*; this is a distinction that has been useful in my analysis and that I develop in section 3.2.2. In section 3.2.3, I discuss the relation between *responsibility* and *answerability*; the following of laws in contrast to answering to justice. Finally, in section 3.2.4, I present some of the studies using Isin's terms and place my own approach in relation to these studies.

### 3.2.1 Citizenship as Being Political and Being of the City

The virtuous image of the Greek citizen exercising his rights and obligations in the agora, the austere image of the Roman citizen conducting himself in the forum, and the stirring image of medieval citizens receiving their charter in front of the guildhall have such a hold on the Western imagination of being political that they blur the boundaries between history and present. Yet, behind such seemingly timeless images, there lie intense struggles,

conflicts, and violence to wrest the right to becoming political from dominant groups, which have never surrendered it without struggle. (Isin 2002:1-2)

Throughout history, citizenship has been ascribed by dominant groups as to who constitute strangers, outsiders and aliens (lacking properties essential for citizenship). In a genealogy of citizenship, Isin (2002) sees this exclusion of “others” as central to this citizenship formation. According to Isin, “citizenship is that particular point of view of the dominant, which constitutes itself as a universal point of view” (ibid. 275). This means that citizenship is not continuous but constructed as such by groups constituting themselves as inheritors of citizenship. Isin suggests investigating citizenship as alterity: citizens do not exist in themselves, but in relation to others. Ways of being a citizen are constituted through group formation (e.g. forming guilds or professions) and are to be sought in the particular rather than derived from the universal. Isin (2002:283) suggests that citizenship can be seen as:

...an unstable and invented tradition through which certain groups have established their dominance and constituted themselves as citizens of a domain that valued their existence and devalued that of those who were constituted as strangers and outsiders.

Isin sees citizenship as a platform for *being political*, an arena where citizens constitute themselves as political agents. Being political means constituting oneself “simultaneously with and against others as an agent capable of judgement about what is just and unjust” (Isin 2002:x). The strategies and technologies<sup>14</sup> used may be solidaristic: toward affiliation and recognition. They may also be antagonistic or alienating: toward exclusion or misrecognition. Isin makes a distinction between being political, which consists in participating in the creation of citizenship as a naturalisation of dominant virtues, and *becoming political*: questioning the grounds behind this order. When citizenship practices are challenged, and their

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<sup>14</sup> Isin (2002:24) understands strategies as “intentional but nonsubjective orientations” and technologies as “mechanisms and instruments of the conduct of conduct”.

arbitrariness<sup>15</sup> is exposed, new groups of non-citizens (such as slaves, women, craftsmen, workers or migrants) constitute themselves as becoming political. The moments of becoming political were neither revolutionary nor continuous; rather, “moments of becoming political were polyvalent, multiple, minor, and tactical engagements with strategies and technologies of citizenship” (ibid. 282). As I will develop further below, this idea of constant contestations of citizenship and new groups becoming political, although not in direct or continuous ways, is important throughout my analysis.

Isin underlines that in the historical formation of citizenship ideals the unit of the city has been central:

The city is a crucial condition of citizenship in the sense that being a citizen is inextricably associated with being *of* the city. Throughout the centuries struggles over citizenship have always taken place “over” the city. (Isin 2002: 283)

The occidental ideas of citizenship were constructed with the invention of civilised peoples with cities in contrast to barbarian people without cities (in a process of othering). Contesting ideas of the city as unitary, Isin (2002:1) describes it as a “difference machine”: through the space of the city, social groups can fix their content, and space is never a passive background but constitutive of social relationships. Therefore, Isin understands the city not as predefined nor as a container, but as “the battleground *through which* groups define their identities, stake their claims, wage their battles, and articulate citizenship rights and obligations” (ibid. 50).<sup>16</sup> The emphasis on the city as a battleground for citizenship has been central for various authors; in section 3.3.2 I will present some of them and the way I have made use of these ideas.

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<sup>15</sup> In this context, Isin (2002:276) suggests that “all domination is arbitrary and its success depends on its ability to conceal its arbitrariness”.

<sup>16</sup> Isin argues that groups are multiple, fluid and overlapping; social groups exist only in relation to each other.



### 3.2.2 Acts of Citizenship

Exploring the disruptive movements when new understandings of citizenship are created, Isin, together with Greg Nielsen, has presented the construct *acts of citizenship* (Isin and Nielsen 2008). Isin sees this theorisation as in line with his earlier investigations of genealogies of citizenship as forms of being political:

It is important to investigate these forms and modes of being political, and acts enable us to investigate the transformation of these ways: how do subjects become actors by finding ways into or out of them? (Isin 2008:38)

Isin distinguishes between actions, that help constituting the present order, and disruptive acts, that contest this order. He defines acts of citizenship as follows (Isin 2008:39):

...those acts that transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and modes (citizens, strangers, outsiders, aliens) of being political by bringing into being new actors as activist citizens (claimants of rights and responsibilities) through creating or transforming sites and scales of struggle.

Acts of citizenship are hence “those acts that produce citizens and their others” (Isin 2008:37). The often-studied subject of the active citizen, following already-given scripts for political life (like voting or participating in civil society organisations), is in Isin's vocabulary distinct from the new actors who are brought into being: activist citizens claiming rights that are not (yet) given. The acts give birth to political subjectivity<sup>17</sup> and they fail to follow conventions. The claiming of rights is central: an act of citizenship “exercises either a right that does not exist or a right that exists but which is enacted by a political subject who does not exist in the eyes of the law” (Isin 2012:13). *Acts* can be distinguished from *action* (that Isin sees as institutionalised and routinised) in that acts:

...‘create a scene, which means both performance and disturbance. Creating a scene means to call into question the script itself. (Isin 2009:379)

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<sup>17</sup> This subject does not exist prior to the act, but is created through the act (Isin 2012:128).

The acts therefore have a creative dimension; something new is born.<sup>18</sup> This is what Isin calls a *rupture*. Drawing on Butler (2004), Isin (2012) describes ruptures as resignification rather than iteration. For Butler, a rupture is:

...the moment in which a subject—a person, a collective—asserts a right or entitlement to a livable life when no such prior authorization exists, when no clearly enabling convention is in place. (Butler 2004:224, cited in Isin 2012:125)

Isin (2012:126) describes the rupture as ambiguous: “it gains meaning only when demonstrated or illustrated”. In his view, what distinguishes a rupture from iteration is the *event* that the act produces. In order to understand an event, it is important to look more closely at the concepts of *site*, *scale* and *duration*. The *site* of an event is temporal and temporary; for example, Tottenham is a place but Tottenham Riots is a site. It has a “strategic value for the struggle for rights that is the basis of enacting citizenship” (ibid. 133).<sup>19</sup> *Scale* instead investigates the reach and scope of acts, and can often be understood together with the site. Isin (2012:134) underlines that scales are not nested or hierarchical, but “fluid and dynamic elements formed through contests and struggles”. Scale is therefore to be empirically investigated, rather than deployed as a “container” of a fixed category such as state, city, sexuality or ethnicity (ibid.). Isin (2009:377) explains that sites and scales are overlapping and connected:

A legal court, for example, can become a site of struggles over certain rights. But it may also activate a scale by virtue of its jurisdiction, as its scope of applicability becomes the object of struggle.

*Duration* is not only the time it takes for an event to happen; events may be interpreted as acts of citizenship after they have taken place. Isin describes a scene during the London riots in 2011, where a woman yells at a group of

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<sup>18</sup> Here, Isin draws on Hannah Arendt’s theory of action as beginning something new; however, he sees this as a capacity that is historically developed rather than linking it to natality (Isin 2008:27, 2012:113).

<sup>19</sup> The site may be many things; for example, Paola Giota Maciotti (2014) sees language as a site for citizenship, where citizenship is enacted through dialogical acts by non-native speakers.

youths that they should riot for a cause rather than destroying the businesses of ordinary people. Even though she is ignored in the moment, her act is recorded by a journalist and spread afterwards, becoming “an act with performative force” (Isin 2012:134). Such acts cannot be determined in advance, and must be investigated empirically. This can also be understood in relation to intentionality and purposiveness; often it is not possible to calculate the result of an act in advance, and this is central to the understanding of an event.

### 3.2.3 Answerability

Inherent in an act of citizenship is that it does not iterate or follow scripts. Following established rules and laws, as the active citizen does, is described by Isin (2008) as proceeding from *responsibility*. An act of citizenship, on the other hand, requires that one instead answers to justice, against injustice. Isin wants to capture this using the term *answerability*. According to Isin (2008:39):

...for acts of citizenship to be acts at all they must call the law into question and, sometimes, break it. Similarly, for acts of citizenship to be acts at all they must call established forms of responsabilization into question and, sometimes, be irresponsible. Those activist citizens that acts produce are not *a priori* beings recognized in law, but by enacting themselves through acts they affect the law that recognizes them.<sup>20</sup>

Isin exemplifies answerability with various acts. For example, the objection to military service in Turkey, a country where conscientious objection is prohibited: breaking the law and drawing on other logics than the rights established by citizenship, such an act is made out of answerability. Another example is the death of Rachel Corrie, an American student who died in Gaza when participating in the International Solidarity Movement. Corrie’s name was later used in the Gaza Flotilla that tried to deliver humanitarian aid to Palestine. According to Isin (2012:19):

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<sup>20</sup> This is, according to Isin, connected to the distinction between “justice as incalculable and law as calculating aspects of order” made by Derrida (2002).

Rachel's subjectivity is brought into history in solidarity with those whom she did not consider deprived but subjected to injustice. Rachel's act traversing frontiers exceeds the ethos by which she is meant to live, a narrative scripted by national citizenship or nationality. Her act becomes a rupture that carries that ethos to the *Rachel Corrie*.

This interpretation opens up for understandings of solidary acts, something that I further develop in section 3.3. Crucial here seems to be Corrie's understanding of injustice. Also, she follows another logic than her life conditions suggested.

Even if an act always has a motive or a purpose, the reason for the act is not what makes it an act of citizenship. According to Isin (2008:39):

Acts of citizenship do not need to originate in the name of anything though we as interpreters will always interpret how acts of citizenship orient themselves towards justice.

This means that how the act is interpreted is more important than the original intentions of the act. As noted above, the subject is not seen as preceding the act – but produced *through* the act. Isin notes, following Bakhtin, that “an act embodies both individual consciousness and cultural consciousness, but the decisions enacted by an act are beyond the bounds of individual consciousness” (ibid. 30). According to Isin (2012:5), our engagement with others “often implicates us in tension or conflict with laws and norms that we uphold”. Through acts based on answerability, the understanding of what is our responsibility may change, as people start to act in new ways. When understanding the social workers' support practices, I find this view helpful. The social workers' accounts of their support are often contradictory and follow different, and sometimes conflicting, logics. What does unite them, however, is a perceived responsibility beyond the letter of the law. Therefore, the tension between responsibility and answerability has become useful to my analysis.

### 3.2.4 Analysing Acts of Citizenship

Isin's theories have been used in many different contexts, and in this section I present some of them and relate them to what I have found useful in my analysis. In my analysis, I emphasise acts at an everyday level rather than studying the spectacular. Further, I emphasise the importance of discussing the exclusionary tendencies of citizenship along with the inclusionary.

Undocumented migrants are often used as an example when studying acts of citizenship. Anne McNevin (2006) uses Isin's concepts of being and becoming political when analysing the presence of the Sans-Papiers movement in France. She argues that this presence forms new spaces where "a new common sense is being shaped about who belongs and who does not, about the shape and limits of community, about the legitimacy of claims made with reference to new types of borders" (ibid. 147). Also Isin (2009:380) takes the Sans-Papiers movement's claim to stay in France as an example of an act of citizenship that stages questions concerning "the boundaries between exclusion and inclusion, gaps between intentions and consequences, and tensions between legality and illegality". Drawing on Isin's theorisations of acts of citizenship, Federico Olivieri (2012:796) describes migrants mobilising, such as the organising of A Day Without Migrants, in Italy as contributing to the production of a "new global citizenship from below". The different mobilisations in the examples above are mostly described as staging questions rather than creating new, enduring forms of citizenship.

When analysing an act of citizenship, some authors draw close to Isin's criteria for an act (e.g. Olivieri 2012, Larkins 2014). To look at scenes, sites and subjects is one way to identify events that the acts produce. Many exemplifications of acts of citizenship are remarkable (however diverse) events, such as Roma demonstrations in the streets of Rome (Aradau et al. 2013), undocumented migrants marching in Ottawa (Nyers 2008), cyber-attacks in Iran (Isin 2012), or flash mobs in the streets of Montreal (Saunders 2008). Other examples are less striking, or even unintentional, such as sending a postcard joking about the totalitarian government in Czechoslovakia (Morrison 2008), gazing back at security guards at checkpoints in the occupied Palestinian territories (Braverman 2008), contesting language regimes and developing non-standard language

practices (Ní Mhurchú 2016, Horner 2015, Maciotti 2014) or disturbing the established rules at a school (Larkins 2014). In such situations it is sometimes underlined that the acts are more ordinary, acting “as if” something was in place that actually is not. For example, Helena Holgersson (2011:52, *my translation*) talks about “everyday acts of citizenship”, describing the different activities of undocumented migrants navigating in the city of Gothenburg without directly creating a scene. Holgersson exemplifies this with going to the library, decorating one’s apartment or learning Swedish, and she argues that such activities in the prolongation may have significance for how undocumented migrants are described and handled politically:

Everyday acts of citizenship are not characterized by being performed in order to criticize Swedish asylum politics, but by the informants – consciously or unconsciously – acting as if they had a future in Sweden. (Holgersson 2011:261)

This everyday level has also been central to my analysis; I have chosen not to focus on spectacular acts but instead on what happens in policymaking and social work practice at an everyday level. This means that I do not study traditional forms of activism (such as social movements) but practices in a social work context; an area that is less explored.

In many cases, analyses of citizenship acts seem hopeful; acts of citizenship are understood as challenging oppressive practices. But there are also critical voices arguing that we risk neglecting the restrictive tendencies of citizenship and the historicity of citizenship when focusing on occasional events (e.g. McNevin 2011). Sandro Mezzadra (2015:14-15) reflects:

...it seems to me that in the work done in recent years by Isin citizenship tends to appear as cleansed of the burden of its historical past. The very ‘ambiguity’ of citizenship, which Isin has so effectively pointed out in the past, seems to vanish, and citizenship itself emerges as an unequivocally ‘good’ concept.

Idealising acts of citizenship is indeed a risk, but I would argue that there are ways of getting around this. When presenting Isin’s text, I have tended to read the later work of Isin as based on the earlier. In my reading, an act

of citizenship does not necessarily bring about a “good” situation. As Isin (2009:376) puts it: “citizenship has gone through significant changes but still remains an institution of domination and empowerment”. The process of constituting citizens often seems complex and contradictory and cannot be isolated from its historical and social context. Another critique of this line of thought is that today’s development of EU migration policies could be read as a failure of migrants’ acts (compare Mezzadra 2015), as no structural change has come about, and the borders of citizenship are not formally expanded. Here, other concepts beyond the vocabulary of citizenship could be of use (Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017, Ataç et al. 2015, Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013, McNevin 2011). But it could also be understood as a process in flux – a struggle that has not been finished once and for all. This is a view that has inspired both my sub-studies. In the cases that I study, where Swedish welfare workers are centred, citizenship is still of crucial importance. The welfare workers have a position of guarding the boundaries of the welfare state that both generate inequalities and create tensions in regard to political acting. This is addressed in the next section.

### 3.3 Acts Claiming Obligations

Undocumented migrants have challenged the exclusion from citizenship and made claims on rights and, as presented above, this has sometimes been interpreted in terms of acts of citizenship. The focus of this study is, however, different. When studying social work in support of undocumented migrants, performed by welfare workers and policymakers employed within a welfare state, a shift of perspective is made from focusing on undocumented migrants’ rights claims to a focus on “others’ rights as our obligations” (Isin et al. 2008:7). In the case of social work with undocumented migrants, there sometimes seems to be room for different understandings of who has citizenship rights. Such understandings can, for example, be negotiated at a policy level, within the discretionary space of welfare workers, or within the civil society (Bhimji 2014, McNevin 2012, Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012). However, this space is often loaded with inequalities and arbitrary assessments that can make it difficult to describe social work in terms of “justice”. Social workers are in a position of

distinguishing between individuals that they perceive as “deserving” and “undeserving”, and they thereby take part in the labelling and categorisations of people made by social workers both historically and today (Kamali 2015, Eliassi 2013, Hertzberg 2003, Lewis 2000). The social workers are in this sense guarding the boundaries of the welfare state through giving or denying access to social rights (or giving “substance” to citizenship). Such processes can be understood in the light of (racialised) labelling of migrants and the differentiation of rights discussed in section 3.1 (see also Anderson 2013). In this section I discuss tensions appearing when studying social support to undocumented migrants using Isin’s theories. I begin by addressing the inequalities inherent in the relationship between citizen and non-citizen, as this is an important dimension to bear in mind when studying support. I then present authors within critical migration and citizenship studies who have analysed support to undocumented migrants in terms of presence at the level of the city, a framework that I have found to be useful in Part I when studying the guidelines on social assistance in Malmö. Finally, I discuss support given by welfare workers directly meeting undocumented migrants, a discussion that has been useful in Part II when studying the support to unaccompanied minors by individual social workers.

### **3.3.1 The Dilemmas of Helping and Solidarity**

While the arguments for actors in civil society taking action are about challenging the state and its institutions – in differing degrees, from anarchist renouncements of the state to moderate calls for reformed practice of the Alien Act – the everyday practices of these challenges might have more blurred boundaries in relation to the state. This can be seen in the example where we/they help to make the policies of the state understandable, but, referring back to the other practices of negotiating access to welfare rights, we/they also ‘help’ the state to make the effects of the policies less explicitly violent. (Sager 2011:222)

In her work on undocumented migrants in a Swedish context, Sager (2011) points at the sometimes blurred relation between activist practices challenging the state and serving as a form of “bridge” between undocumented migrants and the welfare state. Activists’ support to



undocumented migrants to some extent upholds the image of a generous Swedish welfare state, also in situations when undocumented migrants are directly excluded, especially as it may be difficult for the migrant to recognise the difference between different actors within the welfare state and the civil society. This means that acts of support may create changes at some levels but contribute to the conserving of present categorisations at the same time (Sager 2016). Debates on categorisations and “deservingness” are also central to social work research and will be further developed in relation to this tradition in the introductions to Parts I and II (Chapters 5 and 8).

In critical studies on migration, the support for undocumented migrants is often seen as having many problematic dimensions, one reason being that it contains a dimension of smoothening out, or even conserving, injustices (reproducing the *status quo*). For example, short-term goals of stopping a deportation or granting someone asylum may include strategies that do not challenge the present deportation regime or ideas of “bogus” asylum seekers, and therefore add to the preservation of such views (Sager 2016, Squire 2009). Many of the support activities for undocumented migrants, while being important for the individual, do not question sovereignty and/or nationalism (Anderson, Sharma and Wright 2009). For example, Nina Martin (2010:127) argues in an article on migrant civil society organisations in Chicago that these organisations “are integral to the functioning of the informal economy”, as they assist the workers with needs related to social reproduction. The acts of support are often constrained, for example by harsh immigration policies and/or nationalist public discourses. In an analysis of migrants’ advocates’ discourses, Maria Lorena Cook (2010) shows the difficulty of claiming universal human rights within a national paradigm. She argues that advocates need to find arguments that both resonate with human rights and that can affect present public opinion. This means that advocacy groups cannot always make claims they stand behind altogether; this is a recurrent discussion within the asylum rights movement.

The act of helping indicates an inequality in the relation. Irregular migration adds to the dimension of inequality of the relation between helper/helped, as it is structured by post-colonial relations and deportation regimes through the distinction between citizen and non-citizen (compare

de Genova 2002, 2010a). Within the field of critical migration studies, the role of support to undocumented migrants has during recent years been analysed in relation to humanitarian reason (e.g. Squire 2015, Anderson et al. 2009, Eastmond and Ascher 2011). Humanitarian aid can (just as social work) be described as “compassionate action”, aiming at protecting against or alleviating suffering “on the basis of an appreciation of the common humanity of all people” (Squire 2015:34). As a universalist ethic, humanitarianism has the idea of a common humanity and has been implemented in international law. A growing body of literature, however, points at how humanitarianism serves as a depoliticising factor (Squire 2015, Fassin 2012, Malkki 1996). Some authors describe how an image of migrants as victims or as suffering is replacing the image of the rights-bearing refugee (Ticktin 2011). Didier Fassin (2007:500) describes humanitarian action as a “politics of life”: there is a radical inequality underlying humanitarian aid in that humanitarian organisations can decide which lives should be saved and which lives could be risked. In a study on practices ranging from French social policies to war interventions in Iraq, Fassin (2015:1) uses the term “humanitarian government”, arguing that “moral sentiments have become an essential force in contemporary politics”. According to Fassin, compassion presupposes a relation of inequality. This relation has been rearticulated in public discourse: “inequality is replaced by exclusion, domination is transformed into misfortune, injustice is articulated as suffering, violence is expressed in terms of trauma” (ibid.6). Hence, he argues that moral sentiments mask the language of social critique – not only in humanitarian aid projects, but also within Western societies.

The critique of helping and of humanitarian reason is highly relevant to my analysis and there are many cases where the social workers categorise among migrants and sort among lives. At the same time, the processes of categorisation may also contain aspects of contestation. In a study of humanitarian practices in the Sonoran borderzone, Squire (2015) investigates the solidary potentials of compassionate action. She criticises the emphasis on domination and seeks “to question whether humanitarianism can be understood *merely* as a tool of domination or as an ‘absolute value’” (Squire 2015:38): meaning that she wants to underline the differentiated practices of humanitarianism producing relations of inequality as well as solidarity. Drawing on Jenny Edkins (2003), she

prefers seeing humanitarianism as a historical practice rather than as an abstract principle. Squire argues:

I find Edkins' analysis helpful because it invites further exploration of tensions between different humanitarian practices or interventions. It also raises the question as to whether or not humanitarian politics can be more disruptive of relations of privilege and violence (or inequality and dominance) than analyses of humanitarian government often seem to imply. I do not seek to idealise or necessarily argue *for* a humanitarian politics (although I conceive it important to remain hopeful about the potential of compassion even whilst remaining vigilant in its practice and analysis). Instead, my aim is to develop an analysis of humanitarian activism that does not assume from the start that this is *essentially* problematic. (Squire 2015:41)

Inspired by Squire's approach, I see support to undocumented migrants as something that needs to be studied empirically. Compassionate action does in this view not automatically lead to pity, even if there is a risk that it could (see also Pinson et al. 2011, Newcomb 2007). This is not saying that I understand the practices that I study as essentially "good practice"; rather, they may have various dimensions at the same time.

Several authors have studied different forms of solidarity with undocumented migrants among citizens, trying to combine a critical approach with searching for potentials of solidary acting (Stierl 2012, Squire 2009, Nyers 2008). In a study of British asylum politics, Squire (2009) explores the possibilities to go beyond an exclusionary politics of asylum and build new solidarities. She argues that:

...exclusionary politics are not pre-given or handed down 'from above'. Technical operations are highly regulated, but they are also carried out by *people* who have the potential to become political beings through 'misplaced' claims and obligations. In this regard, the engagement of solidaristic relations of mutual contention at the level of technical operation can potentially have a disruptive effect. (Squire 2009:183)

Inspired by Isin (2008) and Rancière (1999), she argues that non-status migrants disrupt the territorial order through a "misplaced" claiming of

rights that have no equivalent in legislation. Squire points to the spaces “in between” citizenship and non-citizenship. These spaces “in between” are created through citizens and undocumented migrants acting together to resist control of migration. Squire (2009:160) argues that these “misplaced” claims are “moving from a transitory disruption to a more enduring *interruption* when met by a ‘misplaced’ claiming of obligations by those with formal citizenship status”. This means that solidary movements can be seen as playing a role when it comes to the struggle for enduring change. Squire discusses this as *acts of solidarity*:

It is in this respect that many of the social engagements of the asylum seekers that were interviewed – be it through religious organisations such as the church, through the education system or through informal working – can be interpreted as political acts of solidarity. Specifically, they can be conceived of as political acts that contest both the inscription of asylum seekers as ‘culpable’ subjects who do not have the right to complain and who are fortunate not to be physically detained, as well as the inscription of asylum seekers as ‘inexistent’ subjects who are denied speech and visibility. (Squire 2009:156)

Squire’s analysis opens up for an understanding of citizen’s acts that I find to be a fruitful entry point for my understanding of acts in support of undocumented migrants: the social workers in my study can be understood to act “on behalf” of undocumented migrants or in accordance with the idea that they have an “obligation”. The idea of citizen’s acts as a “misplaced” claiming of obligation describes how citizens sometimes respond to the presence of undocumented migrants. The creation of spaces “in between” has been a fruitful way to think about my empirical cases. In this view, citizen’s acts of support can be seen as contributing to potential shifts in the understanding of citizenship. However, as empirical examples Squire takes movements such as No Border and No One Is Illegal. These are movements outside of established structures where people of different legal status come together directly challenging the territorial order with demands to remove migration control. Such outspoken initiatives are quite distinct from the practices that I study. In the following two sections, I will therefore discuss two dimensions that are directly present in my material: support at the level of the city (mainly studied in Part I) and welfare workers supporting undocumented migrants (mainly studied in Part II).

### 3.3.2 Presence at the Level of the City

The role of social support to undocumented migrants at the level of the city has been discussed by various authors. Many of them have pointed at interconnections between the presence of undocumented migrants, informal support structures and political mobilisation. For example, Sager (2011:194) argues that:

...the struggle to gain access on an individual level is often closely related to collective levels of struggle for access. For example, an indication of the way that engagement on the level of 'individual needs' tends to spill over into other forms of politics can be seen in the way representatives for the underground clinics have become important voices in asylum rights debate.

Reactions to undocumented migrants' rights claims could in this view be seen as one aspect among others that contributes to political mobilisation and potential change (as in the case of the Swedish law on healthcare to undocumented migrants). Drawing on the example of an extension of voting rights to undocumented migrants in Cambridge, John Saunders (2008:294) argues that "these attempts can also be seen as a way of opening up substantive notions of citizenship, drawing connections between the places where immigrants live and work and the broader geographic context of their lives". Even if limited in scope, Saunders argues that the inclusion must be understood in relation to other struggles of undocumented migrants:

Legally, efforts to franchise may seem in some respects to be only symbolic, but this is the case only if they are considered separately from the struggles in which they emerge. Substantively, they can be seen as a desire to dissolve categories of citizenship, and to place it within the realm of the material, the everyday spaces in which included and excluded live. (Ibid. 294)

In a similar way, Nyers (2008) points at sanctuary cities, where citizens describe themselves as allies to the causes of undocumented migrants (compare Lundberg and Strange 2016). One idea of sanctuary cities is to develop a citizenship at the level of the city, where local policies include undocumented migrants. According to Nyers (2008:172):

The struggle here is to envision emerging forms of international solidarity that advocate not only global freedom of movement and the right to cross borders, but also the right to stay where one already lives.

Such ideas are building on the *presence* of undocumented migrants as a social fact, rather than a dispute over legal status. Fazila Bhimji (2014) has studied undocumented migrants' strategies for urban citizenship in Los Angeles, for example negotiating their possibilities to drive without proper documents. Obtaining a driver's licence was, to many of the undocumented migrants whom she interviewed, signifying citizenship at a sub-national level. She argues that policies differ locally and that substantive citizenship is exercised in the city:

...citizenship for undocumented immigrants needs to be understood in sub-national terms because it is in cities within cities that policies and ordinances are in flux since it affects the daily lives of the people. (Bhimji 2014:29)

Bhimji argues that the everyday activities and *presence* of undocumented migrants create forms of urban citizenship:

...urban citizenship for undocumented immigrants cannot be reduced to a legal status. Rather it needs to be understood as a dynamic process, achieved by long-term residence in the city and managed; through excessive performance of citizenry, through contestations of formal legislation and through alterations of the public/domestic sphere when barred from inclusion. It must be acknowledged that non-citizens interact with the legal machinery of the city. (Ibid. 31)

Also McNevin (2012:166) studies what she identifies as two dimensions of "contemporary citizenship dynamics occurring at the level of the city" in Los Angeles. One dimension concerns *public recognition* of undocumented migrants, for example City Council initiatives to create better working conditions; the other concerns *public acts* by undocumented migrants:

Through expressions of belonging to local communities as parents, workers, students and so on, a 'becoming' of the citizen takes place. When these actions are incorporated into daily routines (working, studying, parenting)

in shared institutions (businesses, schools, universities, assemblies) and backed by support from local officials, business leaders and community sectors, a cumulative momentum is generated that transforms what it means to be part of civic life. (McNevin 2012:177)

McNevin describes these struggles both as *reactions to* a marginalised condition and as *productive of* new forms of citizenship (ibid. 171). However, she notes that such struggles also may be undertaken by opting out of citizenship as a mode of resistance, and describes her cases as “acts which disrupt citizenship norms yet which are not in themselves aimed at gaining legal or conventional citizen-status” (ibid. 179). While stating an awareness of the dangers and hardships of having an insecure citizenship status, McNevin sees a possibility to explore radical and emancipatory potentials in the study of these insecure statuses. In an analysis of local responses to the presence of undocumented migrants in US cities, McNevin (2011:131) argues that “irregular migrants and other residents negotiate the utility of citizenship with and against other expressions of political belonging”. She argues that local divergences in policy responses to undocumented migrants “can serve as a laboratory for new frontiers of the political” (ibid.). In this project, she does not suggest a decline of state sovereignty, but that belonging is produced at multiple spatial scales. She suggests that “the task is to think more creatively about subtle transformations in the ‘who’, ‘what’, and ‘where’ of political belonging that emerge in unlikely sites” (ibid. 145).

The discussions above give me tools to address and discuss the inclusion of undocumented migrants at local levels, but also to discuss the ambivalences connected to this inclusion. Taking the presence of undocumented migrants as the point of departure, it is possible to connect different forms of struggle for recognition and inclusion – both in terms of (partial/urban/substantive) citizenship and beyond the language of citizenship.

### **3.3.3 Welfare Workers Traversing Frontiers?**

The citizenship practices in this study take place in the specific context of Swedish social work (that is further presented in Parts I and II) and in encounters between welfare state employees and undocumented migrants.

Peter Nyers (2008:168) argues that “social workers, school administrators, housing workers and other providers of the benefits of social citizenship become functionaries of the deportation apparatus”, even if they don’t intend to. This, as border processes get enacted whenever undocumented migrants try to access the social services. According to Nyers:

Acts of bordering are also acts of citizenship in that they are part of the process by which citizens are distinguished from others: visitors, strangers, outsiders, non-status people and the rest. Like acts of citizenship, acts of bordering can be either deliberate or unintentional. (Ibid.)

As Nyers describes, providers of social welfare can act as functionaries of the deportation apparatus or managers of migration when encountering undocumented migrants. However, in some cases undocumented migrants do get partially included, at least formally, for example in the case of Swedish welfare services such as healthcare and schooling (Nielsen 2016, Sigvardsdotter 2012).

Among welfare workers, medical personnel have sometimes been studied in relation to citizenship acts. In his work on *citizens without frontiers*, Isin (2012) take his point of departure in professionals traversing frontiers. A central example when he develops his argument is the organisation *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF). Isin argues that, while implicated in “human right regimes and their compromises”, such movements also operate with other principles (ibid. 4). The doctors without frontiers<sup>21</sup> are *responsible* not only to national laws or to the regulations governing their profession, but *answerable* to their principles as doctors when they meet a patient who is in need of care. Isin argues that this indicates a certain autonomy, characteristic for professions and professional ethics:

In fact, our professional lives may well consist in managing the tension or even conflict between direct, intentional, regulated and recognizable duties and indirect, unintentional, open, indeterminate and yet affective obligations that implicate our lives in the lives of others. (Isin 2012:4)

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<sup>21</sup> Isin (2012:1) proposes the use of the word “frontiers” rather than “borders”, as “frontiers” also indicates front lines and is the word used in the original French name of *Médecins Sans Frontières*.



In this case, the professions are engaged in relationships with others that may create tensions with national laws and norms. The different movements of professionals without frontiers therefore “all operate within a similar logic of answerability” (ibid. 5). Inspired by such movements, Isin sees a possibility to explore acts made by *citizens without frontiers*. In his work on developing a new understanding of what it could mean to be a “citizen”, Isin (2012:11) wants to displace the subject “who *moves* across frontiers” (the figure of the migrant), and replace it with the subject who “acts (interrogates and transgresses) against frontiers” (the citizen without frontiers). Isin suggests this figure as an invitation “to think about how subjects become political by traversing frontiers” (ibid. 13). Isin’s project hence aims at envisioning new ways of thinking about the political and about the potentials of citizenship. These thoughts will not be further developed here; for my purpose it will be enough to state that Isin helps me to identify something that I have struggled with verbalising. The social workers whom I study are reacting to what they perceive as injustices at the boundaries of their formal responsibility, caused by a phenomenon (irregular migration) that is not bounded to the national territory. In their everyday work situations they encounter a group that formally “should” not exist because of the citizenship boundaries.

In an analysis of underground clinics in Germany, Heide Castañeda (2013) describes medical aid as an everyday act of citizenship. She argues that the medical professionals engaging in underground clinics “create new interactions and attempt to transform the meaning of citizenship altogether” through a wish to provide substantive citizenship and a willingness to break the law (Castañeda 2013:237). Further, she argues that:

These activist citizens are more than simply supporters or allies; their citizenship status allows for a powerful refusal of governance by those privileged enough to be included. However, alliances between citizens and noncitizens are also contradictory. Relationships of medical aid necessarily create relationships of dependency, and migrants are rarely active agents in this form of protest. (Ibid.)

Although being performed in relationships of dependency, Castañeda argues that the acts of the medical professionals open up new possibilities, and that their protesting through providing medical aid challenges their

own complicity instead of “simply representing ‘moral pleas’ for more humanitarian treatment of migrants” (ibid. 238). Just as discussed above, this means that compassionate acts may follow different logics – or, at least, may be interpreted in different ways. Similarly, in a study of education, asylum and non-status children in the UK, Halleli Pinson, Madeleine Arnot and Mano Candappa (2010) suggest that:

...when the unjust ceases to be a condition in the abstract, when the unjust can no longer be ignored because of its proximity, then a political moment is created which calls the dominant discourses around asylum into question, transforming compassion for those seeking asylum and refuge into praxis. (Pinson et al. 2010:184)

Drawing on Isin (2002) and Nussbaum (2001), they argue that the teacher’s practices become political. In this “political moment”, the teaching became more politicised, such as focusing more on human rights, or teachers getting involved in campaigns supporting asylum-seeking children. Such reactions were triggered by a higher presence of minority ethnic children in a school, making for example removals by immigration authorities (caused by dispersal policies or deportations) more visible for schooling staff and fellow students. The authors note that “witnessing the politics of immigration at first-hand redefines the relationship of teachers to the state” (ibid. 192). The commitment of the teachers was based on a “duty of care” to all students, and a safeguarding of the best interest of the child (ibid. 195). The authors argue, similar to Isin’s understanding of answerability, that this compassion is linked to justice:

...compassion becomes something more akin to what Nussbaum (2001) described as the type of compassion embodied within ‘just institutions’. This type of compassion can be achieved when Others are respected by the community as people who have not lost their own agency but who are temporary victims of circumstance, and when there is recognition that the relieving of their suffering is part of ‘our’ (or the institution’s) goals – ‘our’ own scheme of goals. (Ibid. 184)

They thereby caution against a compassion based on pity and underline the search for justice.

Ideas of moral responsibility towards undocumented migrants have also been studied among Swedish social workers (Jönsson 2014, Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012). Björngren Cuadra (2015) finds through a survey that there exists a support among some social workers in favour of giving undocumented migrants full social assistance and not only support in situations of emergency (this will be further developed in Chapter 5). Drawing on Butler (2009), Björngren Cuadra (2015:6) argues that these social workers take part in an “on-going reframing of the recognisability of irregular migrants” (compare Bhimji 2014). As guards of the national welfare state, in that they are the ones defining who should have access to social rights, Björngren Cuadra argues that the social workers may choose to include undocumented migrants in the social services and thereby recognise them as belonging. This is one opening that I explore through my empirical cases (see also Nordling 2012, 2016). The authors above open up a possibility to see social workers and other welfare workers as parts of a negotiation process, or a process of destabilising present citizenship practices, and I find this possibility interesting to explore empirically. Important to the study of such negotiations is the challenge of understanding the law as something absolute or neutral; there is always room for interpretation (Kolankiewicz 2015, Croissant 2000). As will be clear throughout the analysis, the policymakers and social workers in my study do not (mainly) argue in terms of professional autonomy. They have different educational backgrounds and different roles. What unites them is rather the encounter with undocumented migrants from a position within the Swedish welfare state.

### 3.4 Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I have introduced quite a set of concepts relating to the theoretical debates on citizenship. Some of them have been more salient to me than others, and below I will come back to these concepts in order to give an overview of the conceptual framework that has guided my analysis. Isin’s (2002, 2008, 2012) theorisations on citizenship as *enacted* provide the central conceptual framework in this thesis. One main focus throughout my analysis has been the movement between a reinforcement of present forms

of citizenship status (that I discuss in the analysis in terms of practices within the present citizenship regime) and possible (new) citizenship enactments. To address this, I have used Isin's concepts of being/becoming, actions/acts, and responsibility/answerability, all of which can be used in order to analyse potential change. The concepts focus on different dimensions, and, focusing on the movement between stability and change, I have structured them as follows:

**Table 1:**  
Citizenship as practised

	Status quo maintained	Status quo challenged
<b>Subject:</b>	BEING	BECOMING
<b>Form/practice:</b>	ACTION	ACT
<b>Logic/rationale:</b>	RESPONSIBILITY	ANSWERABILITY

The understanding of citizenship as a platform for *being political* and the constitution of citizens against other groups (potentially *becoming political*) informs my use of citizenship as a theoretical concept. This means that I see citizenship as having inherently excluding mechanisms, but at the same time not being fixed. The conceptualisations of being/becoming a citizen focus on the subjects brought into being using the language of citizenship. These subjectivities and ways of being political are brought about through citizenship *enactments*. Isin has conceptualised this with the construct *acts of citizenship*, which also has been central to my analysis. Here, the distinction between action/act as ways to exercise citizenship is highlighted, something that I describe as the form or practice brought into being. *Acts* are different from *action*, in that they create a scene: something new is born. Acts of citizenship produce activist citizens (a new subject), claiming new rights rather than following scripts. In my analysis, the distinction between *actions* and *acts* is not always straightforward, and I have focused on destabilisations rather than grand ruptures. Studying the movement between *actions* and *acts* at an empirical level has helped me to find a vocabulary that describes the shifting forms of citizenship enactment present in my material. A central dimension to acts of citizenship is the *duration* of and the *interpretation* of the act: something that was not meant to be an act can be interpreted as such afterwards and in other contexts. The acts that I study take place at rather non-spectacular levels, and my study can be placed

among other studies investigating citizenship at an *everyday level*. The focus in this study is not on what we traditionally call activism or organising (e.g. social movements or undocumented migrants organising “from below”). I argue that social workers sometimes may be enacting social rights in tension with the law, but that they also perform a bordering work as welfare state representatives. This way, social workers are in a position where possible renegotiations of the borders and boundaries of citizenship can be studied at an empirical level. Central to the act of citizenship is that the breaking of rules follows a principle that justifies the act; important to the act is that it answers to justice, beyond the letter of the law. Isin has conceptualised this as *answerability* (in contrast to *responsibility*). In the table, I have described responsibility/answerability in terms of rationales or logics. In social work practice, the line between *responsibility* on the one hand and *answerability* on the other is not always clear-cut. This is analysed in Parts I and II with an emphasis on how the policymakers and social workers themselves describe their motives, rather than seeing the logics as inherent in the actions and acts presented.

My focus on social workers giving support to undocumented migrants (as obligations rather than rights) has implications for the study in that the exclusionary mechanisms of citizenship become visible: the social workers categorise among lives and have a power to define who “deserves” their support. As will be further discussed in the analytical chapters, this is nothing new to social work research. In critical migration and citizenship studies, this is often analysed in terms of *humanitarian reason*. Recognising that the social workers do participate in the production of inequality, I still argue for a more open-ended approach to the empirical material as not being essentially (or merely) problematic. Drawing on Squire (2009), I discuss the possibilities of acting in solidarity and to see the social workers’ support to undocumented migrants as a “*misplaced*” *claiming of obligations*. Together with the struggles of undocumented migrants, such claims have a potential to open up *spaces “in between”* citizenship and non-citizenship: a space that in turn may open up for enactments of new forms of citizenship and social rights. Feminist interventions have also helped me to challenge the division between *public* and *private* expressions of citizenship, something that I will discuss in relation to the opening up of new spaces “in between”. Through their *presence* in the city, undocumented migrants can be analysed as participating in the creation of new forms of urban

citizenship. Local authorities can respond to such presence by institutionalising some forms of rights at local level. This should be understood in relation to various forms of struggles and activities, among undocumented migrants as well as citizens. In some research, professional autonomy has been studied as one way to traverse the frontiers of citizenship. In my cases, however, there is no clear professional delimitation and I have found studies on *face-to-face* meetings between different groups of welfare workers and undocumented migrants to be a fruitful way to approach my material. The theories presented expand, develop and sometimes challenge Isin's theorisations and this has inspired my analysis.



## 4. Method

My choices of cases and methods have emerged from my overall interest to study acts that potentially destabilise present citizenship practices. In two cases, presented in Parts I and II, I analyse cases where the responsibility of social workers is expanded in order to give access to certain social rights for undocumented migrants. I have specifically searched for moments where established practices within social work are to some extent challenged by irregular migration. However, I do not see my cases as straightforward exemplifications of my theoretical perspectives; rather, they raise certain questions that I find interesting to explore. The two cases together explore social work as performed in the borderlands of present citizenship practices, and in the analysis I have focused on tensions between *actions* upholding status quo and potentially disruptive *acts*. My interest in acts that challenge the present order also stems from my own participation in the asylum rights movement, something that in some cases positions me close to the participants. In the collection of empirical material, I combine mainly two methods: interviews and document studies (news media material is also used). Below, I discuss methodology followed by a presentation of my substudies and the methods used in each of them, and, finally, the analysis.

### 4.1 Methodological Reflections

This study is an attempt to denaturalise and contextualise assumptions of responsibility and belonging, rather than mapping “facts”. The cases studied are chosen because I find that they to some extent challenge what is taken for granted, both in terms of established citizenship practices and regarding different views on social work. Seeing citizenship as historically developed and negotiated rather than stable, I understand my cases as



enacting certain forms of citizenship – specific in time and space. This view on the cases studied also goes for my view on research: I see it as situated. My view on science is rooted in a feminist tradition questioning the search for a “neutral” knowledge and underlining that the researcher always has a position in relation to the field and that knowledge is partial and situated (Haraway 1988). As expressed by Donna Haraway (1988:587), “struggles over what will count as rational accounts of the world are struggles over *how* to see”. It can be argued that scientific methods are enacted in specific ways and this has implications for what a study becomes (Law and Urry 2004). The methods used, as well as the position of the researcher, should therefore not be approached as neutral “tools” to access a material (Mauthner 2016a). A way to address this is to try to be transparent about how the study has been performed. This also means that the researcher needs to be aware of their own position, a position that is sometimes difficult to verbalise and that is not fixed in relation to the “field” (Skeggs 2002). Trying to situate the study and myself as a researcher, I am not able to give a full account of such positions as they are not always available for me to identify, and since they are sometimes shifting, I find it important to acknowledge that both I and the participants in this study are parts of larger societal structures that we cannot always grasp. In accordance with Les Back (2007:12), I argue that we need to attempt to “pay attention to both the insights and the blindness in the accounts of the people who live in this uncertain world, and at the same time have the humility and the honesty to reflect on our own assumptions and prejudgments”. In the sections below, I try to do this through situating the study, discussing my own role as a researcher and activist, and discussing my ethical considerations – both in relation to larger political processes and in relation to participants.

#### **4.1.1 Situating the Study in a Swedish Context**

This study takes a critical perspective on the development towards securitisation and exclusion from social rights. It can be placed among an emerging field of critical border and migration studies (compare Squire 2015). In contrast to much welfare research, critical migration studies often deal with a population on the move and therefore actively question the framework of the nation state. As many studies take the nation state for

granted, social science has been accused of methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). To write about a kind of migration that is often called “irregular”, or about a population that can be called “undocumented migrants”, is in a way taking the perspective of a nation state: its sovereignty and its population control (de Genova 2010a, Squire 2009). As Bridget Anderson (2013:69) notes, both policy and practice work in a direction of categorisation that imposes “the government’s own order on the population of mobile people”. The setting of this study within the Swedish welfare state, as well as my focus on theories on citizenship, may therefore serve to strengthen taken-for-granted forms of belonging. At the same time, the study focuses on the occasions when this order is contested and denaturalised. The point here, as I see it, is to make clear that the study is performed in a context of a nation state and its laws and regulations – to contextualise it instead of trying to escape this context.

As I argued in Chapters 1 and 2, ideas of EU social responsibility have been challenged by the differentiation of rights in relation to migration. The Nordic model, with the Swedish welfare state as one central example, has often been presented as a model with large access to social rights and as a good example when it comes to equality (Lister 2009). Even if there have been many interventions trying to nuance this image, for example pointing at experiences of racism or exclusion of undocumented populations (Schierup et al. 2006, Sager 2011), the image of a “Nordic Nirvana” is often put forward, especially in centre-left political debates (Lister 2009:242). A study of the Swedish welfare state can therefore be expected to bring about certain associations. Despite critical perspectives, a study on Swedish welfare workers acting in support of undocumented migrants may therefore be read as glorifying (or problematic, depending on the normative standpoint). However, I want to underline that I do not see the examples studied as a story of progress. In line with a critical tradition within the field of social work studies, I rather see social work as positioned at the border of the welfare state – with the means to perform social control and make categorisations drawing on ideas of “deservingness” (Johansson 2001, Sunesson 1985). The social workers often have little space to include undocumented migrants in their work and this study contributes to addressing the questioning of how the Swedish welfare state and Swedish social work are enacted. At the same time, the social work practices that I study actually try to address dilemmas caused by the state control, and I

find it important to study the possibilities to act in ways that are less oppressive (compare Dominelli 2002).

The perceived responsibility of a “good” welfare state has served as a way to understand and analyse the clashes between an experienced responsibility for the migrants that the social workers meet *face-to-face*, and the formal work conditions of the social workers or the economic concerns at a municipal level. Studying irregular migration can in this view be understood as a way to direct the focus to the internal borders of the Swedish welfare state – how these borders are negotiated and what new exclusions are brought about. My ambition has been to critically address the practices studied and the new distinctions and categorisations that are made, at the same time as opening up for the possibility to create changes (even if minor or ambivalent). Directing my interest to what migration does to the enactments of Swedish social work and Swedish citizenship, I study “the ways in which lines are drawn through and across the peoples of the world” rather than taking these lines for granted (Back 2007:31). I find that critical migration and citizenship studies add a perspective that helps me to situate my study and to understand that the categories that I use are not fixed or “natural”. Crucial here is the critical *perspective* and a critical reflection of the categories used. Similarly, Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormick and J.T. Way (2008:627) suggest that transnationalism as a perspective “can do to the nation what gender did for sexed bodies: provide the conceptual acid that denaturalizes all their deployments, compelling us to acknowledge that the nation, like sex, is a thing contested, interrupted, and always shot through with contradiction”. In line with this, my study can be read as an effort to denaturalise and contest Swedish citizenship practices rather than reinforcing certain views of the Swedish welfare state or Swedish social work.

#### **4.1.2 Activism and Academia: a Positioning**

Like many critical theorists, I see knowledge and action not as separate but as linked together: the researcher in this view must be concerned with the consequences of knowledge for ordinary lives (Dant 2003:131). I understand my position as close to the production of knowledge of the asylum rights movement, as I have taken an active part in the discussions in

this movement throughout the years, and as my research interests are rooted in my activist experiences (compare Sager 2011). It is not uncommon that researchers studying irregular migration participate in activist practices or in other ways give support to undocumented migrants (Djampour and Söderman 2016, Keshavarz 2016, Sager 2011, Düvell et. al. 2010, Khosravi 2010, de Genova 2002). During the work with this study, I have dealt with questions of closeness and distance in relation to the “field”. This is a discussion at the heart of much feminist research (Skeggs 2002, Hill Collins 1991, Haraway 1988). My closeness to the “field” has on the one hand helped me both to contextualise and to access the practices studied (this is further developed below), but on the other it has been a challenge: how to identify what is taken for granted, and how to keep a critical position in relation to what is studied? A critical examination of this position is therefore needed. In the search for analytical distance from the “field”, I have made use of a specific theoretical and analytical lens when approaching the material, rather than taking own activist experiences as the point of departure. For example, the cases chosen are neither models of what I find to be a suggested path forward, nor practices in which I have directly participated; rather, they are examples that I find to be theoretically relevant. Still, I find that my experience of activism in various modes is of relevance when positioning myself in relation to the study as well as to the asylum rights movement.

Within the asylum rights movement, I am also positioned as a citizen with all the privileges that this formal status entails (compare Sager 2011). Asylum rights activists have very different possibilities and positions, due to different legal statuses (citizen, temporary resident, asylum seeker, undocumented), and the fact that I am born and raised in Sweden and my status is not questioned due to my background or bodily appearance gives me a privilege. I belong to a part of the asylum rights movement that does not take the nation state as the obvious point of departure in matters of inclusion but that also tries to act in support of, and together with, undocumented migrants on an everyday basis. This is in many ways an ambivalent position. Maja Sager (2015) describes the Swedish asylum rights movement as one balancing between compromises with the present order and a dream of a world without borders. The urgent needs here and now are often contradictory: the nation state may be criticised, but it also gives protection. Therefore, activist practices are sometimes accused of

reinforcing categories such as “deserving” and “undeserving”, or of making the exclusion from the welfare state appear as more humane (ibid., Sager 2011). I find the complexity of trying to *do* things differently to be intriguing. The questions posed in my study relate to similar contradictions as the ones present in the asylum rights movement: the social workers try to *act*, but most often in ways that they do not find to be ideal. Critical discussions on such compromises are present in the asylum rights movement (even if the solutions can be of a more pragmatic kind), and these discussions have informed my perspectives and understandings of the “field”. My activism has in this way helped me to find relevant perspectives and questions. However, this also means a risk of “going native” (Flick 2006:223). Seeing social workers struggling with issues of social change, it is sometimes difficult not to relate to my own struggles within the asylum rights movement. I have throughout the analysis tried to understand how the social workers describe their support and thereby position themselves, rather than seeing their acts as inherently activist/inherently based on pity. In this way, my intention has been to keep an analytical distance from the social workers.

My position in relation to my two studies can be described in numerous ways, and the positioning as an activist and as a citizen are two of them. Many other forms of positioning could be taken into account. For example, my position as a researcher at the School of Social Work in Lund interviewing social workers and policymakers, something that on the one hand situates me in a position of power and on the other makes me recognisable to the participants who have a similar educational background. Most participants were identifying as women; this is another social category we share. However, as discussed by among others Beverly Skeggs (2002:359), what positions are available to verbalise, and what does the description of these positions do with the writer’s conception of the self and the possible fixation of other’s positions? Trying to find a balance between giving an account of my relation to the “field” and avoiding such a fixation, I have chosen to discuss only the positions that I have found to be most central when performing this study. During the process of the study, I have moved between different positions and the relations to my participants have shifted. For example, in my two substudies I have had slightly different roles in relation to the field. In the study on municipal guidelines, I have taken a more formalised role in relation to the participants. The position as

an academic scholar has opened certain doors and made it accessible for me to interview politicians and policymakers. My role as an activist was in this part of the study more an initial way to formulate questions and garner general knowledge of the case. My position can in this case be seen as having borne an influence on my understanding of the topic: I have read the guidelines in relation to struggles over inclusion that are wider than the formal debates on social assistance. In the study on social work with unaccompanied minors, my position as an activist gave me access to a certain group of participants who might have been reluctant to participate in other academic studies. My closeness to the field therefore both served as an entry point and was present in my interactions with the participants. This meant that to a large extent I needed to reflect upon my own role and my preunderstandings during the interviews, but also that I accessed a specific group of social workers. My choices of material and methods will be further discussed in section 4.3 below.

### **4.1.3 Ethical Considerations**

As I discuss further in relation to the interviews in section 4.2, there is an ethics of knowing relating to the understanding of research participants as knowing subjects. Ethics is also about positioning, which I have discussed above as negotiations of closeness and distance. In this section, I will approach ethics from a more “hands-on” perspective: how to *do* the study in an ethically acceptable way? Performing this study, I have had two main ethical dilemmas in relation to this: *what events are ethically acceptable to study?* and *how to study this in a way that is ethically sensitive?* On some occasions my topic of study has sparked reactions; sometimes it has been read as idealising (something that I address above), and on other occasions the risk of “exposing” practices that should not be talked about has been put forward. When it comes to *how* the research is performed, various questions arise. Many researchers in the field of irregular migration argue for strong ethical concerns, as investigating matters of irregularity may expose practices and thereby put research participants in vulnerable or dangerous situations (van Liempt and Bilger 2012, Düvell et al. 2010, Brunovski 2010). For example, Franck Düvell et al. (2010:228-9) argue that the aim of the research on undocumented migrants “has not to be just

to produce a ‘body of knowledge’ but to address the misperceptions and misconceptions surrounding irregular migration, and to minimise the risks and maximise the benefits, firstly for the researched group and, secondly, for other stakeholders”. Studying different forms of breaking with present citizenship practices, I find it important not to write things that reveal practices in a way that make these practices more difficult to perform. For example, in the analysis in Part II I try not to specify the practices more than needed in order to understand the analysis, and I am not interested in exact descriptions of the practices and where they take place – rather I am interested in why the social workers feel that they need to act (compare Düvell et al. 2010). Also, I am interested in understanding these acts in a context: I do not see the support given to undocumented migrants as political in itself, but as performed in certain contexts that potentially give the acts new meanings. These have been central concerns when developing interview guidelines and presenting the analysis. I often avoid explicit descriptions of the social workers’ practices and instead focus on the social workers’ accounts and the logic of their acts.

It seems like the issue of irregular migration makes people react with more emotion than to other topics: migration is a politicised issue, today more than ever (Anderson et. al. 2012). The debates on migration probably will have implications for how my study is understood. The study is performed and presented in a time period when the issue of irregular migration has moved from being formulated in terms of human rights (Nielsen 2016) to a formulation of “crisis” (Dahlstedt and Neergaard 2016, Vestin 2015). Such “political games” illegalising migrants in more open ways than before may affect how the study is received (Vollmer 2011). Harsher discourses on migration could, for example, lead to there being less support for the practice of promoting migrants’ rights. May it be that my presentation of the social workers’ efforts to challenge discourses on criminalisation and securitisation of migration leads the reader to call upon stronger measures of migration control? Such questions are impossible to answer in advance, as research may be used in a variety of ways and can be presented as supporting a wide range of ideological standpoints. But even though I as a researcher cannot control how my results are used, I can present them in a way that decreases the risk of the results being used in ways that harm the practices that I study. For me, a way to deal with this has been to contextualise the studies. I use a theoretical frame and historical context and

I aim to analyse the *understanding* of the practices rather than exposing them (compare Castles 2012). Another dimension is the time perspective; when presenting this study, time has passed and the practices do not look the same any more, and are not performed by the same individuals.

The study has been approved by the Ethical Review Board at Lund University (No. 2012/333). However, no ethical approval can guarantee that the study will be performed in a way that is acceptable. As Mauthner (2016b:2) asks: “does a benchmark applicable to *all* disciplines, scholarly traditions, and research projects exist?” This means that my view on this approval is somewhat ambivalent: I do not see it as enough and I do not want to “hide” behind it. I have made sure to get informed consents from the participants, and all of them have my contact details. But I do not believe that this in itself guarantees good research ethics. As Back (2007:98) argues, “...how can this be informed when the researcher/writer cannot know how s/he is going to use the fruits of a particular participant’s involvement?” Analysing the interviews and documents means taking them out of the context where they were produced, therefore I have a responsibility that goes beyond the informed consent. Following Back, I believe that attention to the context of the interview and openness for participant involvement are better guarantees than bureaucratic procedures. Therefore, to reflect upon ethics during the interviews and throughout all stages of my thesis has been highly important regardless of the institutionalised ethical approval. I have, for example, discussed ethics with research participants (in relation to the interviews in Part II), but also with some of the participants who have shown interest in following the process, with persons within academia specially selected for the purpose and with activists and social workers. This has given me perspectives on what kind of information could be sensitive; however, there is no way to foresee all consequences.

## 4.2 Method: Interviews and Documents

In this section, I discuss the methods and different kinds of material chosen in this study. A central method in both substudies has been performing interviews; this has been a way for me to approach the views of



policymakers and social workers and to investigate how they situate themselves and produce meaning. Interviews do not happen in a vacuum; rather they are social meetings “where experiences are interpreted and meaning is produced” (Järvinen 2005:30, *my translation*). Therefore, interviews look different depending on who is asking the questions and who is being asked and, as I will argue below, the contexts of the interview matter. The interviews were performed in combination with other methods. In Part I, they were combined with a study of documents, and in both studies news media material was used, mainly as illustrative examples. In the gathering of material, I have also sometimes drawn on own activist experiences.

While I am aware of my position as a researcher who must take responsibility for the text written, I have still chosen to describe the persons that I have interviewed and in other ways gathered information from as “participants”. This was in order to underline that I see them as subjects co-producing knowledge rather than as study objects. The participation is, however, limited to the interviews and discussions on ethics in relation to the interviews, and in some cases discussions of the text and issues related to the analysis in later stages. As the researcher, I do have the power to define what I find interesting to analyse and I am the one taking the initiative (Staunæs and Søndergaard 2005). I am also the one doing the analysis, even if some of the participants have been interested in commenting and discussing it. At the same time, the participants can decide what they choose to tell me (Mulinari 2005). Les Back (2007:19) argues that:

True dialogue also means being open to the possibility that those involved will refuse to have a dialogue or the participants whose integrity researchers so strenuously preserve may subvert the tacit rules of the ethnographic game itself.

Admitting these limits, I see the participants’ accounts not as “facts” but as situated in a specific time and place, and as relational. This means that the time period when the interviews were conducted and my position in relation to the participants matter. For example, if I had conducted the interviews after the implementation of the harsher interim asylum laws and in the context of new emerging protests among social workers, the focus of the interviews probably would have been different.

### **4.2.1 Part I: Choices of Material**

In Part I, I analyse the municipal guidelines for social assistance in Malmö; the debates surrounding the implementation as well as how these guidelines may be understood in relation to established practices within the present citizenship regime. In the case of social assistance, there have been discussions on how to use the Social Services Act in relation to undocumented migrants. Studies and official reports have revealed that social workers experience ambivalences in regard to this matter and that there is sometimes a space for social workers to negotiate undocumented migrants' access to social assistance (Björngren Cuadra 2016, Jönsson 2014, Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012, Socialstyrelsen 2010). The Malmö guidelines have been noticed by other municipalities and by civil society organisations for having a more inclusive approach in relation to undocumented migrants. As the Malmö case seemed to diverge from other municipal practices, I chose to study it as an example of where undocumented migrants' access to social assistance is addressed and possibly negotiated. The local context is also explored, in order to analyse how practices are negotiated in interplay with this specific context. The time period studied is 2012–2014, when the Malmö guidelines were debated by local politicians and implemented. However, I have also chosen to include some of the later developments related to the guidelines, since these developments are of relevance when understanding consequences stretched over time. The empirical material consists of interviews with persons involved in the implementation and/or in the debates surrounding the guidelines, as well as with social workers using the guidelines in their daily practice. It also consists of policy documents and documentations of local political processes, as well as news media reporting.

In addition to interviews and documents, I have had a wide range of conversations with researchers, practitioners and activists that have given me a deeper understanding of the processes studied. As I have been active in the local asylum rights movement during the last ten years, I have followed issues concerning social support from the point of view of the asylum rights movement before beginning the research. I have also participated in arranging two seminars at Malmö University, one on the issue of social assistance and undocumented migrants (in 2012) and one on the issue of undocumented EU citizens (in 2014). Both seminars brought together

activists, civil servants, politicians and academics. In addition, I have participated in the collection of material for a documentary theatre play on civil servants and undocumented migrants in Malmö (in 2014); the three interviews with the social workers listed below were made in cooperation with Teater InterAkt, an independent theatre group in Malmö. This has given me an overview of the debates that extends the material presented below. All these different activities mean that it is not easy to mark the beginning of this study. However, when I decided that the Malmö guidelines should be the focus of this substudy, I realised that I needed to get a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation and how it came about. The material presented below is therefore the material that I have studied systematically in order to analyse the implementing of new guidelines on social assistance in Malmö (which were decided upon in November 2013).

#### **4.2.2 Part I: Combining Methods**

The *interviews* were made between 2014 and 2016. They were specifically addressing the implementation and consequences of the Malmö guidelines (which were mainly discussed and implemented in 2012–2014) and the more formal roles that the participants had in this process, and they were focusing on how the participants understood these roles. The persons interviewed were local politicians, civil servants involved in the process of the guidelines or in related processes (such as establishing shelters for undocumented battered women), social work practitioners and asylum rights activists. I contacted the participants mainly through formal channels – at their workplaces or in their official roles – and searched for variation when it came to perspectives and positions. The choice of participants was partly based on my previous knowledge of the field from arranging seminars with different actors involved in the process, but several participants were also recommended to me by other persons whom I interviewed.

Most interviews were performed at the workplaces of the participants; the setting was therefore rather formalised. However, this does not mean that I see the interviews as “neutral” or “objective”; rather, they were undertaken in a specific time and context, and based on interactions with me as a researcher. The number of interviews was decided upon along the way, as I

started to get the overview that I was searching for. During the interviews, I tried to make sure that the participants were aware of the aims of the study and that they could withdraw their participation. Most interviews (10) were recorded and transcribed, but some interviews (6) were made over the telephone taking notes during the interview, since this was requested by some of the participants (most often due to lack of time to meet me for an interview). Names were removed during the transcription, as I have chosen to study the development of the guidelines as taking place in a specific local context, rather than as tied to specific individuals. I find that names could risk creating an image of the implementation depending on specific individuals rather than context. However, many of the participants are possible to trace due to their positions within Malmö municipality. Therefore, some of the participants wanted to read the quotes used in the final text before it was published and this was granted to them. Some of the more general questions were dealt with through e-mail correspondence with some participants. See Table 2 for more detailed information on the interviews.

**Table 2:**  
Interviews Part I

<b>Groups interviewed</b>	<b>Numbers and forms of interviews</b>
<b>Local politicians</b>	3 interviews, all recorded, with representatives of the Social Democratic Party, the Moderate Party and the Left Party (2015–2016). E-mail conversation with local politician 2016-03-10.
<b>Civil servants</b>	4 interviews: 1 recorded with civil servant employed at the City Hall (2015). 3 telephone interviews with civil servant completing the guidelines, municipal legal advisor <sup>22</sup> , coordinator for work with battered women (2014). 3 e-mail conversations: municipal legal advisor (2015), lawyer at the National Board of Health and Welfare (2016), the Economy Department, Swedish Migration Agency (2016).
<b>Practitioners</b>	4 interviews with social workers, all recorded: 3 social workers working with social assistance in Malmö <sup>23</sup> (2014), 1 counsellor formerly working at the refugee healthcare centre in Malmö (2016). 1 interview with a manager working in the area of social assistance in Malmö, recorded (2016). 1 e-mail conversation with manager in the area of social assistance (2016).
<b>Asylum rights activists</b>	1 interview, with activist participating in the asylum rights movement before, during and after the implementation of the guidelines (2015), recorded. 3 telephone conversations with activists in Gothenburg, Norrköping and Umeå (2015-2016).

<sup>22</sup> Lawyer employed by the municipality, participating in developing the guidelines and giving advice to the social services.

<sup>23</sup> These 3 interviews were made together with Cecilia Nkolina, Teater InterAkt.

Many of the interviews were made retrospectively, and it can be assumed that discussions on the topic of social assistance for undocumented migrants that had taken place after the implementation may have influenced the views of the interview participants. As I see the interactions in the interviews as enacting certain knowledge, rather than as mapping “facts”, the time perspective is also reflected upon during the analysis. However, doing the interviews in retrospect has also given me the opportunity to get comments on events that happened after the implementation of the guidelines and how the daily work based on the guidelines has proceeded. This has also implied that I could get the participants’ views on the process as they understood it after it had happened, instead of while in the middle of it; this sometimes opened up for answers that could be more reflexive. During the time of the interviews, things had happened that can be expected to affect the views of the interview participants. For example, other municipalities did not follow the example of the Malmö guidelines (as some of the participants had expected) and there was at the time of the interviews a heated debate going on in Malmö concerning whether vulnerable EU citizens residing as undocumented should be entitled to social support. This sometimes had very concrete manifestations. During autumn 2015, when I was conducting interviews at Malmö City Hall concerning the inclusive policy in Malmö towards undocumented migrants, I passed EU citizens protesting outside the entrance who demanded social support and short-term housing solutions from this same municipality. This indicates that the field is changing in complex ways and it has sometimes been difficult to grasp the events studied, but it has also supported me in the view that I should analyse issues that are “in flux”.

The *documents* were mainly gathered through contacts with civil servants involved in the work on the guidelines and through accessing the political protocols where the guidelines were addressed. Also the few existing court cases addressing social assistance for undocumented migrants have been used in order to get a broader understanding of how the Social Services Act is interpreted. One criterion for the selection of documents was that they actually discussed social support to undocumented migrants, an issue that was not addressed widely. Documents relevant to the local debates on social assistance in Malmö have also been used in order to get a broader context of the development of the guidelines. All documents were authored by officials and could be publicly accessed. In addition, I have also studied the filmed

debate on the Malmö guidelines on social assistance that took place in the Malmö City Hall in November 2013 (Kommunfullmäktige, 2013a<sup>24</sup>). In the debate, which is published on the Internet with open access, it was possible to follow the whole discussion.

Most of the documents on social assistance in Malmö used in this study have, in contrast to the interviews, been produced in direct relation to the process of implementing the guidelines. The content is therefore not affected by the time perspective in the same way, and they can help to study the process beyond the individual memories of interview participants (compare Flick 2006). At the same time documents do have purposes and intentions. Many of the documents studied proceed from political decisions and need to be studied in a context of producing meaning. The study of documents gives a limited approach to experiences and often do not reveal the processes behind what is written. Therefore, I have found it fruitful to combine the study of documents with interviews. Combining different kinds of material has given me a possibility to receive comments and information on the documents studied from persons involved in the process of creating new guidelines as well as a picture of how the documents are understood by practitioners and performed through social work. Different forms of secondary sources, such as newspaper articles and my earlier participation on the field, have also helped me to put the documents in context. News media reporting and blog posts/home pages have been used mainly as illustrative examples of the public debates during the time studied.

### **4.2.3 Part II: Interviews with Social Workers**

Social work with unaccompanied minors is another area where concrete dilemmas arise for social workers in relation to undocumented migrants. My second case is based principally on social workers working with this group, but I have also made use of news media material in order to illustrate and contextualise. The time period studied, 2010–2013 (approximately), was marked by the practice of deporting minors to other EU countries in accordance with the Dublin II Regulation and protests against this practice

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<sup>24</sup> <http://video.malmo.se/?bctid=2840605767001>

(further discussed in Chapter 8). It was also marked by increased numbers of unaccompanied minors and organisational changes of the reception. Since 2006, the work with unaccompanied minors is the only area where the social services are directly responsible for reception of asylum seekers. The social workers in Part II were to follow the decisions of the Swedish Migration Agency and this sometimes meant that the social workers came into direct contact with minors who risked being deported (compare Stretmo 2014). The social workers in this substudy actively chose to give support to these minors. Even if most of the minors whom the social workers supported were undocumented, not all of them were in this situation. Some of them had problems with the migration authorities in other ways, such as being assigned a new age or being moved to a new municipality from one day to the next. The participants were not representative of the social workers at their workplaces or within their occupations. The social workers interviewed in this part of the study were selected on the basis that they consciously had chosen to act in ways that were not expected of them. However, the social workers interviewed were acting in different contexts and from different positions; they also had different motives for their acts.

The selection of participants was based upon my own previous contacts and then as a “snowball from one case to the next”, asking the participants for new contacts (see Flick 2006:118). As supporting undocumented migrants was not always considered to be legitimate at the workplaces, I chose not to make contacts through managers or other authorities. This meant that the contact channels were more informal than in Part I, something that also made the interviews less formalised. Through this kind of selection, a majority of the participants turned out to be working at accommodation centres for unaccompanied minors. This means that the analysis in Chapter 9 is based on the accounts of this group to a larger extent than of the other occupations. The amount of interviews was partly a matter of access; the possibility of finding social workers who were prepared to participate. It was also based upon the richness of the material: after a preliminary analysis of the first eleven interviews, I decided to do three more in order to see if these would support my first analysis (which they did). When searching for potential participants, I found that my own activist background was of help, as I had contacts who could guide me to the participants. I also experienced that my position in relation to the field helped me to gain trust

among the participants with regard to the intentions of my research (something to which I have given a great deal of thought throughout the process of collecting material and writing). The selection of participants was as follows:

**Table 3:**  
Interviews Part II

Occupation	Number of interviews
Social assistants ( <i>socialsekreterare</i> )	3 recorded interviews (2012–2014)
Personnel at accommodation centre ( <i>boendestödjare</i> )	7 recorded interviews (2012–2014)
Guardians ( <i>Gode män</i> )	3 recorded interviews (2012–2013)
Development secretary ( <i>Utvecklingssekreterare</i> )	1 recorded interview (2014)

Of the 14 semi-structured interviews that have been performed, 13 were with social workers who had been in contact with undocumented migrants and who had done something more than was expected of them in relation to the migrants. One interview has also been performed with a development secretary working with the planning and structuring of the reception of undocumented minors at a municipal level; this interview was more directly focusing on the organisation of social work with unaccompanied minors.<sup>25</sup> The interviews were carried out in 2012–2014, took between 40 minutes and 1.5 hours (most interviews took more than 1 hour) and were recorded and transcribed. They took place in venues chosen by the participants. Some interviews were in the homes of the participants, some in my home or at my workplace, and other interviews were at public places such as cafés or restaurants. No interviews were carried out at the workplaces of the participants, and their colleagues or managers were not informed of the participation. This means that the context was different from the interviews in Part I, where the participants had no worries about participating in their official roles as employed by the municipality. A concern during the interviews was that the social workers should only tell me things that they felt comfortable sharing and that they should be aware of my intentions and their ability to withdraw their participation in the study. All participants

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<sup>25</sup> During this interview, some experiences of the direct work with unaccompanied minors was also discussed, but this has not been included in the study since the premise of the interview was established beforehand as focusing on information of a more formal character.



were given my contact information, but only some of them have chosen to keep in contact with me during the process of writing.

As I have elected not to focus so much on exactly *what* the social workers did, but rather on how their acts can be understood, I have not laid too much weight on the balance between the three groups of social workers. Rather, I see their accounts as telling something more general about responsibility and enactments of social rights. However, their roles are of importance when understanding the frames for acting. The interviewed participants had different occupational roles as social workers: three social assistants, seven social workers employed as personnel at accommodation centres, three guardians and one development secretary. The development secretary, who was working at a policy level, also had former experiences of working as a social assistant with unaccompanied minors. Two of the social assistants and one of the guardians also had experience of working at accommodation centres. This was not the focus of these interviews, but it added to the fact that the accounts from accommodation centres compose a larger part of the material. The relation between social worker and “service user” varied between the different types of social workers interviewed; this will be further developed in Chapter 8, but is briefly summarised also here. The *social assistants* were professionally trained social workers (*socionomer*) and their role was formally restricted to finding an unaccompanied minor a place to live and investigating the needs of the minors, as other needs were provided when the minor was at the accommodation centre for unaccompanied minors or in foster care. However, the social assistants interviewed had more contact with the minors, and they also visited the homes for unaccompanied minors. The *personnel at the accommodation centres* were closer to the everyday life of the minors and therefore often had a closer relation to the minors than the social assistants did. They had different educational background; some had studied human rights or political science, others were trained social workers and others had no specific education in the field. Many of them had worked for only a couple of years, but one had worked since the 1980s. The personnel at the homes was the group that had most formal restrictions when it came to what they were allowed to do in relation to the minors. The *guardians* had different educational backgrounds and their assignment was based on a voluntary basis (although economically compensated). All guardians interviewed were women and all of them had children of their own. They had a close relation

to the unaccompanied minors and felt a responsibility beyond the role of guardian. The position as a guardian gave possibilities to meet the minors often, but did not formally demand this kind of contact. For social assistants and personnel at the accommodation centres there was no formal possibility to continue working with a minor that had gone into “hiding” and, during the time of the interviews, the guardians participating in the study could not work with this group within the frames of their assignment.<sup>26</sup> Also, the guardians participating in this study did not want to expose the fact that they had contact with minors who had absconded to the municipality, as they did not want to reveal where the minors could be found.

For the same reasons as stated above, I did not search for participants with certain personal characteristics. However, personal experiences of migration as well as gender did come up as relevant during the interviews. Therefore I find a brief comment on this to be relevant. The social workers came from different local contexts. Among the participants there were two men (both working at accommodation centres) and twelve women. Their ages varied between approximately 25 to 65 years, although a majority was between 25 and 35. Five of the social workers were born outside of Sweden, two had parents born outside of Sweden, and one had own experiences of living in Sweden as undocumented. That some of the participants had own experiences of coming to Sweden at a young age (or had close relatives with such experiences) or of living as undocumented can be seen as blurring the line between the participants and their “clients”, something that they commented upon during the interviews. This means that the analysis to some extent takes such experiences into account.

#### **4.2.4 Part II: Conducting Interviews**

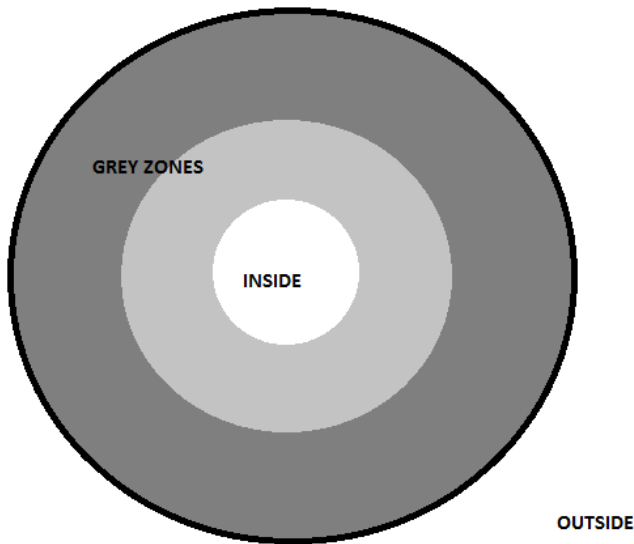
The choice of interviewing as a method for the study in Part II was partly a practical one. Many of the encounters between social workers and undocumented migrants happened spontaneously, and undocumented migrants were not a category of “clients” that was frequent in the daily

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<sup>26</sup> The possibilities for guardians to continue working for minors becoming undocumented have shifted between different municipalities.

activities of social workers employed within welfare state institutions. It would therefore be difficult to make observations and I have had to turn to the social workers' own accounts of their work. Also, as I am interested in the social workers' own accounts and stories rather than in "neutral facts", the interviewed participants are understood as co-producers of knowledge rather than as passive "informants". This means that I understand the knowledge as actively produced together with the participants during the interviews, rather than "collected" or discovered by me as a researcher. Doing interviews has also been a way to actively ask the social workers themselves of their understandings of the situation and their motives for acting. This also means that the analysis focuses on how the social workers presented their acts and how they made sense of their roles. The interviews were semi-structured, using an interview guide with fairly open questions. They were not so much focusing on a specific event, but rather on how the participants would relate their experiences of giving support to undocumented migrants and sometimes going against what was expected of them. There was a focus on the stories told by the social workers; their accounts of acts that did not "fit" with what was formally expected of them.

During the interviews, I was interested in knowing more about how the participants would describe their possibilities to support undocumented migrants, what limits the participants experienced and how they understood their role. The questions were both of an open character and informed by theory: I actively searched for accounts on work situations that did not "fit" within the ordinary work descriptions. In order to better focus on concrete work situations, I constructed a "grey zone map" (see below). This way, it became easier to talk about the different positions of the social workers in relation to what they perceived was expected of them as welfare state employees. Using a picture can make it possible to talk about a topic in new ways (compare Back 2007) and can give initiative to the person participating in the study. It can also serve as a frame when asking open questions about events.



**Figure 1:**  
"Grey zone map"

With this “map” we were together able to visualise the movement between different roles, positions and rationales when in contact with undocumented migrants or migrants risking deportation. Some things were seen as possible to do within the organisational mandate, others were made in a grey zone – and other things were understood as completely outside of what was possible to do at work. A challenge during the interviews was to ask “stupid questions”, as my insider position sometimes meant that I and the participants had preunderstandings in common (compare Weston 2004). This could refer to activist campaigns or strategies that the participants (often rightly) assumed that I already knew of and therefore only mentioned briefly. Sometimes this meant that I needed to collect such information afterwards. Another way of addressing this was by giving both the participants and myself time to reflect and sometimes come back to questions several times from different angles.

## 4.3 Analysis

The empirical material (interviews and documents) adds up with theory and activist experience to what can be seen as a form of bricolage (Denzin and Lincoln 2000) aiming at grasping the phenomena of the Malmö guidelines extending the responsibility in relation to undocumented migrants and of social workers giving support to unaccompanied minors. The choice of cases is also theoretically informed and therefore the selection can be seen as a step in the analysis. Bricolage, as developed by Joe Kincheloe and Kathleen Berry (2004), aims at studying the lived world as complex and without easy answers. Using multiple research tools (such as interviews, documents, news media reporting, participating in a theatre project, own activist experience, and arranging seminars together with activists), I have tried to be open for changes in the “field”. As I see the participants as co-producers of meaning, the interviews (as well as documents) need to be situated (as argued above, see also Mauthner 2016a); it also means that the analysis made is not seen as “fixed” or describing an “objective reality”. Both my cases take place in contexts that are changing, both in terms of the organisation of social work, patterns of migration, and political discourses regarding these matters. I have therefore chosen to present the analysis beginning with a contextualising chapter, both in Parts I and II. As the practices studied take place at an everyday level, the complexity of acting is focused on the analysis rather than grand changes. The two cases together analyse possible destabilisations of citizenship practices made through social work, and the analysis focuses on the movement between understanding this in terms of *actions* and *acts*, as will be further developed below.

The quotes from both interview transcriptions and documents have been translated into English. Shifting language means that I am not able to present exact wordings, and my translations can therefore be understood as a form of interpretation. As my analysis is not linguistic or a conversation analysis, I have focused on readability, and removed umms or stammering. The quotes from the different forms of texts (documents and transcriptions) are therefore to be read as my reconstructions (compare Flick 2006:293). However, I have tried to stay as close as possible to the original texts.

### 4.3.1 Analysis in Part I: Constructing Storylines

In the first case, focusing on the Malmö guidelines on social assistance, the analysing process was made in different steps, the selection of material being the first. I was processing the topic long before it became a study; my different activities as an activist or arranging seminars can be described as ways to understand how the issue of social assistance to undocumented migrants was debated. The first analysis forming an idea of the “field” can therefore be said to begin with my activist work, for example accompanying undocumented migrants in their contacts with the social services and other welfare state institutions. However, since deciding to study the guidelines as a part of this thesis, the analysis has taken form in relation to the more systematically gathered material. The material is gathered in order to get a deeper and broader picture of the negotiations taking place; what different motives can be found for introducing undocumented migrants in the guidelines and what has happened after the implementation? And, by extension: how can these negotiations be understood? Such questions have also guided my analysis.

The next step in the analysis started when searching for relevant material – documents and interview participants that could give me information on the implementation of the guidelines. A practical way of describing this part of the analysis is as a searching for themes in the documents and then deepening my understanding through the interviews. During the interviews, new themes emerged as central and I went back to the documents with partly new understandings. Also theory informed my analysis at this stage; as I early on was inspired by theorisations of irregular migration creating new understandings and subjectivities in relation to citizenship, I searched for ideas of stability and change. The analysis of the different processes surrounding the guidelines, which I describe in Part I, has therefore emerged by going back to the material several times and finding new themes through asking new questions. For example, the child perspective appeared as central in many interviews, something that made me be more attentive to formulations on children in the documents. This has also been noted and critically discussed in other studies on undocumented migrants in the Nordic welfare states (Nielsen 2016, Karlsen 2015), and has made me understand the discussions on children as part of larger patterns.

A third step in the analysis was the construction of a storyline. As the guidelines were analysed both in relation to present laws and praxis and to the local circumstances and political discussions in Malmö at the time, the material was rather diverse. The analytical work was therefore for quite a long period focused on getting an idea of what happened in Malmö during the implementation of the guidelines, and how this can be understood. These are questions that I have asked in relation to the documents, during the interviews, and in the theoretically informed analysis. The storyline is fragmented, as there were many parallel processes going on. One way of systematising this has been using mind maps relating different events to each other. Bringing order to the material and making it understandable, I have used a timeline, which I present at the end of Part I. This is in order to give the reader an overview of the many different processes surrounding the decision, but also as a tool to develop the analysis.

The last step in the analysis was made once I had got an overview of different processes surrounding the implementation of the Malmö guidelines. The guidelines were mainly described as in line with present citizenship practices, and using theory I identified different forms of action that helped me to structure the analysis in Chapter 6: *actions of legal confirmation*, *actions of codification*, and *actions of disregard*. In this analysis, I also found tensions between actions and acts, and I develop this further in Chapter 7. The analysis in Chapter 7 in some ways challenges the views presented in Chapter 6, drawing on authors who have focused on the presence of undocumented migrants as related to partial inclusion, but also to new exclusions. I would therefore like to underline that the material can be analysed in different ways depending on context, perspectives and time.

### **4.3.2 Analysis in Part II: Accounts in a Context**

In my second case study, focusing on support to unaccompanied minors risking deportation, the interviews with social workers have been at the core. However, I have found it important to contextualise the interviews and this has been made mainly with news media material. The analysis in this part of the study has been made over time, going back to the interviews over and over again. Recurrent discussions with colleagues within academia, with activist and social workers, and with some of the interviewed

participants who actively showed an interest in this process have also been of great importance to the analysis in Part II. This has given me valuable inputs and perspectives, especially on ethics and on the ways to present the study.

Just as in Part I, a first step in the analysis can be seen as made through the selection of material, a selection that was partly linked to my earlier contacts as an asylum rights activist giving support to undocumented migrants (some of them unaccompanied minors). A second step was made while performing interviews, sometimes coming back to emerging analytical themes that I had identified in earlier interviews. As I decided to perform more interviews after making a preliminary analysis, the three last interviews (with a social assistant, a social worker at an accommodation centre and a development secretary) served as a way to further develop the analysis and discuss aspects of my preliminary analysis with participants.

The next step in the analysis was made through reading/listening to the interviews several times and thereafter categorising into themes. A first analysis was made during the transcriptions of the interviews, noting both recurrent themes and accounts that seemed to be important to the participants. When presenting the analysis, I have chosen to stay as close as possible to the social workers' own accounts, as I think that many of them speak strongly for themselves. However, I have also found it important to situate their accounts and make them speak in relation to a context. It has been a balance between on the one hand trying to stay close to the social workers' voices and on the other hand not to present them as "disembodied quotations" or frozen descriptions without a context (Back 2007:17).

The analysis that followed was thematic, in the sense that I have focused mainly on what was said during the interviews and, based on this, sorted out themes that were central to the participants. The themes emerged both when reading each interview as a whole and when reading the interviews parallel to each other. There were many similarities in the social workers' accounts (not least because all had acted in support of the minors), but also differences. One key difference was the way they described the acts and the rationales behind them. During the process of analysis, three overarching themes emerged based on the logics of acting. I have developed these themes into three sub-chapters: *Acts of "Professionalism"*, *Acts of "Compassion"* and *Acts of "Activism"*. At this stage, my theoretical framework



helped me to structure the themes, and I have chosen to describe them in terms of acts. I see the themes as different forms of solidary acts, inspired by Squire's (2009) discussions – but not at all as ideal types or illustrations of solidarity. I have found it important to also underline the exclusionary character of the acts, not least because of the risks of idealising discussed above. This part of the analysis can be described as interplay between what was said in the interviews and the theoretical framework.

As some of the participants expressed worries about exposure, early on I decided to present the analysis thematically rather than focusing on individuals. Presenting different kinds of acts rather than the individual social workers makes it difficult to identify the social workers participating and the local contexts. I therefore let the participants speak to each other, instead of following one person at a time, and various voices are combined. The theoretical focus on acts rather than individuals also made this a logical choice of presentation. This goes too for the main focus of the analysis: I have chosen to focus on the acts in support of the minors rather than occupational belonging. Even if the social workers had different types of employment and own experience and background affected how the social workers understood their possibilities to act, such circumstances have been used in order to contextualise rather than as forming the analysis. Just as in Part I, movements between actions and acts at an everyday level have instead been centred.

## 4.4 Conclusion: Two Cases Analysed Together

In this study, I have selected two cases that shed a light on how irregular migration poses new questions to social work in everyday practice. The cases do so at different levels: in Part I, I study a municipal level and in Part II an individual level. In line with my theoretical framework, I understand knowledge to be produced in a historical and social context; I have discussed this in terms of *situated* knowledge. My study is performed in the context of the Swedish welfare state, and this brings about certain preunderstandings. Using critical migration and citizenship theories has

been one way to challenge and destabilise such understandings. My own position as an asylum rights activist has brought questions of closeness and distance to the fore, and I have attempted to deal with this through keeping a critical and analytical distance, while at the same time acknowledging that my position has implications. The focus of this study also brings about certain ethical concerns. How the social workers' support should be described without damaging the practices studied is one of them. I have attempted to be attentive to context, but also to participants' comments on this issue. Both cases focus on areas within social work practice where questions have arisen among practitioners concerning undocumented migrants, and where there have been debates also beyond everyday work situations. As well, they are situated within a specific time period, 2010–2014 (mainly), when undocumented migrants' access to healthcare and schooling was addressed at a national level.

In the collection of material for this study, I have used various methods, such as interviews, document studies, searching for examples in news media, and my own activist background. In both the cases studied, interviewing has been the most central method. I have had slightly different approaches in the two case studies, as my relation to the field differed. In Part I, the participants were interviewed in their formal roles, while in Part II the setting was more informal. However, in both studies I see the participants as co-producers of data and I see the collection of material as a first step in my analysis. I have analysed the material making use of my theoretical framework, and central to the analysis has been a movement between *actions* and *acts* (as well as being and becoming, and responsibility and answerability) at the two different levels studied. Together, the different kinds of material collected in the two cases have helped me to analyse emerging new roles of social work in relation to undocumented migrants, but also with regard to the upholding of borders and categorisations.



**PART I:**  
**Actions and Acts in Local Policymaking**



# Part I: Introduction

The intense debates and the expansion of rights (albeit partial) in the areas of healthcare and schooling described in Chapter 2 were not followed by much debate at the national level concerning the activities of the social services such as social assistance (see FARR 2014, Rädde Barnen 2014 and Hela Gotland 2011 for some exceptions). Social assistance is regulated at a local level, and most municipalities have local guidelines as a complement to the Social Services Act and to other regulations at a national level. In Malmö municipality, undocumented migrants have in praxis received some forms of economic support – especially since this was established in the local guidelines by the end of 2013.

In this part, I analyse how the Malmö guidelines on social assistance can be understood in relation to established citizenship practices. Making use of Isin's (2008) discussion of *actions* versus *acts*, I analyse how the implementation can be situated both within the present citizenship regime and sometimes potentially stretching beyond it. I argue that the regulations of social assistance are played out differently from the regulations of healthcare and schooling discussed in Chapter 2. I underline the local context as crucial to the understanding of access to social assistance and the negotiations taking place concerning undocumented migrants. Part I contains three chapters focusing on social assistance in a local context, on the implementation of the Malmö guidelines and on undocumented migrants' presence, respectively. The study is based mainly on interviews and documents related to the implementation of the Malmö guidelines. I focus on the local debates surrounding the guidelines, mainly in 2012–2014, as well as the new limits drawn through social work practice.

In *Chapter 5*, I introduce how social assistance is regulated, and the local context of Malmö (both as a city and a municipality) as important for how social assistance is played out at a local level. Social assistance is a means-

tested cash program that is meant to be a last resort when the individual has no other ways to earn a living. It is assessed individually, leaving room for differences in interpretation depending on local circumstances but also depending on individual social workers. Assessments concerning undocumented migrants can on the one hand be based on ideas of equality or social justice, but on the other hand on ideas of migration control. In this way, social assistance can be understood as a moral gatekeeper, opening up for discussions on “deservingness” and borders marked by the social services. As social assistance is regulated at a municipal level, the local context is of interest when studying how the issue of undocumented migrants is addressed (if at all). In Malmö, various local initiatives have addressed the issue of undocumented migrants, and this makes Malmö an interesting case to explore in relation to this group. When it comes to social assistance, Malmö has a high percentage of recipients compared to other municipalities and a high percentage of households receiving social assistance on a longer-term basis.

In *Chapter 6*, I analyse the implementation of the guidelines on social assistance in Malmö. The guidelines to some extent implied a formalisation of rights for undocumented migrants and therefore can be seen as a form of partial inclusion at the level of the city. The institutionalising of social rights for undocumented migrants (especially children) at a policy level may be understood as a conscious statement, an act disrupting the status quo (where undocumented migrants are not explicitly addressed). However, the Malmö guidelines came about in an unspectacular manner, as a clarification of present praxis, and the inclusion of undocumented migrants was not a central issue in the development of the guidelines. This indicates that it was an action in line with ordinary practices. Three forms of action are identified through the analysis. *Actions of legal confirmation* express that the Malmö guidelines are an explanation of what is already in the Social Services Act and therefore nothing extraordinary. *Actions of codification* address the practitioners’ requests for a formal assignment to work with undocumented migrants and to codify their work to suit official frames. The *actions of disregard* are made as politicians and policymakers to a large extent do not address the issue of undocumented migrants. I further argue that the guidelines can be understood through the way they are practised. In the everyday social work practice, social workers need to make assessments and new questions arise concerning undocumented migrants.

When put into practice, the guidelines contain both a formal responsibility (undocumented migrants explicitly have the right to apply) and solutions that are improvised or follow other principles than formalised rules. This actualises discussions on *responsibility* and *answerability* (Isin 2008, 2012). At the same time, new exclusions are made through everyday social work practice, inter alia between former asylum seekers and vulnerable EU citizens.

The actions described in Chapter 6 may potentially, in certain contexts, turn into acts. In *Chapter 7*, I address this in terms of *presence* and *spaces “in between”*, focusing on three different contexts where undocumented migrants have become present. The *presence in public debates* since the amnesty campaign and the campaigns on healthcare, discussed in Chapter 2, made undocumented migrants into a group that was considered in more direct ways than earlier. In some cases this was formulated as visions of sanctuaries, and the presence in such discussions opened up spaces “in between” citizenship status and exclusion. A marked *presence in the civil society*, as undocumented migrants participated in the daily life of the city and organised to improve their life conditions, opened up spaces “in between” visibility and invisibility. The *presence at welfare institutions* made practitioners come into contact with undocumented migrants, and new dimensions of responsibility were brought to the fore. This opened up spaces for acting in new ways, “in between” inclusion and exclusion through the practice of welfare state representatives. Analysed in relation to these contexts, the guidelines can potentially be understood more in terms of *acts* than *actions* (Isin 2008). In the last concluding section of Part I, I summarise the three chapters and discuss them together.





## 5. Legal and Local Contexts

In this chapter, I address the legal context of social assistance, which is a part of the minimum income protection scheme, regulated at a local level. Further, I address the local context of Malmö, and how social assistance is played out in this context. Being a means-tested program based on individual assessments and implemented at a municipal level, social assistance diverges from many other Swedish welfare state systems such as, for example, pensions or health insurance, which are based on universal ideas (albeit tied to the individual's performance in the labour market) rather than means-testing (Panican and Ulmestig 2016). The Social Services Act is a framework law that regulates the right to apply for assistance, but the assessment is done by the municipalities and by social workers, indicating a rather large discretionary space (Social Services Act 4 Chapter 1 §). It is therefore debatable whether social assistance is to be seen as a social right, as it is not regulated as a right in the law (Panican and Ulmestig 2016, Johansson 2001). This means that the struggles over prevailing exclusions and hierarchies are of different character in the case of social assistance from those of healthcare and schooling. Social assistance is meant to be adapted to local contexts in the municipalities, hence the social workers are delegated to make decisions by local politicians. Local context and local actors therefore become important in the understanding of the citizenship practices performed by the social services.

The negotiations on formal access to social assistance studied here take place within Malmö municipality. However, they also take place in the city of Malmö with its demography and political context. This is important to underline when it comes to access to social assistance of undocumented migrants. Undocumented migrants have been described as a “municipal headache”: cities cannot control who moves in, and undocumented migrants' access to welfare is often negotiated at a local level (Holgerson 2011:251). At the same time, the local level of the city has in various

studies been explored as a space where undocumented migrants' access to certain rights and local citizenship practices are negotiated (Sigona 2016, Bhimji 2014, Holgersson 2011, Nyers 2008).

The chapter proceeds as follows. In section 5.1, I present the Swedish organisation of social assistance followed by a discussion on social assistance to undocumented migrants. In section 5.2, I present the Malmö context: demography, location and images of Malmö regarding migration and regarding undocumented migrants specifically. Finally, in section 5.3, I discuss the local context in relation to social assistance.

## 5.1 Social Assistance in Sweden

Social assistance is handled by the municipalities and is meant to be a last resort when no other income is available. As a means-tested cash program, it is placed (together with some other subsidies, for example housing allowance) outside of the framework of more general social insurances such as pensions, sickness assurance and unemployment benefits (Hort 2014b, Johansson 2001). It is designed as a temporary support in order to cover the most basic needs, such as food, housing and hygiene. However, since the economic crisis in Sweden in the 1990s an increased amount of recipients have received social assistance over longer periods (Bergmark and Bäckman 2007).<sup>27</sup> The increase in long-term recipients has had consequences for the municipalities in terms of costs. Furthermore, as social assistance is not designed to cover needs that arise on a long-term basis, long-term recipients face a precarious situation with very low income (*ibid.*, Angelin 2009). Local authorities have got increasing responsibility for those who have become uninsured or fallen through the gaps in the social security nets (Hort 2014b:49). The economic crisis in Sweden in the 1990s led to a stricter approach towards recipients of social assistance, focusing more on duties than on rights. This, it has been argued, can be read as a

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<sup>27</sup> At the end of the 1980s the average length of time for receiving social assistance was 4 months; in 2005 the average time was 5.9 months (Bergmark and Bäckman 2007). In 2015, the average time was 6.5 months and 40% of the recipients received social assistance for 10 months or more (Socialstyrelsen 2016).

prolongation of the Swedish approach in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mikael Sjögren (1997:27) argues, in an analysis of early Swedish social policy, that the separation of “deserving” and “undeserving” connected to the willingness to work prevail in today’s welfare state. According to Sjögren, the dominant popular view on persons receiving social assistance in today’s Sweden is that they are lazy and without ambition. Similarly, in a study on social assistance in relation to social citizenship, Håkan Johansson (2001) describes a tendency within Swedish welfare state politics to, along with a wish to build an expansive and general welfare state, have a restrictive approach to groups who are not economically productive. Welfare work with social assistance is hence made in continuation with a history of poor relief and therefore actualises questions traditionally linked to poverty and “deservingness” rather than to social rights (Davidsson 2015, Swärd 2012). In this way, social assistance can be understood as being in the “borderlands” of social citizenship, ultimately covering for those who for different reasons are placed outside of the more general social security net (Johansson 2001:211). Even if social assistance is grounded in an idea of belonging to the nation state, this borderland opens up for discussions on undocumented migrants: a group that has the right to apply for social assistance but that has been addressed in rather different manners.

### **5.1.1 Organisation of Social Assistance**

As social assistance is assessed individually and the assessments are based on municipal guidelines, there are local and individual variations (Stranz 2007). At the same time, requirements concerning documentation, increasing standardisation and heavy workloads pose new demands on social assistants (Lauri 2016, Astvik and Melin 2013). In some areas, there is quite a developed legal praxis, since the decisions of the social services can be appealed against in administrative courts. Local lawyers employed by the municipality, so-called “municipal legal advisors”, give legal advice to employees and policymakers and participate in the formulation of local guidelines. Marcus Lauri (2016:123) shows how social workers in many cases are expected to follow the “organisational protocol” rather than assessing according to their own judgement. In the case of social assistance, there is a tendency that social workers experience a pressure from the

management to be restrictive (Hjort 2012a). Despite being the largest sector of social care (or Caring for Individuals and Family, IFO), work in social assistance has a rather low status, something that might affect the discretionary space experienced by the social workers.

Åke Bergmark (2014) describes three general trends regarding the organisation of social assistance: *specialisation*, *depreciation* of social assistance and *activation*. First, he points at a general development towards *specialisation* within the Swedish social services. Already by 1985, 60 percent of the municipalities had specialised units for social assistance. Often, there is also an internal specialisation distinguishing between groups of service users, and in many municipalities parts of the assistance is handled by assistants without social work education (ibid.). Secondly, in terms of *depreciation*, Bergmark argues that social assistance has become less available and less generous over the last thirty years. During the 1980s and 1990s, the law stated no minimum level of assistance, and the level of financial support varied between the municipalities. Social assistance was to be set in relation to the “general standard development” in society, meaning that the standard of living for a person with social assistance should not be dramatically lower than the Swedish average (Bergmark 2014:33, *my translation*). In 1998, the Social Services Act was revised and a so-called “national norm” was established for social assistance, giving standardised recommendations concerning economic support. The norm is today set by the government every year, and is based on estimations of standard consumption; in 2016 a single adult received a standard sum of 3930 SEK per month, plus money for rent and some additional supplements (Socialstyrelsen 2017a). This more standardised practice is intended to promote a more equal treatment. However, Bergmark (2014) shows that the discrepancy between the social assistance norm and the general income level has increased since the end of the 1990s. Social assistance has hence been lower in most municipalities after the establishment of a national norm (see also Hjort 2012a, Stranz 2007). However, the norm is meant to be a minimum level and this gives room for local interpretations. Central to the norm is what is called a “reasonable standard of living”, and this is to be assessed individually and cannot be denied only with reference to the

national norm.<sup>28</sup> The municipalities have local guidelines that could guarantee support exceeding the national norm, and there is a possibility to apply for economic support in situations of “emergency”. Thirdly, Bergmark (2014) argues that social assistance has become more restrictive and conditional than it was initially meant to be (see also Hjort 2012b); for example, through a strong focus on the service user’s *activation*. According to the Social Services Act, the social services should primarily help people towards self-sufficiency and to find long-term solutions for economic problems. According to Bergmark (2014:39), this goal contains two contradictory principles: coercion/discipline versus empowerment/enabling. Activation becomes disciplining as participation in different programs is often compulsory in order to receive social assistance; the programs are at the same time intended to enable labour market participation (see also Johansson and Horneman Møller 2009).

The idea is that social assistance should be provided on a temporary basis; however, many persons are living on social assistance for relatively long periods of time (Hjort 2012a). The national norm has not been developed with those persons receiving long-term social assistance in mind. This means that this group is in a marginalised position with very low income over a long period of time. In the case of social assistance, the social services are thereby dealing with the much-debated question of child poverty that has arisen as an issue since the economic crisis in the 1990s (Hort 2014b, Salonen 2012). When a child is involved, the social services should always act in the Best Interest of the Child (Socialstyrelsen 2013a). As the child perspective is to be addressed when it comes to social assistance, it is easier for families with children than adults to be assessed as having needs exceeding the national norm. According to Torbjörn Hjort (2012a, 2012b), social workers have experienced an uncertainty concerning how to apply the child perspective in their practice. Hjort describes the difficulties as based partly on the historically rooted distinction between deserving and undeserving poor: when focusing on children, who are seen as innocent, even their parents, who usually are met with more restrictive measures and demands on activation, benefit.

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<sup>28</sup> Torbjörn Hjort (2012a:232) analyses this concept and argues that it rather is formulated as a “decent minimum level” in relation to the “client’s” most basal needs; partly this is in order to motivate the “client” to be self-supporting.

### 5.1.2 The Social Services Act and Undocumented Migrants

The Social Services Act is a law that provides universal access as a principle, since the Act does not stipulate rights in relation to particular groups or categories. This also holds for undocumented migrants. The second chapter of the Social Services Act (2 Chapter 1§, *my translation*) states that:

Each municipality answers for the social services within its domain, and has the ultimate responsibility that individuals get the support that they need.

This means that, as social assistance is not tied to performance in the labour market, the municipality has the responsibility when no one else can give support to an individual. But, if an individual is resident in another municipality, the responsibility is restricted to giving support only in order to solve a situation of emergency (Social Services Act 2 a Chapter 2 §). With regard to undocumented migrants, this has meant that the responsibility of the social services in legal praxis has been limited solely to acute situations, and there have only been a few court decisions regarding undocumented migrants' access to social assistance guiding the municipalities in their decisions (Staaf 2013). The court decisions on the matter processed in administrative courts have concerned individual cases, some of them giving undocumented migrants the right to assistance in a situation of emergency, others not. As the court decisions concerned individual assessments, no general principles were drawn from the decisions. Few cases have been processed by the Administrative Courts of Appeal (see for example Court Case No. 4920-08, Court Case No. 3594-07), and no case concerning undocumented migrants and social assistance during the time of performing this study had been processed the Supreme Administrative Court (although one case was on its way, see next section). Therefore, there was no legal praxis at a national level, only local and regional court decisions regarding individual cases.

There are no national guidelines addressing the issue of undocumented migrants, and the group is formally to be treated as any other persons in need of support from the social services. As explained in January 2016 by one of the lawyers at the National Board of Health and Welfare on a direct question regarding undocumented migrants:

The National Board of Health and Welfare has not taken any particular stand regarding social assistance to persons who in some cases are called undocumented. However, it follows from the Social Services Act that the Social Services have the ultimate responsibility for persons residing in the municipality and this also goes for undocumented migrants. In court praxis it has generally been considered that persons without residence in a municipality where they are residing on a temporary basis only have the right to assistance in order to prevent an acute situation of emergency. What this right to assistance in a situation of emergency implies must be decided from case to case. (E-mail conversation with lawyer at the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2016–01–19, *my translation*)

This clearly states that there is a responsibility, but it leaves a room for interpretation. In practice, the social services have dealt with undocumented migrants in different ways, sometimes directing the group to other authorities, sometimes denying assistance, since the migrants are expected to leave the country, and sometimes giving different kinds of economic support (Socialstyrelsen 2010). The interpretations have varied, and many municipalities have little experience at all of meeting undocumented migrants. Few municipalities have guidelines addressing undocumented migrants (Socialstyrelsen 2010, Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012, Staaf 2013). Even if giving undocumented migrants access to economic support, how to understand the acute situation in terms of duration and specific needs is open for interpretation and has been assessed in different ways in different individual cases. For example, the migrant may be given a ticket back to the country of origin (for example when it comes to migrants from other EU countries<sup>29</sup>) or a sum of money to cover urgent needs such as food.

Undocumented migrants' contacts with the social services are, however, curtailed by a risk of deportation. Before 2013, the social services had a duty to report to the police when opening a new case concerning an alien. This duty was considered as unclear, as it concerned aliens who had not had any former contact with Swedish authorities and was interpreted in different ways by different municipalities in regard to undocumented

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<sup>29</sup> See for example Malmö Stad (2017) and Socialstyrelsen (2017b), where municipal support to EU citizens is discussed.



migrants (Socialstyrelsen 2010). The difference in interpretations meant that there was a risk for undocumented migrants to be found and deported when in contact with the social services. After the abolishment of this duty (7 Chapter 1 § Aliens Decree), which came together with the new law on schooling (discussed in Chapter 2), the social workers only had to give information to the police if they were contacted concerning a specific undocumented individual (17 Chapter 1 § Aliens Act). Before November 2016, the police did not make use of this possibility, but since the intensified search for undocumented migrants during 2016–2017 this has over and over again meant a risk for undocumented migrants in contact with the social services (Sydsvenskan 2016a, Centrum för sociala rättigheter 2017a).

### **5.1.3 Undocumented Migrants as a Moral Question**

Despite the fact that few municipalities have developed local guidelines with regard to undocumented migrants, the issue is addressed by individual social workers. In a study on social work practice regarding social assistance, Carin Björngren Cuadra and Annika Staaf (2012) conclude that the access to a large extent depends on the individual assessments of social assistants, and that these assessments may vary from case to case (see also Cuadra 2016, Jönsson 2014, Socialstyrelsen 2010). The authors therefore argue that the issue of irregular migration has become a moral question. How undocumented migrants are addressed in social work practice may, as long as the assessment is individual, be affected by the social worker's attitude towards migration – in ways that may be positive or negative for the service user. In a survey study with social workers, Carin Björngren Cuadra (2015, 2016) notes that some of the social workers say that they would be willing to give social assistance exceeding emergency support to undocumented migrants. In another study, Jessica Jönsson (2014) identifies three different strategies used by social workers confronting uncertainties in relation to undocumented migrants: to exclude undocumented migrants from social work practice, to make use of one's discretion in order to give support to undocumented migrants (to some extent) or to cooperate with civil society organisations in order to find other ways of supporting undocumented migrants.

Moral dimensions can also be found in court decisions, especially in the local administrative courts with lay judges (in Swedish: *nämndemän*<sup>30</sup>). For example, in 2015 one decision by the Administrative Court in Gothenburg, concerning an undocumented lone mother with children, stated that it was not “reasonable” that someone who defies an order of expulsion should get social assistance as it would “undermine the general sense of justice” (Court Case No. 7284-15, *my translation*). In this formulation, a concern for coherency between different authorities (and thereby arguments for migration control) was put before the acute needs of the individual. Another case that clearly highlights moral dimensions, and also is of interest for future work with social assistance, was processed in the Administrative Court of Umeå in 2015 (Court Case No. 629-15<sup>31</sup>). The municipality in Vännäs had rejected social assistance to an undocumented lone mother with children with the argument that either the Swedish Migration Agency or voluntary organisations should cover the family’s expenses.<sup>32</sup> The court argued that the Social Services Act was applicable and that the family had a right to social assistance. Based on the children’s situation, the court also argued that the family would not be able to have a reasonable standard of living if returning to the land of origin. Interesting in this case was that the court did not only address the immediate needs, but also the difficulties of returning to the country of origin. A moral dimension in relation to the migrants’ “deservingness” or trustworthiness in regard to a need for protection can hence be seen in the decision of this local administrative court. The case was appealed against by the municipality and the Administrative Court of Appeal in February 2016 denied the family the right to assistance and referred them to the Swedish Migration Agency (Court Case No. 1593-15). The case has now been processed in the

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<sup>30</sup> Lay judges are nominated by local political parties. In the Administrative Courts, three lay judges and one law graduate judge attend. In the Administrative Courts of Appeal two lay judges and three law graduate judges attend. In the Supreme Administrative Court there are no lay judges.

<sup>31</sup> In this case, the “client” had to appeal every month, as the social services did not agree with the decision; see for example Court Case Nos. 804-15 and 1062-15 among others.

<sup>32</sup> In the appeal, the family, with the support of local activists, inter alia referred (indirectly) to the practice in Malmö: “There are social welfare boards in other places assessing that so-called “undocumented migrants” have the right to social assistance and thereby respect the rights of the children” (Court Case No. 629-15, *my translation*).

Supreme Court and a recent decision (5<sup>th</sup> June 2017) confirms the decision of the Administrative Court of Appeal.<sup>33</sup>

As these cases demonstrate, the Social Services Act itself opens up for tensions between a formal “responsibility”, following the law, and assessments based on different principles of justice, closer to what Isin (2008) terms “answerability” (compare Nordling 2016). Social workers, as well as lay judges, may choose to act in ways that broaden or narrow access to social assistance, in that they perceive the obligations of the social services differently. This may also go for municipal policies. Just as with other citizenship practices, in this study the law is not understood as fixed or coherent; rather, it can be described in line with de Genova (2002:425) as an “undetermined struggle”. Access to social assistance for undocumented migrants is an example illustrating that there are struggles and negotiations taking place: it is a case where citizenship can be studied as *enacted* (Isin 2008). Through social work practice with social assistance, obligations towards a new group potentially come into being, just as boundaries of citizenship may be reinforced.

## 5.2 The Malmö Context

The city of Malmö can be described as an administrative or virtual space, a municipality, but it is at the same time a physical or actual space with specific demography and geography (compare Isin 2007). Malmö as a geographical and historical city does coincide with the administrative space of the municipality, as the urban area is a municipality of its own.<sup>34</sup> Although the guidelines on social assistance were introduced by the municipality as mainly an administrative issue, I argue that they need to be understood in a specific context exceeding this administrative space.

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<sup>33</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the Supreme Administrative Court stated that the municipalities do not have a responsibility for undocumented migrants (Court Case Nos. 1527–1529-16). However, the municipalities may still choose to expand their responsibilities to include this group. The consequences of this are difficult to foresee.

<sup>34</sup> This is often not the case, as Swedish municipalities usually include districts outside of the city.

### 5.2.1 The City of Malmö

Malmö is Sweden's third-largest city, with about 300,000 inhabitants. It is a densely populated city, and a city of arrival for many travelling on land to Sweden. It is located in the transnational Öresund region, which includes the Swedish county of Scania (Skåne) and Eastern Denmark that was established in the mid 1990s with the construction of a bridge between Malmö and Copenhagen. During the last century, Malmö was an industrial town with a large shipyard, Kockum, as a leading employer. Malmö has a history of a large blue-collar population and a strong Social Democratic tradition. The municipality has mostly been dominated by the Social Democratic Party, as well as in times when the Social Democrats lost their power at a national level.<sup>35</sup> This has influenced the welfare solutions at a local level. For example, Malmö municipality has only a small number of private welfare solutions, on the premise that such solutions would “endanger equality and the right to equal social services for all local residents” (Panican et al. 2013:26). Malmö has also robust civil society organising. For instance, there are many migrant organisations (Odmalm 2004), and the district of Möllevången is known for its political activism focusing to a large extent on social justice (Povrzanović Frykman 2016).

Over the last thirty years Malmö has undergone structural changes similar to many European industrial cities. Following the oil crisis, many industries left Malmö in the 1970s and 1980s, with rising unemployment as a consequence. Between 1970 and 1984, 35,000 persons left Malmö, not long after a large-scale construction project of new housing (during the Swedish “Million Program”<sup>36</sup>) in Malmö in the early 1970s (Salonen 2012). With the transition from being an industrial city, Malmö underwent an economic crisis in the 1990s. In 1994 alone, 25,000 jobs disappeared due to industrial reconstruction (Panican et al. 2013). The population in Malmö started to grow in 1985 and during the 21<sup>st</sup> century has increased remarkably compared to other cities in the EU; during 2000–2007, population growth was 1.75% (Salonen 2012). This development was due

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<sup>35</sup> The Swedish Social Democrat movement has its roots in Malmö. See, for example, Billing and Stiegendal (1994) for a development on this.

<sup>36</sup> During the years 1965–1974, 1,005,578 new homes (different forms of housing) were built in Sweden (Boverket 2014).

to Danish citizens moving to Malmö, students coming to Malmö University and people moving to Malmö from other countries. This was engendered by, inter alia, the construction of the bridge between Malmö and Copenhagen and other investments in infrastructure. The establishment of Malmö University in 1998, part of a national investment in Swedish universities, was also one of the steps taken towards creating a “new” Malmö: a “knowledge city” (Malmö stad 2016a). To this “new Malmö”, a large cultural sector and investments in environmental sustainability can be added.

Malmö is also one of the main cities of arrival when it comes to people seeking asylum in Sweden, further adding to the growth of the population. The largest groups of foreign-born coincide with large conflict zones globally; in 2014 the two largest groups were from Iraq and the former Yugoslavia (and thereafter Denmark) (Malmö stad 2016b). Malmö has undergone a demographic change from an older population born in Sweden to a young population with a relatively high proportion (31%) of persons born in other countries (Malmö stad 2016a). These numbers do not include asylum seekers living outside of reception centres (“*eget boende*” – the so-called “EBO”), as this group is under the responsibility of the Swedish Migration Agency and therefore not registered in Malmö (Salonen 2012).

12,000 persons are also calculated to be part of the “*hidden Malmö*”: persons that live in Malmö but for various reasons are not registered in the city: for example, workers and students residing temporarily in the city (Stiegendal and Östergren 2013:45). Another such group is undocumented migrants. Just as at national and EU levels, the numbers of undocumented migrants are difficult to estimate. Some estimates have, however, been made, and especially concerning undocumented children. In two reports from 2012 and 2013 respectively, the number of undocumented children was estimated to 380–400 individuals (Stiegendal and Östergren 2013, Ander 2012). In 2013, during the time when the Dublin II Regulation was applied to minors, 265 unaccompanied minors were being sought in Malmö for deportation (Lundberg and Söderman 2015).

### 5.2.2 Double Images of Malmö

The city of Malmö has been much studied in recent years and is often described with a double image: the city claims a transformation from being an industrial city to a knowledge city, but is also known as a city with segregation and social unrest (Dannestam 2009, Möllerström 2011, Mukhtar-Landgren 2012, Holgersen 2014, Schclarek Mulinari 2015). This double image is also mirrored in city districts with distinct connotations. The city of Malmö has received international attention both for well-off districts such as the Western Harbour, visited for its architecture, and for the district of Rosengård, with a reputation for social conflicts (Holgersen 2014). Just as in Stockholm and Gothenburg, there is a residential segregation in Malmö with an increased social polarisation (Grundström and Molina 2016).

The double image can be linked to ideas of belonging. For example, Rosengård has been described as a marker of difference and alterity, in contrast to an idea of Swedishness (Ristilammi 1994, see also Ericsson, Molina and Ristilammi 2000). Dalia Mukhtar-Landgren (2005) argues that the images created to represent the city are also *making* the city, and that the success image of Malmö seldom includes its migrant population. She describes Malmö as a dual city with stories of progress existing alongside stories of problems; mainly the two stories of the knowledge city along with the multicultural and problem-laden city. When “selling” Malmö, she argues, the image of the “new Malmö” creates an image of who Malmö’s citizens *should* be; modern and knowledge-producing. When problems are addressed, they are primarily formulated as problems of integration or exclusion. Mukhtar-Landgren analyses one attempt to address such problems that has been much discussed: the program *Välfärd för alla* (“Welfare for all”) launched in 2004 in order to combat social problems in Malmö. Immigration was here addressed as one of the main problems, and a halt to immigration into Malmö for five years was discussed, and that asylum seekers should not have the right to choose where to live. In more recent years, similar analyses have been made of the images of Malmö as a “crime city” linked to migration problems and irregular labour (Schclarek

Mulinari 2015, Keshavarz 2016).<sup>37</sup> Leandro Schclarek Mulinari (2015) identifies an ambivalent position taken by Malmö authorities in their response to crime and the informal labour market in Malmö: on the one hand they use neoliberal revanchist formulations focusing on security, but there is also a social awareness describing social vulnerability.

### 5.2.3 Undocumented Migrants in Malmö

Another image of Malmö can be presented in the case of irregular migration. Malmö politicians have over the last ten years been addressing basic rights for undocumented migrants. The county council of Scania, the region where Malmö is located, has been giving access to healthcare for undocumented migrants since 2008 (five years before the national legislation was introduced). Also many schools in Malmö gave access to undocumented migrants before the national legislation came about, even though there were no centralised decisions and it was up to individual headmasters to decide this (Lundberg and Strange 2014). Undocumented migrants were also accessing childcare (to some extent) and shelters for battered women (to some extent) (Platform 2010-2014). Since 2010, Malmö has been one of the cities in the International Cities of Refuge Network, offering refuge to authors in exile, and there is a municipal decision that gives undocumented migrants access to the public libraries. In combination with this, various organisations, from the No Border movement to religious organisations and migrants' organisations, are also active in Malmö, putting questions concerning irregular migration and migration in general on the agenda. Such organisations are important support structures for undocumented migrants (along with personal networks) and put pressure on local politicians. The political decisions, combined with an active civil society with many support initiatives for undocumented migrants, indicate that Malmö can be described as a city that is relatively open to undocumented migrants.

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<sup>37</sup> Here it is of interest to remark that Malmö, despite a reputation for high crime rates, follows the pattern of the two other big cities in Sweden: Stockholm and Gothenburg. As the third-largest city in Sweden, Malmö also comes third in regard to crime rates (BRÅ 2015).

However, Malmö has also been known for more repressive events. For example, it was the place for the national “REVA”<sup>38</sup> pilot project launched in 2009/10, where the police searched actively for undocumented migrants in public spaces, creating an unsafe situation among the undocumented population (Lundberg and Söderman 2015, Staaf 2013, Stark 2012). The REVA project was brought to public attention in 2012 and was criticised for, among other things, racial profiling (Stark 2012). Hence, different processes interplay to make Malmö both a city with comparatively high access to public institutions on the one hand and a city where measures of control permeate the everyday life of undocumented migrants. The local campaigns against crime and the irregular labour market discussed above also have affected undocumented migrants, who have no opportunity to work in the regular labour market. The issue of undocumented migrants has sometimes been explicitly addressed in such campaigns (Sydsvenskan 2011). More recently, the eviction of an informal settlement in Sorgenfri, Malmö, in November 2015 received attention (Persdotter 2015, Sydsvenskan 2015a). In the case of poor EU citizens, often with Roma background, the approach of Malmö municipality has been harsher than, for example, in the neighbouring municipality of Lund and also harsher in comparison with former asylum seekers with irregular status (Sveriges Radio 2015, Sydsvenskan 2015b). This restrictive approach has been taken despite a large mobilisation within the civil society (e.g. Centrum för sociala rättigheter 2017b). At the same time, it can be argued that support initiatives within the civil society help give the municipality a more generous image than actually is the case (compare Sager 2011).

The interplay between support and control fits well into discourses on securitisation on the one hand and humanitarian support to undocumented migrants on the other that have been thoroughly discussed at an international level (Eastmond and Ascher 2011, Huysmans 2000). The image of Malmö as on the one hand a “good” place for refugees and on the other hand a city with practices of migration control makes Malmö an example of how the two tendencies act together or parallel. However, there are also challenges to this dichotomy, most notably within the civil society. One example is the initiative *Fristad Malmö* (“Malmö Sanctuary”), initiated

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<sup>38</sup> Rättssäkert och Effektivt Verkställighetsarbete (Legal and Effective Enforcement).



by the Asylum Group in Malmö, proposing that Malmö should be a sanctuary city open to all its inhabitants no matter their residential status (see Keshavarz 2016, Malmö Fristad för papperslösa 2016). Also, mobilisation among unaccompanied (sometimes undocumented) minors provides alternative images of agency and presence of undocumented migrants, with visible initiatives like the *No Border Musical*, *The Asylum Relay* and *The Association for Unaccompanied* (Djampour and Söderman 2016, Keshavarz 2016, Ensamkommandes Förbund 2016).<sup>39</sup> An active civil society in relation to issues of irregular migration has hence clearly contributed to placing undocumented migrants on the agenda and to some extent also challenged ideas both of securitisation and humanitarianism, something that will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

## 5.3 Social Assistance in Malmö

In this section, I address the conditions for social assistance in Malmö. I start with an overview of demography and costs for social assistance. I then discuss the Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö that is one example of how politicians have dealt with such issues. Finally, I discuss municipal initiatives addressing social assistance at the time of the implementation of the guidelines.

### 5.3.1 A High Percentage of Households Receiving Social Assistance

Malmö is a city with comparatively high unemployment and a high percentage of households reliant on social assistance. Tapio Salonen (2015) points at a growing income inequality in Malmö, as well as an increasing proportion of households in poverty.<sup>40</sup> However, as described by Panican et

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<sup>39</sup> Such initiatives are efforts to give support to undocumented migrants' own struggles (compare Nyers 2008), but are not without tensions related to humanitarianism or securitisation.

<sup>40</sup> In this case poverty is defined using the official European Union definition of income poverty to be those earning less than 60% of national median income.

al. (2013:67), the local debate has focused mainly on social assistance rather than poverty:

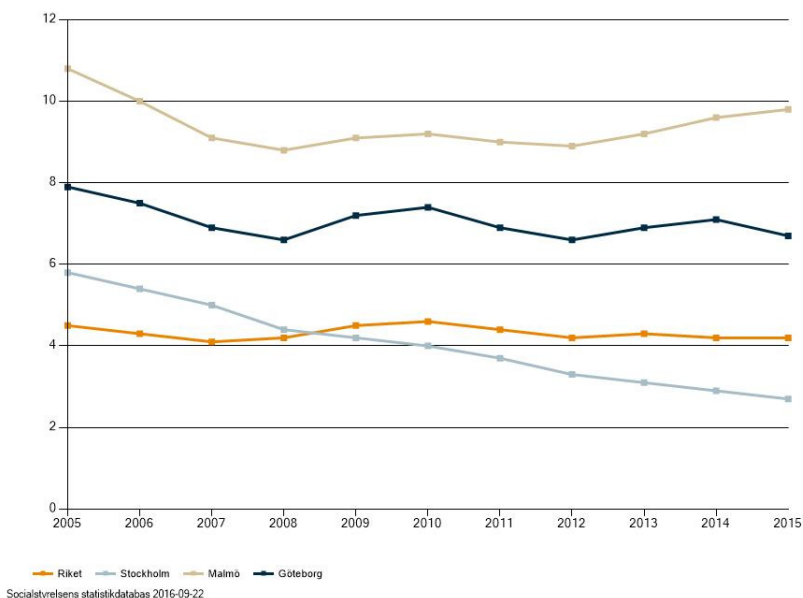
The multifold ways by which poverty is turned into an administrative issue furthermore illustrates a de-politicization of poverty at local level. Poverty and poor people are mainly conceptualized as an administrative category, i.e. social assistance claimants.

When it comes to employment and social assistance Malmö follows the national pattern, but from a starting position of higher unemployment and higher costs for social assistance (*ibid.*). In 2013<sup>41</sup>, the percentage of the population (0–65+ years old) receiving social assistance was more than twice the Swedish average (9.2% compared to 4.3%). In the same year, the number of households receiving social assistance on a long-term basis amounted to 75% of recipients in Malmö (Malmö stad 2013a). Unemployment was the most common reason behind the need for social assistance (49% of the men and 39% of the women), followed by social impediments to working, sickness and language difficulties (*ibid.*). Between the years 2009 and 2013, the costs of social assistance increased by an average of 6% per year (Malmö stad 2014). The increase in recipients concerns both single households, which is the most frequent category, and households with children, predominantly lone mothers (Malmö stad 2014). As presented in Figure 2, these numbers are high in relation to other municipalities. The relatively high numbers of households receiving social assistance in Malmö have been discussed in relation to child poverty. Since 1991, when Save the Children started measuring Swedish child poverty, Malmö has been ranked number 290 out of 290 municipalities (Angelin and Salonen 2012). This has resulted in child poverty being an issue discussed in relation to Malmö municipality, both by politicians and researchers.

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<sup>41</sup> This is the year when the new guidelines for social assistance were discussed; see section 5.2.

Ekonomiskt bistånd, Biståndsmottagare inklusive barn i % av befolkningen, en decimal, Alder: 0-65+



**Figure 2:**

Social assistance, recipients including children in % of the population, age 0–65+, 2005–2015. Swedish average, Stockholm, Malmö, Gothenburg. (Socialstyrelsen 2016c)

### 5.3.2 The Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö

Various programs have been initiated and social investments have been made aiming at creating better living conditions and to lower the amount of households dependent on social assistance in Malmö. One such program was the Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö (hereafter the Malmö Commission), which launched its final report during the time when the new guidelines on social assistance were discussed. As these discussions were current at the time of the implementation of the guidelines, it is of interest to have a closer look at the Malmö Commission. It was initiated by local politicians in 2010 with the mission to “work from scientifically based strategies to reduce health inequities” with a focus on social sustainability and structural prerequisites for health (Stiegendal and Östergren 2013:10). The Malmö Commission, consisting of independent researchers (14

commissioners), focused on the three areas of children and youth, democracy, and social and economic conditions in Malmö. An inspiration was the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health, also called the Marmot Commission, which published the report “Closing the gap in one generation” in 2008 (CSDH 2008). Underlining the importance of social factors to health inequalities, the Marmot Commission report begins with the sentence “Social justice is a matter of life and death” (ibid. ii). Similar ideas can also be found in Malmö’s public health policy stating that “economic and social security is fundamental for public health” (Malmö stad 2010:7, *my translation*).

The final report of the Malmö Commission was presented in 2013 and had a strong focus on equity as a health-promoting factor. One of the overarching recommendations of the Commission was to “establish a social investment policy that can reduce inequities in living conditions and make societal systems more equitable” (ibid. 49). The final report of the Malmö Commission was based on a range of publications by commissioners and other experts. Of special relevance for the discussions on social assistance were two reports on child poverty and social assistance respectively (Angelin and Salonen 2012, Hjort 2012b). Both reports address poverty and suggest an increase in social assistance for families with children, arguing that a long-term dependence on social assistance contributes to child poverty. This led to concrete suggestions on objectives and actions in the final report of the Commission:

With the objective of halving child poverty by 2020 with a view to eliminating it completely, the following actions are recommended:

Develop and implement a municipal action plan to reduce child poverty, establish municipal family support, increase access to computers and the Internet in the homes of families with children in Malmö, raise the municipal social assistance and introduce a standardized addition for children's leisure and cultural activities for households with children with long-term social assistance as well as provide all children in Malmö with access to free public transport in the city. (Stiegendahl and Östergren 2013:137)

The final report of the Malmö Commission offered no recommendations concerning undocumented migrants. This group could maybe be considered as a part of “all children in Malmö” (ibid. 91) or “the entire population” (ibid. 125), as is the formulation in some of the objectives of the suggested actions concerning schooling, daycare and healthcare, but undocumented migrants were not explicitly mentioned in the suggested actions. Undocumented children were, however, mentioned as a group with an increased risk of illness. Also, undocumented migrants were referred to as a group within the reach of civil society organisations rather than as a municipal concern. They were also described as exploited by the informal labour market.

The Malmö Commission produced various pre-reports and two of them, both focusing on children, addressed undocumented migrants more thoroughly (Ander 2012, Köhler 2012). Commissioner and paediatrician Marie Köhler (2012:186-187) suggested in a report that schools and daycare centres should be accessible to all children, including undocumented children, and that healthcare, including dental care, should give real access to all children no matter their status. Karin Ander (2012) also explicitly addressed undocumented children in her report on newly arrived children. She noted that undocumented children not always got access to healthcare as they were supposed to, and that access to schools was arbitrary, and suggested more accessible solutions for healthcare and social services. Further, she argued that Malmö should be in the frontline concerning access to schools, while awaiting the new regulations at a national level. These suggestions are present in a summary of the pre-reports, but they are not included in the suggested actions in the final report of the Malmö Commission (Malmökommissionens sekretariat 2013). This shows that, although there were voices trying to raise the issue of undocumented migrants, this was not considered as a central issue when reporting to politicians.

The Malmö Commission provided suggestions and recommendations to the local politicians; to what degree these recommendations are to be implemented is still not decided. However, some of the suggestions concerning social assistance can be found in the new municipal guidelines, and the Commission’s overall focus on social investments provide a

background discussion to the guidelines on social assistance, which will be analysed in Chapter 6.

### **5.3.3 Municipal Reorganisation**

Parallel to the work of the Malmö Commission, Malmö municipality was investigating how to decrease the number of households dependent on social assistance. A memo from the managers of the social services in Malmö in 2013 drew attention to the increasing number of households dependent on social assistance and a low satisfaction among service users (Malmö stad 2013a). Service users complained about difficulties in coming into contact with social workers. The memo suggested various organisational changes, including a decreased workload for social workers. In the Malmö municipal budget for 2014, the politicians invested 30 million SEK in making the work with social assistance more efficient, along with a local reorganisation of the social services (Malmö stad 2013a). Malmö at the time was divided into ten city districts, administering social assistance with quite a large degree of discretion regarding benefits and conditionality (Panican et al. 2013). In 2014, as part of the reorganisation, the city districts were merged into five districts instead of ten.

At the request of the politicians in the City Hall, the costs of social assistance were investigated. This resulted in a report that addressed the high number of households receiving long-term assistance (especially single mothers, persons born outside of Europe and persons with low education), along with families with children (Malmö stad 2013a). Economic development, changes in unemployment benefits and changes in the national health insurance system were described as key factors in the higher costs of social assistance at a local level. These circumstances had created heavier demands on the social services and on cooperation between different agencies. In regard to labour market programs, a special focus on families with children who received social assistance for a longer period was requested in the report. The report also suggested that alternatives to establishment in the labour market were needed for individuals perceived as “far from the labour market” (ibid. 3). No suggestions were presented in relation to undocumented migrants, and this group was not mentioned in the report. However, as will be further analysed in Chapter 6, the fact that

Malmö municipality was reorganising social assistance had consequences with regard to addressing the issue of undocumented migrants.

## 5.4 Conclusion: Social Support in a Local Context

In this chapter I have discussed social assistance, a means-tested cash program that everyone has the right to apply for – but that is no social right in the sense that everyone is entitled to it. The role of social assistance as a last resort when no other options are available places it at the limits of the welfare state and makes it a bearer of moral dimensions on “deservingness” (dimensions that are also historically linked to the management of poverty). In the case of undocumented migrants, different interpretations have been made concerning access to social assistance, and moral judgements are present in such interpretations. Undocumented migrants do have the right to apply for social assistance, just as everyone residing in a certain municipality does, but there are differences in interpretation when it comes to how far the responsibility of the municipality reaches. There is also a risk of deportation latent in the contact with the social services. The Social Services Act opens up for tensions between a formal *responsibility* and *answerability* (Isin 2008). Access to social assistance for undocumented migrants can therefore be understood as an example of struggles and negotiations taking place; as a case where citizenship can be studied as *enacted*. As social assistance is managed at a municipal level, this is where such enactments potentially take place. Local context does affect the organisation of social assistance, and this chapter has presented Malmö both as a municipality and a city where undocumented migrants sometimes have been addressed. In the following analysis, I will use this chapter as a backdrop that contextualises the discussions on the guidelines on social assistance that were implemented in 2013–2014.

## 6. The Malmö Guidelines: Between Action and Act?

The Malmö guidelines for social assistance were decided upon in 2013 and implemented in January 2014. The guidelines to some extent expanded the scope of social assistance, especially in the case of undocumented children, something that could be analysed as challenging present citizenship practices. However, the guidelines can also be described as an action within the ordinary framework: a partial inclusion that does not challenge the overall citizenship regime. In this chapter, I analyse how these guidelines came about and how they can be understood in terms of actions and acting.

Local guidelines direct the work with social assistance and can therefore be analysed both at a policy level and through studying social work practice (compare Wörlén 2010). The chapter identifies three forms of action leading to the implementation: *actions of legal confirmation*, *actions of codification* and *actions of disregard* and analyses how the guidelines are used in the everyday practice of social workers and the new boundaries drawn through social work practice. I argue that all these forms of action contributed to the fact that the partial inclusion of undocumented migrants was not seen as controversial or extraordinary.

### 6.1 Three Kinds of Actions in Relation to the Malmö Guidelines

The Malmö guidelines for social assistance were described as facilitating the decisions on social assistance and assuring an equal treatment in the different city districts. They were politically decided and were in the



preparatory work described as having a focus on helping individuals to be self-supporting (Malmö stad 2013a:3):

New guidelines for the management of social assistance are to be decided upon during the autumn of 2013; in these guidelines the social services assignment to help people to self-sufficiency is underlined, concretised among other things through suggestions concerning planning and following up the cases. (*My translation*)

As will be developed below, the section on undocumented migrants in the guidelines was presented as a clarification of present praxis and I analyse this mainly in terms of *actions*.

The *actions of legal confirmation* articulated that the problem relating to undocumented migrants' access to social assistance was that existing legal rules were not sufficiently clarified. The actions therefore concerned clarifying existing rules, but without the intent to add anything. The *actions of codification* can be linked to practitioners' wish to do the right thing. As undocumented migrants were already present within the social services, there was an intent to develop equality in the practices in order to avoid variation between the city districts. A solution to this was to develop rules that were in line with the existing legal frames, but this was not a matter of principle concern. The *actions of disregard* were based on there being a lack of politicisation of the topic. To include, widen or expand the groups of individuals to be recognised as worthy of support was not a matter of (direct) ideological dispute. However, in some contexts the guidelines seem to have been understood as diverging from ordinary practices, indicating a movement towards *acts*.

### **6.1.1 Formulating Guidelines: Actions of Legal Confirmation**

The Malmö guidelines on social assistance were agreed upon in November 2013 by the Malmö City Council. In the preparatory work, two main concerns were presented: long-term dependence on social assistance and a child perspective (Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 2013b). In an official statement it was stated that:

The city of Malmö has special challenges when it comes to counteracting long-term reception of social assistance, to ensure a reasonable standard of living for those receiving assistance during long periods of time, and to work with a clear and concrete child perspective with a holistic view. (Official Statement/Tjänsteutlåtande 2013:2, *my translation*)

The guidelines were presented as strengthening the focus on helping individuals to be self-supporting. They were mainly presented as a tool to reduce dependency on social assistance, but also to strengthen families with long-term dependence on social assistance. The guidelines also addressed the issue of undocumented migrants. A rather long section (almost one page, out of fourteen) in the guidelines treated the issue of social assistance to this group. In the guidelines, undocumented migrants were defined as:

An undocumented person is in Sweden without permission. The group includes persons who have received an order of expulsion, persons with an expired or redrawn residence permit and persons who have never applied for a residence permit. Also EU citizens without residence and their family members belong to this group. (Malmö stad 2013b, *my translation*)

The guidelines clearly stated who was to be considered as “undocumented” and explicitly included EU citizens overstaying their three-month visa. In accordance with the Swedish Social Services Act (2 a Chapter 1 §), the guidelines made clear that the municipality had a responsibility for everyone residing within its jurisdiction. This meant that undocumented migrants had the possibility to receive assistance in order to avoid an emergency situation, similar to Swedish residents staying temporarily in a municipality where they did not live. The kind of support was to be assessed on an individual basis. Although individual assessments are applied to all persons applying for social assistance, undocumented migrants were defined as a specific group of service users in order to scrutinise whether they had these rights.

The municipality’s responsibility for undocumented migrants was formulated as follows in the guidelines:

Undocumented migrants lack legal residence in Sweden. The responsibility of the social services is therefore limited to support and help in acute

situations (emergency) when the person resides in the municipality (2 a Chapter 2 § Social Service Act). What types of support and help are considered as acute shall, in the same way as other persons subject to the regulation, be assessed through individual assessment. There are no special regulations for undocumented migrants; they should be treated in the same way as other persons residing in the municipality and applying for support from the social services. The ultimate responsibility of the municipality remains as long as the person resides in the municipality and does not get her/his need met in another way. (Malmö stad 2013b:13, *my translation*)

In accordance with the Social Services Act, the municipality's formal responsibility covered everyone residing in the municipality, and was thus not limited to ideas of citizenship or permanent residence status. The municipality's responsibility was, however, limited to emergency situations, and where this limit should be drawn was a matter of individual assessment. The guidelines were presented as a confirmation of the legal framework: undocumented migrants are the responsibility of the municipality.

Along with the clarification of the municipality's formal responsibility for undocumented migrants, two additional statements were made in relation to emergency support and the child perspective. Undocumented migrants were not to receive social assistance over the longer term but only in an "emergency". However, "emergency" could be interpreted as possibly stretched over time: as long as the person resides in the municipality and does not get the need met in another way. Concerning the child perspective, the guidelines stated:

The principle of the best interest of the child is expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the Social Services Act. The principle cannot be used in order to depart from applicable law but when there is room for different interpretations or assessments the principle can be used in order to select the solution that is most favourable for the child. In the assessments of children's need of support and help, the principle can be used in a way that in every sense treats children as if they were residents in the city of Malmö. This means social assistance according to the full norm and right to assistance for general costs<sup>42</sup> in the same way as children resident in

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<sup>42</sup> "Livsföring I övrigt"; meant to cover current costs for provision (such as costs for dentist, healthcare, furniture etc.) (Socialstyrelsen 2016b).

the municipality. In order to give children residing in our municipality reasonable living conditions it is recommended that the principle is used in this way. If a family with children applies to the social services, the children in the family but not the adults are given full norm and that the whole family is granted support in regard to housing that gives the children reasonable living conditions. (Malmö stad 2013b:13, *my translation*)

The city thus recommended that children should receive the national norm for social assistance. It was also recommended that families with children should get support in regard to housing. However, the adults in these families were still to receive only emergency support (just as other adults residing as undocumented). This means that children, with the backing of the UNCRC, received more far-reaching support than adults. In the case of children, it is therefore possible to talk about a more active inclusion than merely “clarifying” the law.

The child perspective was central throughout the work on the guidelines. The formulations in preparatory works (Malmö stad 2013a) and in the reports made by the Malmö Commission focused on support for children in families receiving social assistance for longer periods of time. An important discussion in relation to social assistance was hence the counteracting of child poverty (see for example Stiegendahl and Östergren 2013). That the guidelines concerned children specifically was mentioned in both interviews and documents. One civil servant declared:

The perspective of children’s rights and to protect children, it is so well incorporated, it is so established and, in fact, I find it a bit strange that others find it [the guidelines] so special.

The idea that children should not suffer has been present in the national debates on healthcare and schooling for undocumented migrants (see Nielsen 2016). For example, the Minister for Education at the time of the creation of the Malmö guidelines, Jan Björklund, expressed the view that “all children in the world have the right to go to school, no matter what their parents have done” (SVT 2012, *my translation*). The idea of child vulnerability and need for special protection in debates on undocumented migrants has been analysed as a picturing of children as innocent victims of irresponsible parents (Nielsen 2016, Karlsen 2015). This is also visible in

the guidelines, as children are to receive full social assistance while their parents can access only emergency support.

The approach to the guidelines as mainly clarifying the law made them a matter for experts, or an action of legal confirmation, rather than for example a political stance. As was expressed by a civil servant at the City Office:

And then we have legal advisors who are good at it, so we had lots of discussions and they got lots of questions and they answered again and they got new questions and they answered again. So we thought that we should do something that could be a help for the social assistants, and then we reached the conclusion that it is good to have it in the guidelines, as the social assistants use them when they handle their cases. Because, of course, you can sit and look things up in law books and law texts but it doesn't help you very much, so we asked the legal advisors to help us formulate a text that was of use for a practitioner in reality. (Civil servant working at the City Office)

This civil servant related that the municipal legal advisors in Malmö were very clear about how the Social Services Act should be understood. The guidelines were hence presented as an action of legal confirmation. She added that clearer instructions were requested by practitioners; this will be developed below.

### **6.1.2 Requests from Practitioners: Actions of Codification**

The reason for introducing the paragraph on undocumented migrants in the Malmö guidelines was also explained as in response to a request from practitioners. This request can be understood as an action of codification: the practitioners had already dealt with the question, but they wanted to have a formal assignment. In the preparatory work presented to the politicians in the City Council, the addressing of undocumented migrants was explained as follows:

The present guidelines contain no formulation of social assistance to undocumented migrants. Lately, there have been questions from the city districts concerning this type of matter and the City Office assesses that there is a need to complement the guidelines in order to clarify what are the terms. The City Office assesses that the uncertainties concerning this matter motivate a relatively large section [in the new guidelines] even if the contents only imply a clarification of present law. (Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 2013b, *my translation*)

As there were uncertainties among practising social workers, it was argued that clearer guidelines were needed. In an e-mail conversation, this was also explained by one of the Malmö municipal legal advisors:

When it comes to the guidelines there were no special discussions on this matter. That it [social assistance to undocumented migrants] was entered into the guidelines was mainly a “codification” of how the social services had already acted and it was entered because the question had been brought up to date more than it was a couple of years ago, the last time the guidelines were reviewed. The guidelines were thus not meant to imply any change in how the work was already performed, but were meant to give more clarity concerning how the municipality works with this question. This was done in conjunction with the fact that the guidelines were worked through in general. So, there were no special discussions with anyone on this matter. (E-mail conversation with municipal legal advisor in Malmö, 2015-09-23, *my translation*)

The view on the guidelines as an action of legal confirmation is here linked to the codification requested by practitioners.

One reason for the need for a codification was that there were differences between the city districts. This can be noted in interviews with practitioners and managers. A social worker, who was working as counsellor at the Refugee Health Care centre in Malmö and had contact with undocumented migrants before the Malmö guidelines came about, describes getting different answers from different city districts when she had questions regarding social assistance:

I remember this calling around and getting different answers from different city districts. (Former counsellor, Refugee Health Care)

Similarly, a manager working with social assistance explains that many social workers did not know how they should act in relation to undocumented migrants before the guidelines were implemented, even if some had already applied a practice similar to that recommended in the guidelines:

For some, yes [the guidelines created a change], definitely. I think in [city district], here we had no long tradition of working with either undocumented or with homelessness, or that kind, we have been spared for many years. That also means that you are not used to handling such topics. So we need to work with that. But there are many parts of the city that actually have been working with this before... (Manager at the social services, social assistance)

The quote indicates that the issue was brought to the fore when undocumented migrants came to certain city districts, rather than as a matter of principle. In the interview, she also underlined the importance of the city districts having the same information when it came to the handling of social assistance to undocumented migrants, and also that districts with few undocumented migrants should be prepared when meeting this group. The assessment was thereby expected to become less dependent on individual social workers or managers when there were municipal recommendations to follow: practice was to be codified.

### **6.1.3 The Local Political Debate: Actions of Disregard**

The implementation of the guidelines was preceded by debates among local politicians. During spring 2013, the guidelines were remitted to the city districts in Malmö. Here, undocumented migrants were rarely mentioned in the protocols. Therefore the introduction of undocumented migrants into the guidelines can be understood in terms of actions of disregard, in that it was not treated as a central issue.

Instead, an important discussion among local politicians was whether the guidelines were focusing too much on subsidies or if there was a focus on recipients being self-supporting. The political assemblies in the city districts (with a majority of the Social Democratic Party, the Green Party and the

Left Party) supported the guidelines (Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 2013a).<sup>43</sup> The right-wing opposition commented that the guidelines had too little focus on activation. Studying the meeting protocols, the paragraph on undocumented migrants does not seem to have been an issue, apart from smaller comments on phrasing and further clarifications of the rules.<sup>44</sup> Rather, two main lines of argumentation could be seen in the debates on the guidelines: equal opportunities for all children on the one hand and activation/encouraging work rather than social assistance on the other (Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 2013a). However, the right-wing nationalist party, the Sweden Democrats, was clearly against giving social assistance to undocumented migrants; this was expressed in their reservations about the guidelines.

When the guidelines were discussed in the City Council, in November 2013, the discussion was clearly divided between the local political factions at the time (a left/right divide): the Social Democratic Party together with the Green Party and the Left Party versus the Moderate Party together with the Liberal Party and the Swedish Senior Citizen Interest Party (Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 2013a, 2013b). The Sweden Democrats also participated, but outside of the two groupings. The Social Democrats argued that the guidelines on social assistance strengthened the idea of self-support as well as the child perspective:

You could say that what is new in this is that we have a clear child perspective. There are two things that I would like to raise first, and that is the double assignment that the social services actually have in regard to social assistance, that you should of course first assess the right to assistance when someone lacks own income. But what is made clear in these guidelines is also the support for self-sufficiency. The other thing that I want to raise is the child perspective, that we really pay attention to the situation of the children living in families with long-term social assistance. (Social Democrat in Malmö City Hall 2013-11-28, Malmö kommunfullmäktige 2013a)

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<sup>43</sup> An overview of Swedish political parties can be found in the appendix.

<sup>44</sup> For example, there were comments on clarifying what groups should be considered as undocumented and the interpretation of “emergency situations” (Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 2013). These two issues were addressed in the final version of the guidelines.



The additional section on undocumented migrants was described as a clarification of present law. The Social Democrat view on self-sufficiency was contested by the opposition, who wanted a stronger focus on activation and on the creation of new jobs – this, it was argued, would also create better conditions for the children. A topic for debate concerned whether the increased costs of social assistance were caused to a large extent by political decisions at the national level (and the politics implemented by the right-wing government) or whether the municipality was not active enough in fulfilling the “work line” proposed by the right-wing government at the time. In these discussions, concerning costs and the ambitions of the guidelines, undocumented migrants were not mentioned. Rather, the debate echoed broader disagreements between the political coalitions. Therefore the introduction of undocumented migrants in the guidelines can be interpreted as a form of disregard.

Social assistance to undocumented migrants was also presented as a matter for equal treatment of children (Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 2013a). The guidelines were introduced by the Social Democrats as a strengthening of the child perspective, rather than as a political statement in favour of including undocumented migrants as a responsibility of the social services. However, a more active stance could be seen as representatives of the Green Party and the Left Party stated that they were proud to be able to give undocumented children equal treatment:

I am very happy that we so clearly put a focus on children in this matter. I am also very happy for this clarification that we make concerning undocumented migrants, and I am proud of the decision to give full norm to undocumented migrants with children, so that all families with children are treated equally and right. (Representative of Green Party, Malmö City Hall 2013-11-28, Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 2013a)

This indicates that these two parties had a more explicitly expressed idea of giving support to this group, and it can be related to the fact that they had been advocating for the inclusion of undocumented migrants in other areas, for example healthcare (see Chapter 7 for further discussion on this).

The Sweden Democrats tried to introduce another line of argumentation: migration as a problem:

For a long period of time, Malmö has not been able to deal with the high numbers of migrants coming to our city. This is, according to us, the Sweden Democrats, the central topic in order to come to terms with the social problems in Malmö. (Representative of Sweden Democrats, Malmö City Hall 2013-11-28, Malmö Kommunfullmäktige 2013a)

This line of argumentation also included critique of the inclusion of undocumented migrants in the guidelines, an effort to change the formulation to “illegal immigration”, and blaming migrants in general for the poverty in Malmö. This was not taken up by the other parties. As the Sweden Democrats were isolated in their argumentation, the question was not turned into a controversial issue but remained within the framework of clarifying praxis and equal treatment of children.

The guidelines were agreed upon in the City Council and implemented shortly after. The little debate on undocumented migrants indicates that this was not seen as very controversial by the politicians. The incorporation of the group seems to be due to circumstances other than a strong political agenda, and can therefore be understood as an action of disregard.

#### **6.1.4 An Extended Debate – Actions Turning into Acts?**

The Malmö guidelines for social assistance were introduced in terms of different forms of actions. I have above discussed actions of legal confirmation, actions of codification and actions of disregard. However, if we extend the discussion in time and space a partly different image emerges. In other contexts, the practice of giving social assistance to undocumented migrants was understood as controversial, and the introduction of the Malmö guidelines drew attention in the media. For example, Sveriges (Swedish) Television reported on the implementation and published an article on its webpage describing the guidelines as “far from self-evident”:

In Malmö new guidelines will be implemented at the end of this year, stating that undocumented children shall have social assistance and support for housing. It is an interpretation of the Social Services Act and the Convention on the Rights of the Child that is far from self-evident in other Swedish municipalities. (SVT 2013, *my translation*)

The Malmö guidelines were presented as an *event*, i.e. something that diverges from the usual practice. In another article, in one of the leading Swedish newspapers, a Malmö Social Democrat commented upon the formulations on undocumented children, stating that “we show that we take the Convention on the Rights of the Child seriously” (Dagens Nyheter, 2014, *my translation*). On this occasion, the formulation indicated that the rationales behind the implementation were more directed to *acting* beyond formal expectations. When presenting the guidelines as divergent or as taking responsibility for undocumented migrants, rather than as a clarification of the law, something happens with regard to the understanding of the guidelines. In other local contexts the explicit mentioning of undocumented migrants did not seem to be understood as merely an action of legal confirmation.

Some of the interview participants said that they had been taken by surprise when the “Malmö case” was noticed in the media. As a civil servant involved in the development of the guidelines related:

And when we took the decision and it was announced, it got such attention – lots of journalists called asking, “How did you come to this decision?” Was it so remarkable? Then I understood that you interpret this in rather different ways, because there was a journalist who called me and said, “Now that you have made Malmö a sanctuary for undocumented migrants” – what? That is too far to the other side; no, we have not made Malmö a sanctuary for undocumented migrants. But we have thought that undocumented migrants or EU migrants, people living in this vacuum, that their children should not suffer from this, not economically anyway, because that is what we can manage. (Interview with civil servant at the City Office)

The civil servant rejected the view of the guidelines as divergent, something that was also underlined by the municipal legal advisors. To the question as to why this only happened in Malmö, one legal advisor answered:

I can’t comment why others find it difficult to interpret the right to assistance, as I am not certain of why this is the case. The Social Services Act states that if one resides in a municipality and is in an acute situation one has the right to help and support. Therefore, this [our local guidelines] is

based on what the law says. (E-mail conversation with municipal legal advisor in Malmö, 2015-09-23, *my translation*)

The legal advisor underlined that the formulations in the guidelines were in line with the Social Services Act. Similar comments were made by another municipal legal advisor, who explained the variation between municipalities as because other municipalities did not have “enough knowledge of the law” (interview, municipal legal advisor).

However, the news media reporting on the guidelines indicated that the guidelines were part of a broader struggle over definitions. The local policies were also embraced by activists within the civil society. For instance, the Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups (FARR) encouraged municipalities to make use of the leeway in the Social Services Act to give undocumented migrants real possibilities for assistance. FARR stated:

Some municipalities have decided that undocumented children have the right to full social assistance, adults to assistance in acute situations and that, for example, women in need of protection have the right to this.

FARR encourages Swedish municipalities to apply a broad and generous interpretation of the law and to ensure that there are resources and practical possibilities to give assistance to undocumented persons in need without the risk that their records are given to the police. (FARR 2014, *my translation*)

When FARR encourages a “broad and generous interpretation”, they link the Malmö guidelines to an inclusive approach rather than to “ordinary practice”. If applying the Malmö practice, the municipalities are seen as taking a stand. The Malmö guidelines on social assistance can hence be understood in the light of how they are presented and made use of afterwards and in other contexts. Applying a more generous interpretation is in this case described as good practice but not as self-evident. Similarly, in a guide for giving social support to undocumented children (“Utanför nästan allt”/“On the outside of almost everything”), Save the Children state that:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is clear. All children have the same rights, no matter societal status, if they have residence permit or not, if they live as hidden or not. But reality is different. The fundamental rule when it comes to the right to social support is that the responsibility of the Social Services concerns all persons residing in the area concerned. The Social Services have a responsibility for children who are mistreated or risk being mistreated, no matter the legal background of the child. All children have a right to get their individual needs assessed. Save the Children as well as other actors have however noted that different authorities and instances treat undocumented children in very different ways. They simply don't get the same access to societal support as other children do. (Rädda Barnen 2014)

This statement goes in line with the Malmö guidelines, but also underlines that this is not a practice that all municipalities agree upon. In the same year (2014), one of the largest unions for social workers, SSR, described the guide from Save the Children as a "path in the right direction" (Akademikerbloggen 2014). This can be read as support from the union to social workers and policymakers who include undocumented migrants in local social work practice.

When compared to those of other municipalities, the Malmö guidelines did seem to diverge. Inspired by the Malmö guidelines on social assistance, there have been local efforts to encourage other municipalities to adopt similar guidelines. For example, in November 2013, the Norrköping Asylum group participated in arranging a seminar with local politicians, churches and researchers trying to put pressure on the social services in regard to undocumented migrants' (non-)access to social assistance (Löfgren 2015). However, the local politicians argued in line with a logic of migration control rather than a logic of social rights or children's rights, and undocumented migrants were not introduced into the municipal guidelines (ibid.). In Gothenburg, after many years of discussions, the new municipal guidelines of 2015 stated that undocumented migrants should have the right to appeal for social assistance (Göteborgs stad 2015). The guidelines also stated that undocumented migrants had the right to emergency support, but that the kind of support was to be decided upon on an

individual basis.<sup>45</sup> Children were not addressed specifically. In Stockholm, the guidelines of 2014 did not address undocumented migrants, but in December 2016 guidelines were suggested following the Malmö example (SVT 2016b, Stockholms stad 2014). However, as the Supreme Administrative Court did not go in line with the Malmö practice in its decision in June 2017 it is yet too early to say what consequences this will have. This is especially the case since the border police almost at the same time has begun to search for undocumented migrants through contacting the social services (see Chapter 5). However, differences in local interpretations show an ongoing negotiation, and that the issue of social assistance to undocumented migrants can be described as “in flux”.

## 6.2 Social Assistance as Exercised Between Actions and Acts

The Malmö guidelines on social assistance have implied changes both for practitioners and for the everyday life of many undocumented migrants, but new demarcations of borders are also created through practice (compare Balibar 2004). When applied to social work practice, the Malmö guidelines are interpreted and the social workers encounter new challenges connected to the inclusion of undocumented migrants as a group of service users. As a long tradition of studies explores, formal instructions are constantly negotiated and performed through everyday social work practice (Fassin et al. 2015, Wallander and Molander 2014, Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012, Lipsky 1980/2010). The guidelines are therefore to be understood somewhat differently at different scales. At a policy level, the intention of the guidelines was described as clear: undocumented migrants have the right to an individual assessment, adults can receive emergency support and children full social assistance. At manager level in the Malmö city districts, this intention was related to more practical issues, such as short-term economic concerns. At the level of social workers meeting service users *face-*

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<sup>45</sup> When implementing these guidelines, Gothenburg municipality also introduced the direction that civil society organisations working with undocumented migrants can apply for funding (Feministiskt Initiativ Göteborg 2016).

*to-face*, even more concrete guidance has been asked for. The guidelines state that the social services have a responsibility for undocumented migrants, but what this responsibility consists of is interpreted in meetings between social workers and undocumented service users. This opens up for a possibility of the different forms of *actions* moving towards *acts*, as a creative dimension is added through the discretionary space of the social workers.

Below, I analyse how this responsibility is interpreted and negotiated and how tensions between *responsibility* as the formal duty and *answerability* as a “moral duty” answering to justice beyond ordinary responsibilities become visible (Isin 2008, 2012). I argue that the Malmö guidelines can be understood through how they are practised: studying the interpretations made by social workers when practising social support. Where to draw the line, where to identify the boundaries, is negotiated at an everyday level. This negotiation is made within the formal mandate of the social services, a formal responsibility that could be expanded or limited depending on individual social workers and on context. The negotiation is also made in relation to the municipal budget and to the political discourses at the time. This means that the support to undocumented migrants can potentially be understood as more controversial if there are higher costs or at a time when migration is seen as a problem. The seemingly neutral individual assessment made in accordance with the guidelines (and with the Social Services Act) can therefore also be related to political agendas. I conclude by discussing potential restrictions and cutbacks in relation to undocumented migrants, relating this to a discussion on events changing meaning when stretched over time.

### **6.2.1 Discretionary Spaces: Between Responsibility and Answerability**

The Malmö guidelines state that the municipality has a responsibility for undocumented migrants in situations of emergency. However, they do not provide practical solutions. Even if the Malmö guidelines are more explicit than in other municipalities, and even if they do give more detailed instructions than the Social Services Act, they do not establish *how* to work with undocumented migrants. For example, what was to be considered as

the best interest of the child, a principle described as central to the guidelines, was not always clear in practice. As a manager explained:

And “the best interest of the child” is always an expression that you can play with as much as you like; who has the right to define the best interest of the child? And from what perspective? So... We make our assessment based on our norms, or rather our guidelines, formally, within the social services. And we always have to do that assessment. (Manager within the social services, social assistance)

Here, the use of the principle was not presented as self-evident but as open for interpretation (and, thereby, possible to use in accordance with different political agendas).

The social workers sometimes expressed that they had practical difficulties when in contact with undocumented migrants specifically; for example, they might not be able to show a housing contract or to receive payments into a bank account. Sometimes, the social workers interviewed found this problematic. Most of the undocumented service users did not have a formal housing contract and some were afraid to disclose their address, as there was a risk that the police might contact the social services and ask for information about specific service users (as indeed they later did<sup>46</sup>). However, the social workers often described that they managed to find solutions, such as contracts for subletting or making home visits. The fact that there was a formal responsibility in these cases implied that social workers to some extent needed to adapt their practice to the situation of undocumented migrants and make use of their discretionary space.

Another practical problem concerning undocumented migrants mentioned in the interviews was the goal of “activation” (see also Bergmark 2014, Johansson and Hornemann Møller 2009). This was connected to the overarching goal to make service users leave the social services through establishing them in the labour market. As discussed above, the social workers were expected to work actively to support service users to find a job. One social worker recounted in regard to undocumented migrants:

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<sup>46</sup> At the time of the interviews, this risk was seen as theoretical – the police had not contacted the social services for such a reason.



...we can't make any demands on these people, and this also makes it rather meaningless in a sense. I know their situation. You can look for a job but how will it work and who will hire you? It is a nonexistence in many ways, for these people. And at the same time, you think about that, when you meet them, they can't plan forward. You can't ask things about the future because... because it is so uncertain. (Social worker working with social assistance)

The situation of undocumented migrants here clashed with the goal of helping service users to become self-supporting. As the social services focused on the aspect of self-support, rather than adapting to a situation with long-term social assistance, the work with undocumented migrants could be understood as “meaningless”; it could not change the situation in the long run. The actions of legal confirmation, describing the Malmö guidelines as in line with the law, were therefore in some instances troublesome when applied in practice.

The acute situation of “emergency” stretched over time has similarities with the general discussions on social assistance received over longer periods of time: ideally this situation should not exist. In the case described above, the child perspective, which is the reason why undocumented migrants sometimes get social assistance on longer terms, clashes with the goal of activation (compare Hjort 2012a). Such situations sometimes meant that the social workers found it complicated to “fit” undocumented migrants into their ordinary work with social assistance, as they could not be “active citizens” in the way that was expected (compare Dahlstedt 2015). The link between *activation* (as in participation on the labour market or in different programs) and being seen as an *active citizen* sometimes became an obstacle for social workers when trying to address undocumented migrants “as if” they were citizens. Other groups receiving social assistance on longer terms could at least be asked to do something in return (for example, participate in labour market programs). The temporariness of social assistance was hence put aside in the case of undocumented migrants. At the same time the situation of undocumented migrants could be understood as temporary in itself: former asylum seekers especially were receiving social assistance

while awaiting a new opportunity to apply for asylum (a waiting that could last for up to four years<sup>47</sup>).

As the guidelines already established that undocumented migrants had a right to support in situations of emergency, one main challenge discussed was how to deal with service users who live in an emergency for a longer period of time. The guidelines state that “the ultimate responsibility of the municipality remains as long as the person resides in the municipality and does not get her/his need met in another way” (Malmö stad 2013:13, *my translation*). This can be interpreted as a possibility to receive emergency support on a long-term basis (also for adults without children). Balancing between a temporary support in the acute situation and the long-term needs, the situation of emergency was to be assessed on a regular basis. For example, one social worker described how he met a service user every second week, repeating the same information, as he needed to assess the situation of emergency over and over again:

...we are not to give them money for an entire month but we should assess the urgent need. Assessing emergency shouldn't be done on a regular basis really – it is an emergency situation. Therefore, we need to meet them often and explain to them that “You do not have a residence permit and you aren't allowed to stay. Are you going to go to that country that is to assess your application for asylum; what are your thoughts? To see if we can approve this, because you have no residence permit.” And every time I meet the woman who I have been meeting for half a year now I say all of this, every second week: “No, you can't be here, you have to go back to wherever it is. Has something changed, have you received any money, have you been in contact with the Swedish Migration Agency...?” And I can see her, she sits and looks at me and smiles – here we go again. It becomes somewhat ridiculous. (Social worker working with social assistance)

In the quote, the social worker remarked that the assessment of emergency should not be made on a regular basis, and that when this was done it created a situation that he found to be somewhat ridiculous. However,

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<sup>47</sup> This is the time that a rejected asylum seeker needs to wait before having the right to reapply for asylum in Sweden. Undocumented migrants subject to the Dublin Regulation have to wait for 18 months (see also Chapter 8).

following the logic that the municipality is ultimately responsible for everyone residing in its territory, the person in front of him should receive support.

The interpretations of the guidelines were also made in an organisational context with a heavy workload and where some social workers had little experience of the work (Hjort 2012, see also Chapter 5 for a description of this).<sup>48</sup> One social worker said that she didn't have the possibility to meet the service users often, and said that this probably affected her assessments regarding a family residing as undocumented:

I think I had them during a year. I actually think that it is too little to meet them twice in one year, that I would have needed to meet them more, just to see how they were, if they need anything more, but because of the work situation this was not possible. And as they did not apply for more... they weren't making any fuss, so then I had to prioritise what did... (Social worker working with social assistance)

In relation to this case, she said that the family probably received less support than many other service users as they were not in a position to make demands.

Another example where there was a variation, was the interpretation of the needs of the service users. Especially in the case of emergency support, the social workers said that they found it difficult to define the *content* of the support:

...they [undocumented migrants] still have the need for the same things, especially if they are here over a long period; needs arise. It is not only food that is needed acutely over one and a half years. Clothes break. And just to brush your teeth over a year and a half... (Social assistant working with social assistance)

Just as in the case of other long-term recipients with a regularised residence status, the short-term character of social assistance made it difficult to

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<sup>48</sup> The interpretations were made by social workers in their meetings with undocumented service users, but also by the managers who were to approve the decisions of the social workers (compare Lauri 2016).

handle persons needing assistance for a longer period of time. This was even more accentuated when it came to “emergency support”, which was constructed to be for a very short term. For example, a social worker told about an undocumented service user who applied for a sum to cover the cost of a pair of spectacles:

For example, [he] applied for glasses, and then I had to assess: is this an urgent need? And this time we thought that it was an urgent need, because he had a lot of pain in his head. So then it became [assessed as] an urgent need. (Social worker working with social assistance)

The discussions on the limits of economic support bear many similarities with the discussions on assessing urgent healthcare: the understanding of emergency will vary between different welfare officials (see Chapter 2, also Gullberg and Wihlborg 2014). The interpretations of formulations such as “emergency” can be used both to expand the social services’ responsibility towards undocumented migrants and to limit it; this indicates a movement between responsibility and answerability, as following rules could mean different things.

The individual assessment could also be used regarding age. The extended responsibility for undocumented children can be understood to concern individuals under the age of 18. However, in the guidelines there was a special concern with immigrant youth who have not finished high school:

Immigrant youth who have arrived in Sweden at school age can often have had their studies delayed. Then it is reasonable that they may complete high school after turning 20 without having to borrow money. The same assessment can be made regarding other youth who have had their studies delayed because of social problems. (Malmö stad 2013:10)

The sometimes sharp line when a child turns 18 is not as strict here, just as in some other cases regarding the social services – but not in cases concerning migrants without residence permit (compare SOU 2016:19). In some situations where a child reached the age of 18, social workers were not strictly focusing on the age limit in their assessments. As an activist in contact with undocumented minors related:

Yes, yes. Well, there was some city district that continued paying the rent for some minor who turned 18, but that was an unaccompanied minor, that just “there are only three months left of your time [before being able to reapply for asylum], so I can just like continue to pay your rent for three months”, yes. (Asylum rights activist)

However, the activist frames this as an exception, not as the general approach. The individual assessment leaves room for movement between a strict following of (formal or informal) rules and making own assessments based on other principles. This means that the social workers were practising their work with social assistance within the formal framework of the guidelines for social assistance, but they came to different conclusions and made different interpretations. The stated responsibility for a group that did not always “fit” the organisation meant that the social workers sometimes had to find new solutions. The social workers were hence acting as “shims” between welfare state and the everyday life of undocumented service users: they needed to find ways to take this responsibility on (Tilly 1999:53). This meant that the social workers needed to make use of their discretionary space, and the line between *responsibility* and *answerability* sometimes became blurred; for example, when it came to practical solutions of how to interpret emergency support and/or demands on activation, or how to receive payments.

### **6.2.2 Borders: Where to “Draw the Line”?**

The interpretations made by social workers and managers could be understood as forming the practice of the guidelines. Individual assessments therefore decide the actual access to the social services. In such individual assessments, internal borders were sometimes made visible. One such example is the distinction between undocumented migrants and vulnerable EU citizens, a distinction that is not made in the guidelines but seem to be made in practice. Even if the assessment was to be individual, there seemed to be a hierarchy of perceived “deservingness” where former asylum seekers, fitting into the category of “hidden refugees” (compare Sager 2015), were seen as less problematic to help than EU citizens begging in the street. This levelling of “deservingness” has a long history in views on deserving and

underserving poor, and can be linked to means testing (Panican and Ulmestig 2016, Swärd 2012).

However, the distinction was not described in terms of “deservingness”. In some interviews this distinction was explained as a matter of time; the more temporary the stay was perceived to be, the harder it seemed to be to receive monetary support (covering expenses for food) and the more likely it seemed to be to get a ticket back to the country of origin. Former asylum seekers were often perceived as more immobile and “rooted” than EU citizens without residence permit. According to one manager, the assessment was often based upon the duration of the stay – if the undocumented migrant was understood to be rooted in the municipality, and what were their plans for the future:

Once again I go back to the individual case, and of course there could be different circumstances depending on the background as to why you are undocumented. (...) Time does matter for how long the children have been rooted in... (Manager within the social services, social assistance)

Time and temporariness here create a differentiation in how the presence is received and a following differentiation in terms of access to social rights. Even though the manager was reluctant to make general categorisations, she added:

You think that asylum seekers are often included in a context, and in some way they have been taking part a bit more, because they have gone through this process. And time does say something, as I said before: there is a difference between having been here for four months and for four years...

A distinction was also mirrored in some of the social workers’ categorisations. One of the social workers interviewed clearly defined an undocumented migrant as a former asylum seeker:

I would think that immigrants from outside of Europe who have got their asylum application rejected and live as hidden, those are the ones I think of. (Social worker working with social assistance)

Even though having a marked presence in the city of Malmö, and even though explicitly mentioned in the guidelines, vulnerable EU citizens in an irregular situation were not automatically perceived as undocumented migrants. This was partly as they were not seen as belonging – or rooted – in the same sense as former asylum seekers (who at least aspired to a formalised status). Temporariness can, however, work in different directions: on the one hand social assistance is meant to be a short-term support, but a situation viewed as temporary may give less access to social assistance. Also, the difficulty in deporting a migrant group staying irregularly can be read as an obstacle when giving access to social rights. In a comparison of the Swedish approaches to schooling in the case of undocumented migrants versus vulnerable EU citizens, Jacob Lind and Maria Persdotter (2017) note that children of former asylum seekers can access schooling in a less problematic way, but that they are also easier to deport than EU citizens. The authors argue that these approaches are dependent on the deportability of the two migrant groups, and that it is easier to grant rights to a group that is more deportable.

One of the politicians stated that the group considered when discussing the guidelines was mainly former asylum seekers who were already “in the system” (in contact with the social services):

I can say that when we decided upon the guidelines it was not the EU migrants who were the focus, but rather these children who actually went to school already... (Politician, Social Democratic Party)

The partial inclusion of undocumented migrants hence participated in the drawing of new lines around groups of rights-bearers and individuals who do not access the social services. This can be described as an action within present codifications of the professional practice, but can also be interpreted in terms of *acts*: the social workers draw new lines around who is regarded as a rights-bearing subject (compare Nyers 2008). The group of undocumented migrants who were already in contact with the social services was estimated to be small, something that also seems to have affected the views on which groups to include.<sup>49</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2,

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<sup>49</sup> This was also stated in newspaper articles following the implementation of the guidelines. If some expected a “boom” of applicants directly after the implementation, this seems to have failed to appear. (Sydsvenskan 2014, SVT 2014)

talk about numbers in relation to undocumented migrants is tricky. In an analysis of EU discourses on irregular migration, Bastian Vollmer (2011) argues that estimates on numbers are often difficult to make and that numbers are used for political purposes:

In sum, ‘number games’ indicate the significance and the role of numbers in policy discourses. State authorities and governments, but also political stakeholders from the civil sector (NGOs, think tanks, etc.) use figures depending on their own strategic interests, hence the term ‘number game’. Sometimes, numbers in this game are based on unverified sources. Most ‘number games’ across the EU resemble the model found in the UK: higher numbers justify control and enforcement policies, whereas lower numbers ease the political landscape. Thus, ‘number games’ gained a pivotal position in policy discourses across the EU. (Vollmer 2011:330)

Uncertainties in numbers may be used for different political purposes. Talking about numbers always contains a risk of blurring what is at stake. During the time of the interviews (in autumn 2015), the numbers were seen in another light by some politicians:

I remember that at the time the civil servants from the social services said that these are children who we already have in the schools here, it does not concern big numbers and they have lived here for years. So I think that we underestimated the numbers when we took the decision. (Politician, Social Democratic Party)<sup>50</sup>

In this talk about numbers, there seems to be a shift between saying that “no child should suffer” to “it concerns only few families”. An increase in numbers would possibly make social assistance to undocumented migrants turn into a more controversial issue. Addressing the presence of undocumented migrants as a marginal group within the municipality hence

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<sup>50</sup> After this interview, the undocumented service users have been counted. A recent counting of the social services’ contacts with undocumented migrants in Malmö shows that, in 2015, 282 adults and 144 children had contacts with the social services (this number concerns contacts, not only recipients of social assistance) (e-mail conversation with local politician, 2016). This is a number that must be considered low in relation to the total amount of recipients in Malmö; in 2015 there, 16584 households received social assistance. (Socialstyrelsen 2016b)



seems to have been easier than when the principle of giving support is applied to more groups than former asylum seekers already in contact with the social services.

### **6.2.3 Cutbacks – Making the Guidelines into an Event?**

How the guidelines are to be understood can be related to a larger context, both regarding the municipal context and larger discourses on the possible costs of migration. During the past year, 2016, asylum rights activists have sometimes experienced difficulties when giving support to undocumented migrants applying for social assistance in Malmö. There are indications in some of the interviews that the practice is beginning to be more restrictive. For example, one manager within the social services, working with social assistance, said:

Manager: ...we try to ward off as far as possible.

Vanna: Try to?

Manager: Ward off. Somewhere, that we can't lay all our resources on undocumented migrants. (Manager within the social services, social assistance)

This indicates that when more undocumented migrants come into contact with the social services, there are efforts to restrict the access; to “ward off” the group. This is even if the group is comparatively small. According to another manager of the social services (IoF), the interpretation of the guidelines has become more restrictive:

When it comes to the handling of undocumented migrants, there has probably been a general change in that undocumented migrants are not granted emergency support as often as before, but are offered help to travel home. (E-mail conversation with manager within the social services, 2016-04-22, *my translation*)

This change is possible to do without changing the guidelines, as the assessment is always individual and the guidelines serve more as a

framework (albeit as a more detailed framework than the Social Services Act). In some of the interviews performed during the so-called “refugee crisis” in 2015, comments were made that indicate new views on economic assistance to undocumented migrants. Individual assessments could therefore serve as a “gatekeeper”, making harsher assessments if undocumented migrants are perceived as “too many”. Harsher migration control, for example the police demanding information on undocumented migrants from the social services, therefore risks throwing the practices of support to undocumented migrants back to a more informal level. Even if still formally addressed in the guidelines for social assistance, informal practices of avoiding the police might need to be a part of the social workers’ practices if undocumented migrants should not be afraid of contacting the social services.

When asked about future investments in undocumented migrants, a local Social Democrat politician says:

Well, economically it is very difficult to find any room, as we are making savings in the ordinary activities. We have a great amount of homeless that we make big contributions for, we put very much money into homelessness and social assistance, more than a billion right now. So our focus is on decreasing this, helping people to self-sufficiency. And the further you are from the labour market the more difficult it becomes to come in and compete with the group that is in vulnerability... It is a bit pragmatic; of course, you would really like to be ideological and say that everyone has the right to everything, but we aren’t there in the legislation. (Politician, Social Democratic Party)

In the quote, the inclusion of undocumented migrants again becomes “something extra”; the presence of the group and its demands for rights is not questioned as such, but seen as an unrealistic cost and not as a municipal responsibility. Similar tendencies can be seen when a civil servant talks about the established idea that vulnerable groups should not be put against each other:

Because that is another question that everyone agrees upon. If you say that we should protect the children, everyone seems to agree that we should not put one group against another, is also that kind of question. But something

happens in a crisis that forces you to choose. And then it becomes like, we protect the children at the expense of the adults. And of course, if you talk about the reception, that we have to take care of the children and all of that, you can think about... as we now can't take care of them in the same way as we did a couple of months ago. Well you always stretch things and you have to accept what you wouldn't have accepted half a year ago, that is the case. (Civil servant at Malmö City Office)

In combination with the border police making use of the social services in order to find undocumented migrants in November 2016, the discussions above indicate that such a “stretching” of what is understood as good practice may be going on in the case of social assistance. A question that could be asked today might therefore be: is it going to be seen as more controversial (more of a rupture?) to give undocumented migrants increased access to the welfare state in a period of closed borders? The actions of disregarding the issue of undocumented migrants' access to social assistance and the actions of legal confirmation could therefore be understood as more politicised today.

## 6.3 Conclusion: Actions Potentially Turning into Acts

In this chapter, I have argued that the implementation of the Malmö guidelines on social assistance can be understood mainly in terms of actions within ordinary citizenship practices and that *actions of legal confirmation*, *actions of codification* and *actions of disregard* interplayed in the creation of the guidelines. Furthermore, instead of focusing directly on citizenship as a principle of giving access to municipal support, *residence* has been focused on at the local level with reference to the Social Services Act.

At a *municipal policy level*, the Malmö guidelines can be understood as within the frames of the Social Services Act, and the implementation was at the time mainly seen as an action of legal confirmation made by municipal legal advisors and policymakers. Nonetheless, the Malmö guidelines diverge from other municipalities' in that they clearly state that the social services

have a responsibility for undocumented migrants and recommend that undocumented children should be treated as other children resident in the municipality. In the municipal work with unemployment and social assistance, ideas of equality, especially for families with children, and ideas of self-support (or activation) exist parallel to each other and a conflict can be seen in the attempts to lower the costs for social assistance (resulting in higher demands on parents) on the one hand and to reduce child poverty on the other (Hjort 2012a). The guidelines' general focus on child poverty (not only on undocumented children) can hence be criticised for neglecting the cause of the children's situation: that the parents are poor. That the guidelines mainly focused on children seems, however, to have made it easier to address the issue.

At an *individual level*, tensions between responsibility and answerability are activated as practical problems experienced by social workers and managers are accompanied by difficulties related to the individual assessments. Concrete manifestations of such tensions can be identified in questions posed by practitioners, such as what is to be understood as an "emergency". As discussed above, the individual assessment can be used either in order to create better living conditions for undocumented migrants or in order to restrict the access for undocumented migrants to social assistance. Only treating undocumented migrants "as if" they were citizens and following the organisational protocol may create obstacles for undocumented migrants as their situation is different from that of residents. Social workers are acting in an organisational context, and also need to relate to what kind of interpretations are made by managers and by politicians at a municipal level. The discretionary space opens up for creative solutions, but this may sometimes mean that the social workers need to break with the expectations of managers and colleagues.

In some instances the implementation of the guidelines can be analysed in terms of *acts*. The decision of Malmö municipality to explicitly address undocumented migrants meant institutionalising a responsibility for the group. A clear statement was made in relation to undocumented migrants within an area where this group was rarely addressed. The addressing of undocumented migrants in the municipal guidelines, and the extension of social assistance in regard to undocumented children, have been understood as controversial in other contexts and other municipalities have not

followed the Malmö example to any large extent. The partial inclusion of undocumented migrants at the same time draws new lines around groups of rights-bearers and individuals who do not access the social services. The inclusion of groups perceived as “deserving”, such as former asylum seekers rather than vulnerable EU citizens, also seems to have made the guidelines seem less controversial and can be understood as in line with present citizenship practices (compare Nielsen 2016). Therefore, question marks arise when more closely analysing the Malmö guidelines for social assistance in terms of *acting*: maybe they are in line with present citizenship practices?

The line between *actions* and *acts* is not clear-cut in my material. Being a framework law, the Social Services Act gives possibilities for movement between the two. This is even more visible when studying social work practice, and I have argued that social workers in their everyday practice can move between a logic of *responsibility* (indicating actions) and a logic of *answerability* (indicating acts). Even though the boundaries of citizenship are somewhat redrawn through the guidelines, they are not erased. New citizenship practices and new exclusions take place as some groups get partially included in the local welfare system. Isin (2002) argues that citizenship is not stable. This is also a point that I have found to be central throughout my analysis. Challenges to present citizenship practices take place at various levels and with different results. In social work practice, there is sometimes a fine line between doing something out of what Isin describes as responsibility and what he describes as answerability.

Whether the guidelines are interpreted as controversial (or in terms of rupture) or not can be related to local and political context – what debates are on the agenda, what practices are seen as responsible or possible? In a context of harshening migration politics, the limitations of the inclusion of undocumented migrants become visible. Although being important to the individuals lacking social support, the guidelines do not in themselves create changes in the overall citizenship regime, and undocumented migrants remain deportable. At the same time, against the backdrop of increasing migration control and deportations, the guidelines may with time become understood as an event diverging from other practices. At a time when Sweden’s borders have been closed and the politicians talk about a “refugee crisis”, the guidelines may be seen as more controversial than during the time of implementation. Acts of giving support to or advocating for

undocumented migrants can become perceived as more political than before. This means that it is of importance to take duration into account when analysing this process. The period when the Malmö guidelines were implemented may therefore be seen as a “window of opportunity”; the circumstances were right. This opportunity was taken, something that indicates an act – although ambiguous.

The Malmö guidelines can on the one hand be read as an example of exclusion from full citizenship, as within the present citizenship regime and as *ordinary*. On the other hand they can be read as an example of extending the scope of rights-bearers and citizens’ responsibility and thereby opening up for new subjects as rights-bearers. The process of the guidelines’ coming about was not “revolutionary” nor always intentional (in the sense of a direct process from A to B). A central discussion in the analysis has been the focus on *residence* rather than *citizenship*. As undocumented migrants are partially included as a responsibility of Malmö municipality due to their presence in the city, this can be analysed in terms of a citizenship enacted at the level of the city – but it can also be understood as a case where citizenship becomes less relevant as a basis for granting social support and/or social rights. The implications of presence and residence will be further developed in Chapter 7.



## 7. Residence: Becoming Present in a Local Context

In Chapter 6, I argued that the Malmö guidelines on social assistance could be understood mainly in terms of action: that they were implemented in line with present practices and regulations, and were surrounded with little debate. However, the participants in this study also discussed other developments than the local political debate was contributing to the implementation of the guidelines. In this chapter, I therefore analyse the guidelines in a broader local context. The situation of undocumented migrants was brought to the fore through various channels, and undocumented migrants seem to have become perceived as a municipal responsibility when their presence was made visible and they were perceived as belonging. Access to social assistance is based on who is *residing* in the municipality, and I argue that the guidelines can be understood as a part of a larger development where undocumented migrants were being addressed through various channels. However, in giving them access to social assistance, Malmö municipality crossed a line between service (as in healthcare and schooling) and giving monetary support – something that sometimes made the guidelines be understood as controversial.

The chapter takes departure in the understanding that everyday activities of undocumented migrants and their allies at the level of the city, along with public forms of recognition, can be studied as processes of *becoming* citizens in new – although unstable – ways (Nordling, Sager, Söderman 2017, McNevin 2012, Holgersson 2011, Squire 2009, Isin 2002). The partial inclusion based on residence studied in Chapter 6 can be understood in relation to a process of undocumented migrants *becoming present* in the field



of social work: the social services needed to take into account that the group resided within the municipality. This presence was often marked by being “in between” the formal and the informal, citizenship and non-citizenship, opening up new spaces where claims on rights were made and forms of urban citizenship potentially enacted (compare Squire 2009). I present three different arenas where undocumented migrants have *become present*, to different extent. In *public debates*, undocumented migrants have not always been met by actions of disregard, and the Malmö guidelines cannot be read as entirely separated from the debates on healthcare and schooling at the time of considering the local guidelines. This is explored in section 7.1. In section 7.2, I discuss the presence within the *civil society* and the everyday acts by migrants and other activists, which sometimes have given undocumented migrants actual access to rights through forms of *substantive citizenship* – not formally being citizens but accessing social support (compare Bhimji 2014, Holgersson 2011). I also discuss their presence at *welfare state institutions*, which made undocumented migrants into a category of “clients” in their contact with the social services. This can be analysed as actions of codification, as in Chapter 6, but also, as I will argue here, as an opening-up of new spaces for politicians and policymakers to address undocumented migrants “in between” formal obligations and acting in new ways perceived as “right” or “just”. This implies that there might be a movement between *actions* and *acts*. In the discussion on *acts*, Squire’s (2009) conceptualisation of “misplaced” acts claiming obligations has been of use, indicating that a variety of citizens’ acts have contributed to the fact that undocumented migrants’ rights-claims have partially been taken into account.

## 7.1 Presence in Public Debates

During the time of the implementation of the Malmö guidelines, social rights for undocumented migrants were on the agenda at the national and regional levels, through the new laws on healthcare and schooling implemented in 2013. The public debates preceding these laws were also drawing on discussions at an international level and the UN critique of the earlier Swedish approach (Nielsen 2016, Sigvardsdotter 2012, Björngren

Cuadra 2011). Undocumented migrants, and especially undocumented children, had in the public debate been identified as rights-bearers, and the campaigns on healthcare (see Chapter 2) were underpinned by a human rights perspective (Nielsen 2016.). Notably, a broad range of practitioners were active in the debates. Healthcare personnel were especially active, putting pressure on politicians, and medical doctors practising in underground clinics or receiving undocumented migrants at their ordinary clinics, and schools admitting undocumented children access at local levels. Similar initiatives of medical doctors and teachers giving access to welfare services have in other contexts been described in terms of citizenship enactments (see for example Castañeda 2013, Pinson et al. 2010). In the case of the social services, the campaign “Ain’t I a Woman” advocated access to women’s shelters, and various municipalities (among them Malmö) permitted access to women’s shelters around the years 2010–2011. However, other forms of support from the social services were not as present in the public debates. The National Board of Health and Welfare addressed the social situation of undocumented migrants in a report in 2010, and described the social services’ contacts with the group as limited (Socialstyrelsen 2010).

The partial inclusion of undocumented migrants into different welfare sectors seemed to be more complicated in the case of social assistance. Being a subsidy in the “borderlands” of social citizenship (Johansson 2001), both in terms of perceived “deservingness” and belonging, social assistance has another character than healthcare and schooling. That the support is monetary (rather than service) and that there have been increasing demands on service users, for example in terms of activation, may be reasons that undocumented migrants were not directly addressed. As social assistance to undocumented migrants was not addressed to any large extent in national public debates, the local addressing of the group in municipal guidelines is interesting. The Malmö guidelines on the one hand seem to be in line with a general development towards partial inclusion, but on the other hand they diverge in terms of the content of the support.

### 7.1.1 Local Debates

Even if not directly addressing the social services to any large extent, social rights of undocumented migrants were debated at a national level, and this seems to have affected the local debate on social assistance in Malmö:

It has come gradually; undocumented migrants got the right to certain healthcare, they have a right to go to school, and these aren't things that we have decided here in the municipality. But at the same time, if we have children in the schools it is unreasonable that they should not be able to eat or to live somewhere... (Politician, Social Democratic Party)

As undocumented migrants were identified as rights-bearers at a national level, and addressed in laws, the inclusion into local guidelines seemed to have been perceived as a rather logical step. Another thing that seems to have contributed to this was that the county council of Scania had already made urgent healthcare available to undocumented migrants, giving access to certain social rights at a local level (and through that access preceding the regulations at a national level):

At the moment [for the City Hall decision on the guidelines] I was also working for my party with questions on healthcare in the county council of Skåne and then the same questions concerning undocumented migrants... We had handled it in what I thought was a good way, that you should be able to receive healthcare in spite of this... (Politician, Moderate Party)

The two quotes above, by local politicians from the Social Democratic Party (political majority) and the Moderate Party (opposition), are in line with each other in that both of them draw parallels to the discussions on healthcare to undocumented migrants. The arguments on human rights in the campaigns on healthcare to undocumented migrants, as well as the early establishment of underground clinics challenging the exclusion of undocumented migrants and providing forms of social support, in this case seems to have “spilled over” also to the issue of social assistance.

The local debates in Malmö on issues related to migration at the time of the guidelines can be understood as a shift from the situation ten years earlier,

when a halt to migration to Malmö was discussed (see Chapter 5). As expressed by a politician in the Left Party:

When I started in the City Council [12 years ago] both the Moderates and the Social Democrats stood there talking about how we needed a halt to refugees coming to Malmö. These were actual discussions one had. And now, ten years later, we write these goals, (...) and I think that three of them were about openness. That Malmö shall be an open city and that people should come here, and against discrimination, three objectives out of ten. (...) And I mean, then these are suddenly objectives that the Social Democrats can agree on and it is also that the Moderates are much more open, talk a lot about openness. (Politician, Left Party)

A shift in the political scene seems to have opened up for the issue of undocumented migrants to be addressed. This indicates that *time* and *local context* were important factors when including undocumented migrants in the guidelines for social assistance. When starting the political cooperation between the Social Democratic Party, the Green Party and the Left Party in 2010, the three parties agreed on guidelines for their cooperation during the period 2010–2014. This cooperation included undocumented migrants in two areas: giving access to shelters for undocumented battered women and giving access to schooling and daycare for undocumented children (Platform 2010-2014). Even though social assistance was not mentioned in the guidelines for political cooperation, these guidelines provide a context where the matter was addressed and talked about. Ideas of Malmö as an open city, such as described in the quote, seem to have been mobilised in discussions on undocumented migrants; during this period of time this seems to have been understood as “the Malmö way” of dealing with these questions. Hence, what was described as *actions of disregard* in section 6.1 does move closer to an idea of *acts* when put in the larger context of local political debates on undocumented migrants.

As we could see in Chapter 6, Malmö municipality was in some cases, for example in news media, presented as taking responsibility beyond what was expected. This was an image of Malmö that was sometimes actively presented to the media as well as in some of my interviews. There seemed to be quite a broad consensus that Malmö should take this responsibility, at least for some groups (often defined as vulnerable). This approach can be

exemplified by the discussion on access to women's shelters for undocumented migrants in 2010. As a Social Democrat politician commented, about Malmö offering shelter to undocumented, abused women (by way of giving economic support to an NGO that ran a shelter<sup>51</sup>):

Politician: ...but the year we did this there was money, as I remember it, and then it was more about deciding which of the demands from the committees to prioritise. And then it means that you more or less delete all the demands and then you incorporate some of them that you feel are important in order to profile the new budget. And then this thing with undocumented women got in, despite great competition.

V: So then it must have had a rather big support?

Politician: Yes, exactly, it felt like a lot of things had to go away in order to do this. And then it might not have been, in numbers there aren't many, but the possibility should be there.

V: A matter of principle, you could say?

Politician: Mm-hmm, you could say that. Well, yes, women exposed to violence shouldn't... we should be able to help women as well in that situation. (Politician, Social Democratic Party)

In these comments on the decision, the support to undocumented women was seen as something that should be there in order to show Malmö's priorities. Women who were exposed to violence were identified as a vulnerable group that should not suffer, something that went in line with an image of Malmö as a socially responsible city. The focus on this specific group of women in this case indicates a gendered idea of "deservingness"

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<sup>51</sup> In the work with opening up shelters also for undocumented women, Malmö municipality has budgeted a sum that should cover the costs of one place at a shelter for undocumented, abused women, and for social support at a local NGO running the shelter. As NGOs do not have the same duty to give out information if contacted by the border police (as the municipality has), this solution is meant to give unconditional protection to the women in contact with the NGO. (Interview with coordinator for work with battered women, see also Helmersson 2017)

(compare Sager 2011). It can be linked to the understanding that undocumented women are also victims of violence (and thereby to the ideas in the campaign “Ain’t I a Woman”), rather than seen as an intention to include undocumented migrants in general in the local welfare scheme. However, it is clearly stated that being undocumented in this case should not be an obstacle when needing protection in a women’s shelter. Together with other local discussions on social support to undocumented migrants (on healthcare, schooling and daycare), the exclusion of undocumented migrants from local municipal practices is thus destabilised. Citizenship norms are to some extent challenged and identities are unsettled, even if the aim is not a formal citizen status (compare McNevin 2012, Saunders 2008).

### **7.1.2 The UNCRC**

Another discussion that influenced the local debates was that concerning the UNCRC. Just as with the new laws on healthcare and schooling, the Malmö guidelines admitted more extended access to children specifically. At the same time, the parents were de facto receiving the money, as they were representing their children when in contact with the social services. They also benefited from the fact that the social services are more likely to pay for housing when children are involved. This meant that adults in families with children accessed more support than adults without children. In a similar way, Sager (2011) shows how undocumented women without children became excluded in the Swedish amnesty for undocumented migrants in 2005, as the amnesty only concerned families with children. Adults without children were in this way neglected/marginalised, just as in the case with social assistance. As I have argued in Chapter 6, the focus on children can be seen as contributing to the laws and the guidelines not being understood as controversial: children were seen as “deserving” or “innocent”. However, the view of children as “innocent” can be contrasted with the rights discourse present in the discussions. As Nielsen (2016) points out in regard to the debates on healthcare and schooling, a human rights perspective sometimes rendered discussions on innocence/responsibility unnecessary. According to Nielsen, the focus on children’s innocence must not automatically mean that the parents are seen

as responsible for the situation. Also in my interviews, the discussions on social assistance often focused on a rights perspective. As a politician affirmed:

At the same time the Social Services Act does not give the right to give economic support to adults without residence permit, but then we chose to follow the Convention on the Rights of the Child and children's rights, so then we give "full norm" to them but not to the parents. (Politician, Social Democratic Party)

The national legislation on schooling to undocumented migrants and the UNCRC are here presented as important backgrounds to the formulations in the guidelines. This focus on children's rights at a national level seems to have made children "more present" at a municipal level. The UNCRC was, in the Malmö case, used as an opportunity to give access to full social assistance within the frames of the legislation, an opportunity that was not there in the same way in the case of adults. This was a political decision extending the responsibility of the municipality. To argue for an extension of social assistance in the case of children can be read as following a logic of answerability, an alternative logic of rights and justice, as this is not a practice common to all municipalities and is seen as something extra-(out of the) ordinary. The child perspective can hence be understood both as an action of legal confirmation (as the law gives room for this interpretation) and an act making use of the possibility that UNCRC gives. A form of citizenship at the level of the city was hence realised through the use of international conventions (somewhat moving beyond citizenship as a formal status).

## 7.2 Presence within the Civil Society and at Welfare State Institutions

The Malmö guidelines can be analysed in relation to a marked presence of undocumented migrants within the local civil society and at welfare state institutions. Everyday acts of citizenship by undocumented migrants participating in daily city life, for example going to the library or to the gym

(compare Holgersson 2011), and acts of solidarity made by activists (undocumented migrants as well as residents) organising together within the civil society, for example demanding access to public institutions or claiming a right to political participation (compare Djampour and Söderman 2016, Lundberg and Spång 2016), participated in creating spaces “in between” (Squire 2009). In these spaces, rights and obligations in relation to undocumented migrants could sometimes be negotiated (Nordling et al. 2017). The presence of undocumented migrants could thus open up for new forms of acting and new understandings of the municipality’s responsibilities.

### **7.2.1 A Strong Civil Society Organising**

As described in Chapter 5, Malmö has (just as other cities) its specific demography and local context. The city is known for such diverse things as social innovation, social unrest, child poverty, and a strong civil society organisation (Povrzanović Frykman 2016, Holgersen 2014, Angelin and Salonen 2012). In this section, I am going to focus on the civil society. One of the politicians interviewed expressed the view that support within the civil society for some of their ideas was crucial:

Because this makes Malmö a bit, that there is a strong organising, an immense solidarity. At the same time as there is lots of racism and other shit, there is still some kind of... That is a force that I think that we should build upon. (...) And that is the reason that we have been able to drive these issues at all. (...) If we were to sit here as the smallest party in the coalition and drive a question that had no support in the civil society, it would have been impossible. So, of course it matters a lot. (Politician, Left Party)

Even if speaking of support for undocumented migrants in general, and not about the issue of social assistance specifically, the politician points at something that she finds to be crucial in order to make political demands: being rooted in the civil society.

A strong civil society mobilisation on the issue of irregular migration and the situation of asylum seekers, by for example the Malmö Asylum Group,



migrant organisations and religious organisations, meant that the situation of undocumented migrants became an issue in Malmö (Nordling et al. 2017, Lundberg and Söderman 2015, Sager 2015, 2011). Many of these organisations also provided networks that gave undocumented migrants de facto access to certain social support within the civil society. For example, the organisation Deltastiftelsen started providing healthcare at a clinic run by voluntary forces in 2001<sup>52</sup> (Skånska Dagbladet 2008, Sydsvenskan 2009). Undocumented migrants organising in for example the Asylum Relay, an initiative started by a group of undocumented youths in Malmö, contributed to making their situation visible. This kind of organisation has been analysed as a way for undocumented migrants to constitute themselves as political actors (Djampour and Söderman 2016, Keshavarz 2016). It can also be read in Squire's (2009) terms of a "misplaced" claiming of rights.

Before the new laws on healthcare and schooling came about (pre-2013), everyday struggles to receive schooling, and in some cases healthcare, were present in the asylum rights movement in Malmö (see Sager 2015, Lundberg and Söderman 2015, Gullberg and Wihlberg 2014). An asylum rights activist comments in one of my interviews upon the situation of undocumented unaccompanied minors at that time (around 2010–2012):

...in the beginning with the unaccompanied, it took at least a year before we even found a school that would receive them. So there was no...[support] and that was only schooling. (Asylum rights activist)

Being in contact with welfare institutions and putting pressure on local authorities, civil society organisations can be seen as having contributed to the visibility and presence of undocumented migrants within the local welfare system. During the years before the guidelines were renewed, there were also researchers addressing the issue, making surveys and interviewing social workers and politicians on the matter of undocumented migrants, and on social assistance in particular (Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012, Lundberg and Söderman 2016, Baghir-Zada 2009). In addition, research seminars were held on the matter at Malmö University during autumn

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<sup>52</sup> Similar initiatives were also made in other Swedish cities at the time. For example, in Gothenburg, the underground clinic *Rosengrenska stiftelsen* was started in 1998, and in Stockholm *Läkare I Världen* started a clinic in 1995.

2012 (at Global Political Studies and at the Department of Social Work) in collaboration between researchers and activists, inviting municipal legal advisors, practitioners and activist groups. This all played a role in creating arenas for discussing undocumented migrants in relation to municipal services and can be understood in terms of a “misplaced” claiming of obligation by citizens (Squire 2009). Undocumented migrants were in some cases understood as a responsibility.

## 7.2.2 Residence as a Claim for Rights and Obligations

Central to the formulations in the Social Services Acts is, as we have seen, *residence*. In the implementation of the Malmö guidelines on social assistance, *residing* in the city became a ground for claims on rights and obligations. A similar line of thought can be found in other discussions concerning undocumented migrants. One such example was “Fristad Malmö”, also discussed in chapter 5, which was initiated by the Asylum Group and had an explicit aim of creating a sanctuary for undocumented migrants in Malmö:

[W]e want to move the migration political debate to the local level in Malmö and engage popular movements as well as associations and politicians in an intent to include and build a sanctuary for undocumented migrants in Malmö. (*Malmö -- Fristad för Papperslösa/Malmö -- sanctuary for undocumented migrants*, 2011 – quoted in Nordling et al. 2017:715)

The idea of a sanctuary city can be linked to a movement present in various cities over the world, envisioning a right to stay where one already lives (ibid., Nyers 2008). Such ideas were also embraced by some local politicians. For example, the Left Party in Malmö addressed the issue of irregular migration in several ways during the time when the guidelines were implemented. The Green Party also was active in these discussions, including actively promoting healthcare to undocumented migrants (Lundberg and Söderman 2015). In a debate article in 2014, representatives from the local Left Party were imagining Malmö as a “sanctuary city”:

As long as the Swedish refugee policy is inhumane, the work for the rights of undocumented migrants continues. As part of this, the Left Party wants to make Malmö into a sanctuary for undocumented migrants. (Johansson, Thomé and Katzin 2014, *my translation*)

The initiatives to include undocumented migrants in, for example, pre-schools, women's shelters, and libraries, as well as giving access to social assistance, were linked in the article to the argument that the presence of undocumented migrants is licit during periods of time when the migration politics are harsh. The politicians therefore did not embrace a radical shift in the citizenship regime, as the discussion was limited to an asylum policy that was seen as inhumane, but they did suggest that undocumented migrants had licit rights claims and that the municipality had obligations towards the group. The article explicitly mentioned "housing, leisure time activities, and economic conditions" for undocumented children, directly linking the idea of a sanctuary city to the areas covered by social assistance (*ibid.*). Hence it contributed to presenting the guidelines on social assistance both as an ordinary practice ("this is what we do in Malmö") and as an event: making a statement for the rights of undocumented migrants rather than remaining passive and waiting for others to take the first step. This indicates acting (or maybe a wish to act?) in a direction of social change, instead of keeping up the status quo or disregarding the issue. When described this way, the guidelines for social assistance could be read in line with a right to remain where one is (Nordling et al. 2017).

### **7.2.3 An Early Access to Welfare State Institutions**

Undocumented migrants had access to healthcare earlier (in 2008) in the county of Scania than in most parts of Sweden (in 2013), and this meant that an early institutional contact was established with this group of inhabitants. A special healthcare centre for asylum seekers was started in Malmö in 2005: Refugee Health Care. This centre, which was a part of the regional healthcare system, also had routines for receiving undocumented migrants. The services at the centre included counselling and psychological support. This support sometimes included contact with the social services – especially in the cases of children and families with children (interview with former counsellor at the Refugee Health Care). This meant that there were

personnel within the municipality who could help with contact and could put pressure on the social services when meeting undocumented migrants in need of social assistance. Local access to a shelter for battered women (arranged through municipal cooperation with an NGO) and children's access to schools and daycare centres also contributed to create a broader range of municipal services potentially encountering undocumented migrants. Undocumented migrants were, through the local welfare arrangements, becoming present in a very concrete sense.

Social workers sometimes met undocumented migrants in their work, and in some cases this was seen as quite unproblematic; they passed as one group of "clients" among others. As a social worker who formerly worked with homelessness relates when describing her work in the years before the guidelines came about:

...you didn't talk about undocumented migrants or EU migrants back then, it wasn't called that, we didn't use these terms. But afterwards, I have realised that the phenomenon had already started in 2005, that we started to notice them. But we didn't talk about it that way (...) they just slipped through as one of the tasks we had... (Manager within the social services, social assistance)

That the year 2005, when undocumented migrants were made visible through the amnesty campaign, is mentioned in the quote may also indicate that undocumented migrants were "discovered" by some social workers during this period of time (see Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012, who show that the social services in Malmö were in contact with undocumented migrants in the early 2000s). Such contacts can be linked to the formulations on practitioners' demands in the guidelines. This presence can hence be understood to have opened up spaces for the local politicians and policymakers to address undocumented migrants. In the case of Malmö, the presence of undocumented migrants was visible at welfare state institutions, sometimes making practitioners ask for advice. The encounters between social workers and undocumented migrants thus contributed in opening up spaces where claims on rights and obligations could be made, and this made the claims on actions of codification, discussed in Chapter 6, possible. That the guidelines were presented in terms of action can hence be understood in

relation to the fact that undocumented migrants were in some cases already seen as service users.

However, as my interviews as well as other studies indicate, most undocumented migrants were not in contact with the social services, and when making contact many were rejected access before even making an application for social assistance (Jönsson 2014, Socialstyrelsen 2010). This means that access to assistance before the guidelines was dependent on the goodwill of the social worker, and indicates a practice that was not very rule-based. Leaving rather large room for differences in interpretation, the work with undocumented migrants at the time before the guidelines could therefore be seen as moving between a formal responsibility and answerability: social workers could choose to act in accordance with ideas of migration control or ideas of social justice (compare Nordling 2016, Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012). A member of a local asylum rights group told about her experience since she started to have contact with undocumented migrants in 2008/2009:

It was in the end of 2008 (...) and at that time we had no contact with the social services. Rather, we kept all forms of information away from the social services. I know that we discussed it for quite a long time... where is the limit between [saying] that children can't live on the street versus the duty of the social services to report to the Swedish Migration Agency or the police. But I think that we concluded that we weren't ready to take that risk, what it could mean to do it. At the time I don't think that we had that much knowledge either... (Asylum rights activist)

As there were no clear directives concerning social assistance to undocumented migrants before the guidelines, and the law at the time implied a duty to report undocumented migrants (although this was interpreted in different ways), there was a fear that the social workers would contact the border police or the Swedish Migration Agency. This means that the physical presence of undocumented migrants was double-edged: receiving support could imply an increased risk of deportation. Therefore undocumented migrants and the civil society support structures were mainly dependent on voluntary forces and own networks, as very often they would not trust the social services.

Although the guidelines were presented as a legal confirmation or codification of existing praxis, they had concrete consequences for the social services' contacts with undocumented migrants. One result was that undocumented migrants officially became present within the social services. Another was that some of the undocumented migrants who had not had this contact before dared to contact the social services, for example with the support of civil society organisations. As an activist remarked:

It is generally easier, you don't need to be as prepared to get objections, you can be calmer in your approach. Because you know that it is generally known that it is this way [that undocumented migrants do get support from the social services]. (Asylum rights activist)

A new category of "clients", and thereby potential rights-bearers, was created through the institutionalisation. As discussed in Chapter 6, the guidelines implied changes in the daily work of social workers and in the reception of undocumented migrants; it was at least clear that their needs should be assessed. In combination with the laws on healthcare and schooling at a national level, the Malmö guidelines on social assistance therefore created a material change in the everyday life of undocumented migrants and their allies. A consequence was that activists (both undocumented migrants and citizens) could focus on other issues than daily survival, something that created opportunities for other forms of political mobilisation (Nordling et al. 2017). The social workers got clear directives regarding the (partial) inclusion of undocumented migrants instead of the municipality leaving this decision to individual managers and social workers.

### 7.3 Conclusion: Acting on Presence?

In this chapter, I have argued that the Malmö guidelines on social assistance can be placed in a broader context (compare Saunders 2008). Analysed in the context of other processes addressing undocumented migrants, the Malmö guidelines can potentially be understood as one event among many others contributing to enactments of citizenship at a local level. Social

assistance is organised at a local level, and it partly needs to be analysed differently from healthcare and schooling. I have especially pointed to the *presence* of undocumented migrants (Nyers 2008). The issue of social support to undocumented migrants has been present in *public debates*, especially on healthcare and schooling. This is also visible at the local level in Malmö, indicating that the issue has not been disregarded by politicians. Social assistance, however, concerns economic support rather than service, something that might have made the (partial) inclusion of undocumented migrants more controversial. The access to social assistance for adults residing as undocumented was, in line with the laws on healthcare and schooling, limited to emergency support and can be argued to have focused mainly on bodily survival (compare Karlsen 2015). The support given distinguished between groups perceived as “deserving” (children and abused women) and “undeserving” (adults). At the same time, the inclusion of undocumented migrants was underpinned by ideas of equality and based on the UNCRC, indicating a focus on rights.

Undocumented migrants’ presence within the *civil society*, and the everyday acts by migrants and other activists, can be understood in terms of “misplaced” claims of rights and obligations. The marked presence and the everyday acts of undocumented migrants and their allies, claiming “misplaced” rights and obligations, provided a context where the issue of undocumented migrants could be addressed (Squire 2009). Such acts of claiming rights and obligations may be understood as creating spaces “in between” residence status (as “full” presence) and invisibility, where undocumented migrants had a partial access to the welfare system and were included in parts of the civil society – but still were not seen as citizens (Nordling et al. 2017). Their presence at *welfare state institutions* made undocumented migrants into a category of “clients” in their contact with the social services. As undocumented migrants were *present* within Malmö municipality as a social fact, the social services sometimes came into contact with the group and needed to find ways to deal with this (compare Nyers 2008). This can be analysed as *actions of codification*, but also as opening up new spaces for politicians and policymakers to address undocumented migrants “in between” formal obligations and acting in new ways perceived as “right” or “just”. Through their presence in public debates, within civil society organisations and at welfare state institutions, and through activists’ solitary acts, it can be argued that undocumented migrants to some extent

have become understood as a responsibility of the municipality. As Bhimji (2014) argues in a US context, the presence and the everyday activities of undocumented migrants at the level of the city sometimes do influence local policies (compare Holgersson 2011). The Malmö guidelines on social assistance can be seen as one such example, as they were made to respond to the local context and to support social workers with issues that they met in their daily practice.

In the interpretation of the Malmö guidelines as something beyond ordinary practices and instead as linked to undocumented migrants *becoming present*, a movement towards *acting* is indicated. The movement between actions and acts can be read in different ways depending on the perspective one takes. It is possible to focus mainly on the actions described in Chapter 6, and to argue that the guidelines were implemented within the present citizenship framework. However, it is also possible to see the acknowledged presence of undocumented migrants as a potential or an opening for new subjectivities to come into being. The presence in public discourse on the one hand meant that the inclusion of undocumented migrants into local guidelines on social assistance could be seen as in line with a general development. On the other hand, it can be read as a situation in flux: redefinitions were being made in relation to citizenship and this opened up new spaces “in between” citizenship and exclusion.

Having said this, the potential new modes of citizenship are partial and can be withdrawn when new political agendas are established. The Malmö guidelines can be understood as a local and rather pragmatic solution of the problem of inhabitants lacking access to the welfare state institutions. Underlining this, I argue, along with McNevin (2012), that there is instability in the new forms of citizenship created (e.g. as undocumented migrants are still deportable), and that the different expressions of belonging are both linked to insecurity/surveillance/“deservingness” and may have radical or emancipatory dimensions. This means that the support initiatives do not always aim at a full citizenship status, but they do sometimes destabilise citizen norms as they expand the boundaries of social obligations/responsibilities. In the case of social assistance, the focus on the fact that undocumented migrants are *residing* in Malmö (which was related to the Social Services Act) potentially contributes to creating modes of



citizenship at the level of the city as well as modes of belonging stretching beyond citizenship.

# Summary Part I

In Part I, I have studied actions and acts in the implementation of local guidelines on social assistance in Malmö. In many ways, the implementation can be described as in line with present citizenship practices, as a partial inclusion where undocumented migrants are kept in a condition of deportability. This is because they were implemented with few discussions and seen as something “extra” rather than as an implementation of new obligations for the municipality. I, however, argue that the implementation must also be understood through the consequences of the guidelines in social work practice and in a context where undocumented migrants can be seen as *becoming present* in Malmö.

The legal context of social assistance being a means-tested subsidy regulated by a framework law makes it into a marker of “deservingness”, and access to social assistance for undocumented migrants has been assessed in different ways: in line with migration control or in line with ideals of equality or social justice. In Malmö municipality, the implementation of guidelines on social assistance addressing undocumented migrants was not seen as controversial and it was mostly described in interviews and documents in terms of *action*. I have identified three forms of action in the local policymaking: *actions of legal confirmation*, *actions of codification* and *actions of disregard*. The first form of action describes the implementation of new guidelines as a clarification of the law: in this view, Malmö is not divergent but municipalities refusing access to the social services do not have a correct interpretation of the law. In the second form, a presence of undocumented migrants within the social services is acknowledged, and practitioners want to have an official document supporting their work and wish for more equal treatment. The third form of action concerns the little debate on undocumented migrants’ access to social assistance; instead, politicians were focusing on other issues, such as self-sufficiency and activation. However, this description is somewhat destabilised as other municipalities did not

follow Malmö's example (to any large extent), and the guidelines were presented as divergent in news media. Thus time and space influence the interpretation of the implementation. Also, the guidelines again provide a framework for practitioners, as they do not regulate in detail. The guidelines state that undocumented migrants are entitled to emergency support, but the assessment is still individual. This leaves room for assessments based both on formal *responsibility* and on *answerability*, making use of the discretionary space in order to find creative solutions. The social workers also draw new lines (for example, between former asylum seekers and vulnerable EU citizens) and create new exclusions through their practice.

The formal inclusion in municipal documents and through social work practice have enabled undocumented migrants to some extent to *become present* in Malmö municipality. In the specific case of the social services, the presence within the social services activated a responsibility both in a moral (encountering someone *face-to-face*) and a legal (in terms of the Social Services Act and its focus on residing) sense. Following a somewhat different line of argumentation, I have further analysed the *presence* of undocumented migrants in *public debates*, within the *civil society* in Malmö, and at *welfare state institutions*. I have argued that the inclusion of undocumented migrants can be analysed together with other forms of partial inclusion (and exclusion) of undocumented migrants, and that the presence made the guidelines on social assistance possible. The right to social assistance has, however, not been institutionalised in the same way as the right to healthcare and the right to schooling; it became a local event with little influence on other municipalities.

In the timeline presented in Figure 3, I have summarised the process of implementing the guidelines and connected it to other events. The timeline describes how the guidelines for social assistance came about in a context of many different events leading to both inclusion and exclusion of undocumented migrants, events that sometimes opened up new spaces where undocumented migrants could be addressed and claims could be made on rights and obligations.



Above the arrow we see events at a Swedish national level, from campaigns starting before the Malmö guidelines were discussed, to active inclusion through the laws on healthcare and schooling and active exclusion through, for example, the REVA project. Such events show that the Malmö guidelines were not implemented in a vacuum, but in a context of debates and law changes. Below the arrow we see events taking place locally in Malmö. Also here, we find campaigns as well as different political decisions both in the directions of exclusion and inclusion of undocumented migrants. The guidelines came about in a period of time when the issue of undocumented migrants was addressed through various channels and in a place (the city of Malmö) with a marked presence of undocumented migrants, both within the civil society and at welfare state institutions. It can be argued that, as undocumented migrants in this way had *become present* for the municipality, it was a smaller step for Malmö to actually formalise this presence.

I have argued that the presence of undocumented migrants destabilises formal citizenship practices in that social work practitioners sometimes need to act in new creative ways. Whether this is to be interpreted in terms of *action* or *acts* (or both) depends on time perspective and level of analysis. A question is, of course, whether this form of partial inclusion creates any changes in the long run? This is too early to analyse. The analysis of the Malmö guidelines on social assistance in terms of both *actions* and *acts* can be seen as an attempt to describe a potential in the institutionalising of citizenship rights, at the same time as not neglecting the deportability of undocumented migrants and the possible need to find other ways to address their rights claims, beyond citizenship.

**PART II:**  
**Enacting Social Obligations and Rights**



## Part II: Introduction

In this part, I study enactments of social rights and/or obligations by social workers working with a specific group: unaccompanied minors. The social workers studied here had all expanded or crossed the boundaries of their assignments in order to give support to minors who risked becoming or had become undocumented. Hence, the social workers were at an everyday level reacting to the precarious situation of the minors, which was conditioned by a fear of deportations to conflict zones or to countries where the rights of the minors were not granted in practice. The acts performed by the social workers often went beyond what they perceived to be their formal mandate, but sometimes they also saw their acts of support as parts of what they actually *should* do as social workers although they did not have the organisational conditions. The study is based on interviews with social workers and focuses on the time period 2010–2013. This was a period marked by the construction of a new area within Swedish social work (which started in 2006): the reception of unaccompanied minors. This was also a time period when the numbers of unaccompanied minors arriving in Sweden increased. Some of the minors arriving were to be sent to other EU countries in accordance with the Dublin II Regulation (stating that every person seeking refuge should do so by filing an application in the first country of arrival), a practice that was criticised and that later was changed (see Chapter 8). The support given by the social workers could therefore concern juridical support in order to help a minor who was subject to the Dublin II Regulation. It could also concern meeting minors outside of working hours or outside of the workplace, helping undocumented minors with contacts to civil society organisations, or helping a minor to stay away from the migration authorities. Through the social workers' acts, the minors were able to access social support such as monetary support and housing, as well as access to schooling and healthcare. Many of them could



also by extension get asylum in Sweden, as they could apply for asylum after a period of waiting (escaping deportation).

The social workers in this substudy were expected to let go of minors who did not “fit” into their work descriptions. The clash between their experienced responsibility for the minors and the formal expectations to discharge them sometimes created situations where these practitioners (unlike many of their colleagues) chose to act in new ways. The analysis takes its point of departure in negotiations of discretionary spaces and responsibility at an individual level and it evolves around the question of how social rights and obligations are enacted when the processes of exclusion inherent to citizenship (in this case the deportability of the minors) are dealt with in the everyday practice of these social workers. When the social workers chose to actively give support to minors who became undocumented, they sometimes acted in accordance with other logics than what was formally expected of them. The acts were performed as the social workers could see no other solutions, and as no one else would step in and take responsibility for the minors who became undocumented. The acts often contributed to creating new exclusions or distinctions between minors categorised as “deserving”/“undeserving”. They should therefore not be seen as straightforward forms of change. However, I argue that to some extent the social workers in some cases did challenge present citizenship practices, as they actively questioned whether the minors should be deported and thereby went against what was formally expected of them, although often in secret and at an individual level. The social workers’ acts should, however, not be understood as acts that in themselves break an order, but rather as everyday acts going beyond formal responsibilities and pointing at new spaces for acting out of perceived (“misplaced”) obligations.

As discussed in Part I, the local context is of crucial importance when analysing the partial inclusion of undocumented migrants. In this part, the local context is toned down out of ethical concerns (see Chapter 4), and the participants are from different parts of Sweden. However, aspects such as big city/countryside and access to local networks are still present in the material. Just as in Part I, there is also a focus on support to *children*. The support to unaccompanied minors could be seen as easier to justify within present citizenship practices, as children are often defined as vulnerable and innocent. At the same time, suspicion against and racialisation of

unaccompanied minors in public debates complicate this picture. Social work has been described as actively participating in creating dichotomies on racial and religious grounds and as creating “us” and “them” classifications (Gruber 2015, Kamali 2015, 2002, Eliassi 2013, Lewis 2000). Such an upholding of postcolonial relations was also present in my material, and the acts of the social workers sometimes contributed to creating similar dichotomies. At the same time, the acts diverged from other categorisations such as the distinction between asylum seeker and undocumented migrant, as the social workers often saw how these categorisations overlapped and how the minors could go back and forth between these two statuses.

The analysis proceeds as follows. In *Chapter 8*, I contextualise the work with unaccompanied minors and discuss the situation of unaccompanied minors and minors who became undocumented. I then present the organisation of social work with undocumented minors and the three different occupations that I study. Social workers’ roles in public debates are also addressed. In *Chapter 9*, I analyse three forms of acts that I have identified through the interviews: *acts of “professionalism”*, *acts of “compassion”* and *acts of “activism”*. These forms have emerged through an analysis of the social workers’ own descriptions of the rationales behind their acts. The acts are presented as analytical reconstructions and in some cases intersect and overlap. In the last section, I conclude the chapter in relation to my theoretical perspectives and relate the acts to each other. In the summary of Part II, I reflect on the two chapters and my main arguments.



# 8. Contexts of Social Work with Unaccompanied Minors

In this chapter, I present the discourses on unaccompanied minors in the Swedish debate. I also present the situation of undocumented unaccompanied minors, as well as the Dublin II Regulation, that were present in Swedish public debate during the time of this study (around 2010–2013). Some Swedish studies focus on the experience of unaccompanied minors and these give valuable and important insights for example of how the Swedish reception may be perceived as well as of experience of fleeing from warzones and border crossings (e.g. Stretmo and Melander 2013, Wernesjö 2014, Djampour and Söderman 2016, Söderqvist 2017). The focus of my study is different, as it analyses social workers meeting this group rather than unaccompanied minors themselves. As the social services had started to work with the reception of unaccompanied minors quite recently (in 2006), and as the numbers of unaccompanied minors increased, all social workers participating in this study had been working during a period of organisational changes. There were also emerging forms of protest among social workers at the time of the study. In *section 8.1*, I begin with an overview of the situation of unaccompanied minors: how they have been pictured in public debates, and consequences of the Dublin Regulation and of irregularity. In *section 8.2*, I then present how the reception of unaccompanied minors is structured in Sweden and the different roles of the social workers participating in this study. Finally, in *section 8.3*, I comment upon reactions from different groups of social workers concerning their work conditions.

## 8.1 Unaccompanied Minors in Sweden

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, or *unaccompanied minors* (a common term in international literature), are individuals under the age of 18 who have been separated from their parents or other guardians. In Sweden, this is an administrative category that marks how the reception is made and what are the chances of getting a legalised residence status (Stretmo 2014, Wernesjö 2014). Below, I discuss present categorisations of unaccompanied minors.

### 8.1.1 Some Numbers

Most of the minors in contact with the social workers participating in this study were boys from Somalia or Afghanistan. These were also the largest groups of unaccompanied minors arriving in Sweden during the time period studied (Migrationsverket 2013a). Between 2005 and 2008, the group of minors from Iraq was larger than the group from Afghanistan (Migrationsverket 2009). A majority of the minors would have had the right to asylum in Sweden, if it hadn't been for the Dublin II Regulation (or age assessment), discussed below.

In 2006, the numbers of unaccompanied minors doubled in comparison with the year before (from 400 to a little above 800), and after that the numbers have increased (Migrationsverket 2009). From 2007 onward there are more detailed statistics from the Swedish Migration Agency regarding unaccompanied minors. In 2008, 1,481 minors applied for asylum and 54% of them were granted it (Migrationsverket, Ekonomiavdelning, e-mail conversation). The largest groups were from Iraq (568), Somalia (285) and Afghanistan (278). The average handling time was 174 days. In 2012 the number was 3,578 minors (out of 43,887 asylum seekers) (Migrationsverket 2013a). That year, 65% of the unaccompanied minors who had their applications assessed during the year were granted asylum, 416 were rejected, 328 children were directed to other EU countries in accordance with the Dublin II Regulation and 289 did not have their application assessed because of other reasons (Migrationsverket 2013b). The average handling time was 98 days. 1,774 of the minors were from

Afghanistan, and 78% of them were granted asylum, 220 of them were to be directed to other EU countries. 293 of the minors were from Somalia, 76% of them were granted asylum and 38 were to be directed to other EU countries.

### **8.1.2 Images of Unaccompanied Minors**

The categorisation “unaccompanied minor” is loaded with values. Live Stretmo (2014) describes how unaccompanied minors have been pictured in Swedish policies as on the one hand vulnerable children (or passive victims) and on the other as possible strategic migrants, for example as economic migrants (so-called “anchor children”) or adults trying to pass as minors (see also Eastmond and Ascher 2011). This, she argues, creates ambivalence in the reception of this group. Unaccompanied minors have a right to a quicker asylum process than adults do and to a child-friendly environment, arranged by municipal housing solutions separated from adults. They also have a right to a guardian and to healthcare and schooling. Such a “softer” asylum scheme sharpens the distinction between being younger or older than 18 years and, according to Stretmo (2014:141), further underlines a separation of “real victims” from “bogus asylum seekers”.

A central discussion in relation to the vulnerability of unaccompanied minors in Sweden is the issue of *missing minors*: minors disappearing from the radar of the authorities (Stretmo 2014; Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län 2012). The numbers of unaccompanied minors disappearing in Sweden are not exact, and how many of these minors are victims of trafficking is unclear. A national mapping of trafficking made in 2012 states that hundreds of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors disappear every year without much effort being made to find them (Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län 2012). The report states that few children get structured support when returning to their countries of origin, and that some children have disappeared on the way back. Stretmo (2014) particularly analyses the media narratives of trafficked unaccompanied minors, starting with a focus on minors from Eastern Europe in 2002 and then on Chinese children from 2005 onwards. She notices that the phenomenon is conceptualised in relation to smuggling and trafficking and thereby framed as a specific social

problem originating outside of Sweden, instead of in relation to the social problem of missing children in general (Stretmo 2014:111). Ulrika Wernesjö (2014:10) argues that unaccompanied minors are perceived as “out of place’ and outside the realms of what could be considered as a ‘normal’ childhood from the perspective of Swedish society”. Policy answers to these conceptualisations have been constructed in two different ways: stressing voluntary disappearances (that the minor wanted to go to another country) or stressing vulnerability and trafficking (Stretmo 2014). Voluntary disappearances are often discussed in relation to so-called “*strategic migration*” and the Dublin II Regulation (which will be discussed in relation to irregular migration below).

In an article on the discourse on “trafficking” in a British context, Julia O’Connell Davidson (2011) argues that there is a strong policy concern with “trafficked” children that tends to be negligent of other ways that migrant children can suffer. One example of this is all the children entering Europe in clandestine ways and the increasing amount of refugees dying while trying to cross Europe’s borders. Her study explores the “gap between the almost universal spoken commitment to children’s rights and the lived experience of migrant children in the contemporary world” (O’Connell Davidson 2011:455). This has also been studied in a Swedish context. According to Marita Eastmond and Henry Ascher (2011:1192), the stated commitment to children’s wellbeing and “claims based on ‘the best interest of the child’ have a special rhetorical force in Sweden”, and also when it comes to Sweden’s international image. However, the authors argue that the best interest of the child is subordinated to national concerns, such as control over immigration. They also criticise the Swedish practice of giving children residence permits for “extraordinary” or humanitarian reasons, as this seems “to change the focus from the basic human right of the refugee to seek and be granted asylum to a question of charity and generosity” (ibid. 1196). This can also be seen in the case of unaccompanied minors. Stretmo (2014:152) argues that there is an undertone of disbelief regarding the asylum claims of unaccompanied minors and that:

...unaccompanied minors and children are given the right to reside in Sweden and Norway due to more overall humanitarian considerations and for compassionate reasons, such as the fact that their next of kin cannot be traced and of their vulnerability as children.

Such disbeliefs mark today's debates on unaccompanied minors, which are often polarised.

Although used with limitations, the special concerns regarding children give unaccompanied minors certain rights in regard to reception and asylum process (Stretmo 2014). This also has another side: it has been seen as important to investigate if they *really* are children and not adults trying to pass as children out of strategical motives. For example, in a report on the best interest of the child, the National Board of Health and Welfare stated:

In the case of unaccompanied children in their upper teens who have applied for a residence permit it is, in consideration of the protection that unaccompanied children are entitled to such as applying for a guardian, direction to a municipality and so on, of importance that it is made likely that it concerns a child and not an adult. (Socialstyrelsen 2012:3, *my translation*)

*Age* here emerges as a social category closely linked to border practices, as there is a strict limit concerning both societal support and the asylum process on the day an individual turns 18. Many unaccompanied minors arriving in Europe lack documents proving their age, and therefore age assessments are performed. One method to assess age is using X-rays of the wrist and wisdom teeth. Such practices have, however, been heavily criticised for not being precise. In an article, professors and paediatricians Anders Hjern and Henry Ascher (2015) argue that there are large interindividual differences in physical maturation between adolescents, and that the margins of error of such a method limit their informative value.<sup>53</sup> This method has been used by the Swedish Migration Agency since the year 2000, in order to assess the age of unaccompanied minors who were believed to be over the age of 18 (*ibid.*). In 2008, the National Board of Health and Welfare removed their recommendations on X-ray age assessments, but reintroduced them in 2012. At the time of writing, minors have a responsibility to prove their age if it is questioned by the Swedish Migration Agency, and for this reason age assessments are sometimes required by the minors themselves.

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<sup>53</sup> Ascher and Hjern criticise this practice and propose an assessment based on psychosocial methods, as used in for example Great Britain.



After the interviews were carried out, there has been a continued development of an ambivalent picturing of unaccompanied minors. For example, unaccompanied minors have been imagined as potential rapists, and thereby a threat to “Swedish” women (ETC 2016, Dagens Nyheter 2016). There has also been media reporting where unaccompanied minors living in the streets are described as potential criminals (Dagens Nyheter 2015). At the same time, rights claims as well as a focus on the minors’ agency have been forwarded, not least by unaccompanied minors themselves (Ensamkommandes Förbund 2016). This reflects further tensions in the discourses on unaccompanied minors.

### **8.1.3 Undocumented Unaccompanied Minors and the Dublin Regulation**

Undocumented children have been described as being in an extremely vulnerable situation, but at the same time they have to relate to this situation and do develop practical strategies in order to decrease vulnerability and risks (Ascher and Wahlström Smith 2016). As noted above, the social workers in my study were mainly in contact with unaccompanied minors who had become undocumented as they were subject to the Dublin II Regulation. A category of unaccompanied minors that Stretmo (2014:113) finds is described with suspicion is this category of so-called “Dublin cases” or “Dubliners”. “Dublin case” refers to the Dublin II Regulation, requiring that every person seeking refuge should do so by filing an application in the first country of arrival. Stretmo finds a discourse linked to calculating asylum seekers (what is in Britain called “asylum shopping”), where asylum seekers are described as travelling between EU countries, sometimes applying for asylum in various countries and sometimes aiming at a country of their own choice instead of applying for asylum in the country of arrival. However, the Dublin II Regulation at the time of the interviews was also heavily criticised by refugee support groups and some politicians, as the reception within the EU varied between different countries (e.g. ECRE 2006). Countries close to the common EU border, such as Greece, Italy and Hungary, should according to the regulation be responsible for most asylum seekers, as these were points of arrival. During the time of the interviews, Swedish praxis was to send back a

person to the first country entered in the EU if fingerprints were registered in the EU database Eurodac<sup>54</sup>. The minors who had their fingerprints registered in another EU country were to be sent back to that country and were not entitled to a legal representative in Sweden. Despite this, some minors chose to stay in Sweden “underground”, waiting the eighteen months that led to expiration of the Dublin II Regulation and the possibility of having their asylum application assessed in Sweden.

The practice of the Dublin Regulation has changed over time. In 2008 Sweden stopped sending unaccompanied minors to Greece, as the conditions in Greece were defined as deficient. In a report from the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket 2008), it was documented that children were locked up, unable to go out and without any form of trial. By the end of 2010, transfers of adult asylum seekers to Greece were stopped as well, after a decision in the Migration Court of Appeal (Court Case UM7706-10). At the same time, the situation of unaccompanied minors in Malta and Italy was highlighted in the Swedish debate by civil society organisations, researchers as well as politicians (SVT 2010, Lundberg and Söderman 2010). In 2010, people who were organised within the asylum rights movement together with social workers and other persons coming into contact with unaccompanied minors subject to the Dublin II Regulation started the campaign *Barnets Bästa Främst*, “The Best Interest of the Child Foremost”, demanding that the UNCRC and the principle of the best interest of the child always should outweigh the Dublin II Regulation (Barnets Bästa Främst 2010, Rosengrenska Stiftelsen 2010). Besides putting pressure on politicians, a publication from this campaign collected stories of unaccompanied minors living as undocumented because they do not want to return to an uncertain existence in countries such as Malta or Italy (Barnets Bästa Främst 2010).

In February 2010 the Swedish television program *Aktuellt* broadcast images from Malta where unaccompanied minors who were returned from Sweden lived in big hangars together with adults and without any support (SVT2 2010, see also Söderman 2010). These images had been taped by activists and social workers participating in the campaign *Barnets Bästa Främst*, who

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<sup>54</sup> Only persons over the age of 14 can be registered in Eurodac (the age limits are, however, being discussed during the time of writing this text and might be lower in the future).

had come into contact with minors who had been deported and wanted to investigate their situation. In the news program, the images were commented on by Thomas Hammarberg, EU Commissioner for Human Rights, saying that the situation did not accord with UNCRC and the principle of the best interest of the child. The Minister for Migration at the time, Tobias Billström, was in the studio stressing the importance of individual assessments by the Swedish Migration Agency, EU cooperation and also that Malta, Greece and Italy needed to take responsibility for the situation. Such principles were contrasted by activists with the situations of the unaccompanied minors “here and now”.

A “Dublin case” that got attention in Swedish media was “Ali’s case” in 2012 (Mikkelsen and Wagner 2013). Ali was an unaccompanied minor, 15 years old, who was to be deported to Italy. This was protested by, among others, Ali’s guardian and by Ali himself, who sewed his lips together. After suicide attempts and the presentation of “new facts” showing that Ali had been abused in Italy, his application was finally transferred to Sweden. In a book on “the missing children” two journalists, Jens Mikkelsen and Katia Wagner (2013) follow Ali’s story and various other unaccompanied minors who have gone “missing” for various reasons. When it comes to the so-called “Dublin cases”, they describe a contradictory image of the reception in Italy: the Swedish Migration Agency on the one hand did not assess any risks for minors in Italy; on the other hand minors attempted suicide or went “underground” rather than going back there. In September 2012, the Swedish Ombudsman for Children wrote a letter to the Director-General of the Swedish Migration Agency, asking the Agency to consider the situation for unaccompanied minors in Italy as a possible exception to the Dublin II Regulation (Barnombudsmannen 2012, Mikkelsen and Wagner 2013). At an EU level, EU Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, and the EU commissioner and Swedish liberal politician Cecilia Malmström criticised the use of the Dublin II Regulation in regard to children (Lundberg and Söderman 2010). A consequence was that the issue was debated and that deportations in accordance with Dublin II were a question at the time of the interviews in this study.

In June 2013, an EU court decision established that minors should have their asylum application assessed in the country where they made the

application instead of the country of arrival.<sup>55</sup> Later the same month, the regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union (Regulation EU No. 604/2013), also called the Dublin III Regulation, stated that:

In the absence of a family member, a sibling or a relative as referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2, the Member State responsible shall be that where the unaccompanied minor has lodged his or her application for international protection, provided that it is in the best interests of the minor.

As the interviews in this study were performed before 2014, the Dublin II regulation was still applied to minors in Sweden. In 2012, 12–13% of the minors originating from Afghanistan and Somalia, nationalities that to a very high degree were granted asylum at the time, were directed to other EU countries in accordance with Dublin II (Migrationsverket 2013b). This meant in practice that the children who decided to “go underground” in Sweden could wait for eighteen months and then have a fairly good chance of getting their asylum application approved. However, these eighteen months could also cause problems for young migrants of the ages of 16–17, as they risked turning 18 before being able to apply for asylum (and therefore might have less chance of receiving a residence permit).

## 8.2 Municipal Reception of Unaccompanied Minors

Unaccompanied minors differ from other asylum-seeking children in that they are in contact with the local authorities from the day that they arrive in Sweden. In 2006, the social services took over the reception of unaccompanied minors from the Swedish Migration Agency. This meant that the municipalities were responsible for the minor both during the asylum process and afterwards (Socialstyrelsen 2013b). The municipalities’ reception was, however, still dependent on the Swedish Migration Agency,

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<sup>55</sup> 6 June 2013 MA, BT and DA against Secretary of State for the Home Department (C-648/11).

in the sense that the Migration Agency decided where to place the minor (the “municipality of assignation”) and through the asylum process (if the minor was to stay in Sweden at all). An order of expulsion took away the official mandate of the social services in relation to the minor. This could generate difficulties for practitioners, as the different laws and different occupations sometimes followed different logics (compare SOU 2016:19). Below, I begin by presenting the reception in the municipalities with a focus on accommodation centres, as this was the form of reception present in my interviews (it is also the most common). I then present the three different occupations participating in this study.

### **8.2.1 Reception at Accommodation Centres**

The first contact that the minor had with Swedish authorities was often with the Migration Agency in the municipality of arrival, which directed the minor to the social services (Socialstyrelsen 2013b). The Swedish Migration Agency made agreements with the municipalities concerning reception, set forecasts and planned for coming needs, and decided upon state reimbursement for the municipalities. The municipalities of arrival were responsible for housing and accommodation before the Migration Agency assigned another municipality to receive the minor. When the Migration Agency assigned a new municipality to receive the minor, this municipality was responsible for the arrangements regarding the wellbeing of the minor. The Migration Agency was responsible for the asylum process and for assigning a legal representative for the minor. Furthermore, the Migration Agency contacted the county council where the minor resided regarding healthcare, searched for family members, prepared for returning in case of a denied asylum application and made decisions concerning economic support for the minors (ibid.). The municipalities were free to arrange the reception in different ways (always in accordance with what was seen as the best interest of the child): municipal or private accommodation centres, temporary foster homes or in foster families. When a minor arrived at a municipality, the social services opened an investigation according to the Social Services Act (11 Chapter 1 § Social Services Act), as the minors lacked accommodation when they arrived in Sweden. The most common housing solution for unaccompanied minors was at accommodation centres

(group-homes, so-called “HVB-homes”: “homes for care and living”). The HVB-homes receiving the group worked with unaccompanied minors specifically, but the idea of HVB-homes was formed from the needs of minors with a residence permit in Sweden, who are usually placed there because for various reasons they need care outside of their family homes, and not for the needs of unaccompanied minors (Söderqvist 2017). The reception in many of these HVB-homes has also been criticised for not well enough taking care of the needs of the minors and for neglecting to carry out individual assessments (Wernesjö 2014, Stretmo and Melander 2013).

Young persons may stay at an HVB-home until they turn 21 years old (SOSFS 2012:11). However, persons who have not gone through the asylum procedure before the age of 18 have to move to a reception centre for adults. Hence, the laws directing the social services and the Swedish Migration Agency differ when it comes to age. As the asylum procedure is often difficult to overview, it could be expected that the minors sometimes found it difficult to identify the difference between the social services and the migration authorities, and sometimes it took time before the minors trusted the social services and confided their problems (Stretmo and Melander 2013). In studies on unaccompanied minors’ experiences of the social services, minors often show a positive attitude towards the care, but researchers have expressed a concern that this positive attitude risks coming from an experienced obligation to be “grateful” for the support or that the minors could be afraid that any critique would affect their application for asylum<sup>56</sup> (ibid., Malmsten 2012).

As the responsibility for reception was moved to the municipalities, the new actors experienced unexpected challenges such as lengthy asylum processes and minors who were rejected asylum but could not be deported (Stretmo 2014). During the years relevant to my interviews (2010–2013) it also happened that the numbers of minors exceeded the numbers that the Swedish Migration Agency and the municipalities willing to receive minors had agreed upon (Socialstyrelsen 2013b). In the “municipalities of arrival” this could mean that minors who were meant to stay only for short periods

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<sup>56</sup> Stretmo and Melander (2012) also note that this fear could be well-grounded, as there have been cases where the social services have given information to the Swedish Migration Agency.

(in *transit*) stayed for several months before being sent to other municipalities where they were to stay on a more permanent basis (see e.g. Stretmo 2014, Malmsten 2012). Besides creating an insecure situation for the minors (which the social workers reacted upon), this necessitated flexibility on behalf of the social workers and also a certain amount of insecurity, for example through short-term employment. A considerably high flow of both personnel and minors contributed to this situation (compare Stretmo and Melander 2013). In a guide for the work with unaccompanied minors from 2013, the National Board of Health and Welfare expressed the view that:

When staying maybe several months, a consequence was that the children got used to living in the municipality of arrival. They had developed significant ties with other children and youth at the reception centre, with their guardians and personnel at the centre, at school and at the social services – important persons that later on they were forced to move away from, something not easily done. (Socialstyrelsen 2013b:41, *my translation*)

In the guide, social workers in contact with minors in these situations were encouraged to explain the regulations and to motivate and support the minors to move. Also, minors who were subject to the Dublin II Regulation stayed in the municipalities of reception awaiting deportation. These regulations have been changed since then, and today all municipalities are to receive the minors assigned to them by the Swedish Migration Agency.

### **8.2.2 Three Groups of Social Workers**

In this section, I will describe the three groups of social workers participating in this study: social assistants, personnel at accommodation centres, and guardians. The three groups of social workers had different work descriptions/assignments and acted in relation to different forms of mandates. The social assistants were positioned closer to the welfare state bureaucracy and ideals of following the rules of the organisation, while the guardians were closer to ideals of helping and voluntary work (compare Svensson 2017, Svensson et al. 2008). The personnel at the accommodation centres could be placed somewhere in between the other two groups as they were employed within an organisation but worked close

to the daily life of the minors. The social workers also came from different local settings. In the case of social work with unaccompanied minors local contexts do matter, as the reception is taken care of by the municipalities. However, even though they had different roles and were from different local settings, the social workers in this study had many things in common. What unites them is the performance of different forms of social work in relation to the minors and that they all chose to act in support of the minors, and thereby followed other logics than the strictly organisational.

#### *8.2.2.1 Social Assistants*

The *social assistants* in this study had a rather formalised position in relation to the children and their main task was to investigate the children's needs, such as housing and schooling, and to assign a guardian. They worked in accordance with the model BBIC<sup>57</sup>, and planned the different life areas together with the minors, and sometimes with guardians. With regard to unaccompanied minors, this work has been described as sometimes difficult as BBIC has a focus on the children's network and is not always easy to apply to the situation of unaccompanied minors recently arrived in Sweden (Stretmo and Melander 2013). In a study on experiences of the work with unaccompanied minors, Live Stretmo and Charlotte Melander (2013) also comment that social assistants when opening an investigation on minors in transit did not do it as thoroughly as when it came to other undocumented minors, as they did not find it ethically acceptable to initiate such a large dossier when the minors were to be moved. Stretmo and Melander further describe the role of the social assistants as managing contacts with the different actors involved in the practical work with the minors, especially working close to personnel at accommodation centres and guardians. The role of the social assistant and their relation to the minor is therefore affected by how much responsibility other actors take, as well as by possible conflicts between other actors. This meant that the social assistants needed to be flexible in their roles and able to step in and take more responsibility when they experienced that other actors failed in their responsibility (ibid.) This situation can also be noted in my interviews. To the social assistants participating in my study, discussions on accountability and discretionary space were more central than to the other categories of social workers,

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<sup>57</sup> Barnets Behov I Centrum/Assessment framework for Children in Need and their Families.



possibly as their position was closest to the street-level bureaucrat described by Lipsky (1980/2010) (see Chapter 1).

The minors had most often already arrived at a municipal accommodation centre when meeting their social assistants. As the contact with the minor was made after arrival at the Swedish Migration Agency and the minors needed somewhere to go right away, the social assistants' decision on housing was often retroactive, according to the social assistants participating in this study (indicating that the mission started out with an ad hoc solution; see also Stretmo and Melander 2013). The Social Services Act regulated the work of the social assistants, but they also worked under the Migration Agency, and thereby the Aliens Act, in that they had to follow their decisions concerning moving children to other municipalities or deportations. This was experienced in many interviews as a contradiction (compare Aracena 2015). The decisions made in accordance with the Social Services Act were overrun by any decision made by the Migration Agency (which, besides deportation, could involve moving the child to another municipality with little notice). Therefore, the social assistants expressed a frustration with their role and sometimes did not feel able to perform the social work as they would have liked. Within the frames of the overall legislations and the directives at their workplaces, however, the social assistants had a discretionary space and could decide how to organise their daily work and what it should contain. This meant that they had a fairly clear framework for their work, and that they had freedom to organise their work within these frames. They could also act somewhat independently during their time off, as the role of social assistant was performed formally within the frames of the working hours at the office – bound to time and place.

#### *8.2.2.2 Personnel at Accommodation Centres*

The *personnel at accommodation centres* for unaccompanied minors worked close to the everyday life of the minors, as there were personnel at such centres all day and night. The accommodation centres serve as a home for the minors while they are being taken care of by the social services, and have been described as offering a “way in” to Swedish society (Stretmo and Melander 2013). This could mean a focus on activities such as learning how to swim or how to ride a bike, as well as cleaning, cooking and planning personal finance. Everyday life at the centres was often rather structured

with daily routines, but also leisure-time. Åsa Söderqvist (2017) has studied different aspects of unaccompanied minors' transition out of care to own accommodation, and a central discussion in her study is about what is a "home". Regarding the personnel at the accommodation centres, she identifies three themes connected to the "home" that they tried to provide for the minors. First, they referred to basic protection and security; second, they described a family-like context where their own lives could serve as an example; and third, they identified obstacles when trying to separate between their private and professional identities. This last dimension especially, as will be further developed in Chapter 9, was also highly present in my material. Another difficulty described by Stretmo and Melander (2013), which also is central to my material, is that the personnel at the centres revealed that it was sometimes difficult to work with children who had different residential status (asylum seekers, children awaiting deportation, children with residence permit), as these groups had very different sets of rights. For example, asylum seekers and minors who had had their asylum application rejected lacked a Swedish "personal number" (see Chapter 2) and therefore could not always participate in the same activities as other minors. Stretmo and Melander also recount that the personnel often assume that the minors who have been deported as well as the minors who have absconded are doing well, but that they don't understand much about what has happened to them.

In my interviews, the personnel at the accommodation centres often had a role that permitted a closer relation to the minors than that of the social assistants. This opened up for other forms of social work than the formal administrative role of the social assistants. The personnel at the centres, however, did not have the same discretionary space as the social assistants, as their role was more closely tied to the employer, who regulated the daily work at the centres. The formal work description/frames varied between accommodation centres and municipalities. Some of the centres were run by the municipality and others by private actors. At the centres, there were often rules that regulated contact between the personnel and the minors. Some centres had more explicit rules when it came to this relationship, for example prohibiting the social workers employed at the centre from giving out their telephone numbers or meeting the minors in their time off. At other centres, minors who had gone into hiding could visit their former "home" and also sometimes eat with the others. Still, all social workers at

accommodation centres were afraid of talking with colleagues about their activities in support of the minors. Many of the interview participants also had short-term contracts, something that they found affected their ability to talk openly about things of which they were critical, as they were afraid of not getting their contracts extended.

### 8.2.2.3 *Guardians*

The *guardians* had a different position from that of social assistants and personnel at accommodation centres. Their assignment was on behalf of the minors and they were expected to have other employment besides being guardians, as this was a role considered as voluntary work (see Svensson 2017). The guardians participating in this study, however, were focusing to a large extent on their role as guardians and had various parallel assignments as guardians. This meant that their role as a guardian often took up much of their time and also gave them an income that they (to different extents) needed. The guardians received their assignment and salary from the municipality (reimbursed by the Swedish Migration Agency) and it can therefore not be seen as only voluntary work, although they were not employed by the municipality (compare Svensson 2017). Their work was allocated under the Law on Guardians for Unaccompanied Minors (2005:429) and not the Social Services Act. This meant a focus on representing the child and acting in ways that should benefit the child. The guardians should *inter alia* represent the child in relation to the Swedish Migration Agency and take care of practical questions concerning the minor's finances, schooling and living situation (SKL 2016). They were supervised by a chief guardian within the municipality, but could organise their work independently. Stretmo and Melander (2013) note, in their interviews with social assistants and personnel at accommodation centres, that guardians show different amounts of dedication to their assignments and that this sometimes creates inequalities among minors. Such distinctions were, as we will see in Chapter 9, also found in my study. However, the guardians participating in this study all had a close relation to the minors.

The guardians had no formal training for the role of being a guardian; only one of them had taken a course, arranged by the municipality together with a nongovernmental organisation. The interpretation of the guardians' assignment seemed to vary quite a lot between different guardians. There

were also variations between municipalities. The guardians in this study were not compensated financially when they continued having contact with minors who became undocumented, as this was something that they saw as outside of their assignment. However, in some municipalities the responsibility for undocumented minors was interpreted differently. In 2013, a court decision in Örebro gave the municipalities the right to remunerate guardians who kept in contact with minors who became undocumented and also to get reimbursement from the Swedish Migration Agency for this. This decision was a consequence of the fact that a guardian in Örebro municipality was financially compensated by the municipality for keeping in contact with an undocumented minor and that the Migration Agency was afterwards to compensate the municipality (Örebro kommun 2013). The decision shows that the rules and guidelines are possible to interpret in different ways and that the assignment can be changed. However, the guardians in this study had not experienced such changes at the time of the interviews.

### 8.3 Heavy Workloads and Protest

The social workers in this study were acting not only in a context of conflicting discourses on unaccompanied minors, but also at a time when the conditions of social workers (mainly employed social assistants) were being discussed in the public debate. During recent years, many social workers in different fields of the social services have left their positions, a development that has been linked to heavy workloads and a lack of adequate resources (Lauri 2016, Ryan Bengtsson 2014, Astvik, Melin and Allvin 2014, Aronsson, Astvik and Gustavsson 2014, Tham 2007). In a study on welfare workers, Wanja Astvik and Marika Melin (2013) describe how demands on cost efficiency and welfare cutbacks today affect both the health of welfare workers and service outcome. An increased workload and increased work-related stress have followed from the general restructuring of human service organisations to leaner organisations. In the study, social workers stand out as an exposed occupational group when it comes to balancing workload and demands. The authors claim that “social workers and especially child welfare social workers report higher workload and more

difficult demands” (Astvik and Melin 2013:338). The authors also describe three forms of coping strategy: *compensatory and quality reducing* (skipping lunches, bringing work home, prioritising among work tasks), *voice and support seeking* (asking colleagues for support and voicing problems to managers), and *self-supporting* (keeping the problems to oneself). The first coping strategy was more common among social workers, a result that the authors explain as due to the heavy workload constraining the possibilities to seek support from colleagues. Other studies have shown that social workers are afraid of voicing protest and express a fear of being seen as not professional by their colleagues, negative reactions or reprisals (Lauri 2016:123, Hedin, Månsson and Tikkanen 2009).

During the time of the interviews, there was an emerging organising among social workers who expressed dissatisfaction with their work situation. For example, a blog called “Det sociala arbete kan vara annorlunda” (“Social work could be different”) published texts by social workers, many of them working with unaccompanied minors as social assistants or as personnel at accommodation centres, that shed light on situations that the social workers felt that they could not complain about openly. This blog was mentioned in some of the interviews. Similar to this blog, the trade union initiative “Now We Break the Silence” (*Nu Bryter vi Tystnaden*) on their webpage published “good examples within the social services” (NBVT 2015, *my translation*, Ryan Bengtsson 2014). These examples were presented as anonymous stories told by social workers who have “been able to perform good work with clients, despite the often poor organisational conditions” and who are proud of their work (*ibid.*). The idea that social workers *should* act differently may be a reason not to act in accordance with the formal expectations of the employer. The NBVT network was active 2011–2015 and, besides the blog, had more outreaching activities putting pressure on politicians. It has continued at a local level in Uppsala and is still there organising social workers in matters of municipal cutbacks. Other initiatives among social workers during this time period were groups organising critical social workers such as KAOSA in Malmö, SFSÅ in Gothenburg, and a syndicalist union organising among social workers in Stockholm, all

reacting to the conditions of social workers and advocating from a social justice perspective.<sup>58</sup>

During the last years (2016-2017), a large mobilisation in support of unaccompanied minors has also been made, after the introduction of the interim asylum laws in Sweden in 2015. The consequences of the interim law to unaccompanied minors, as well as age assignments, have been heavily criticised, not least by minors themselves and practitioners in contact with the group. Demands on amnesty have been made and deportations protested, highlighting that unaccompanied minors (especially from Afghanistan) should have the right to stay in Sweden (*Vi står inte ut* 2017).

The different forms of organising on the matter of unaccompanied minors (also discussed in section 8.1.3) and the critiques of the conditions for social work practice are important contexts to the acts analysed below. However, just as in the case of the social workers in the two blogs presented above, the social workers in this study preferred to remain anonymous. As giving support to undocumented migrants is not illegal in Sweden, the hesitation to talk openly about their contact with undocumented migrants partly had to do with the legal frames at the workplace and fear of being reported or dismissed.

## 8.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the debates and contexts conditioning the work with unaccompanied minors during the time period studied (2010–2013, and some years before that). This context is important to bear in mind throughout the analysis in Chapter 9. Unaccompanied minors have been described both as a vulnerable group and in terms of “bogus” asylum seekers, and the debates on trafficking as well as on age assignments are important backgrounds to the social workers’ acts in relation to the minors. The use of the Dublin II Regulation in the case of minors is also of crucial importance if we want to understand the social workers’ choices to act. At

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<sup>58</sup> KAOSA, kritiska organiserade socialarbetare, are still active in Malmö, as well as SFSA, Socialarbetare för social aktion, in Gothenburg.

the time of the interviews, deportations of minors to countries such as Malta, Italy and Hungary were heavily criticised. A majority of the minors in contact with the social workers would have a right to asylum if their cases were to be assessed in Sweden. Therefore, staying “underground” for eighteen months would mean that they had quite a good chance to be given permanent residence in Sweden.

Even though the municipalities were responsible for the reception, the Swedish Migration Agency decided when the minors were to be moved between municipalities and, in the end, if the minors were to stay in Sweden at all. The social work with unaccompanied minors therefore contained elements of migration control and the minors sometimes found it difficult to distinguish between social workers and migration authorities. While the “municipalities of arrival” had a responsibility for the minors over longer periods of time than was initially planned for, the social workers in these municipalities in some cases had close bonds to some of the minors staying temporarily and who suddenly were to be sent to a new municipality (or whose age was revised to be above 18 by the Migration Agency).

Social workers participated in the collective organising against the application of the Dublin II Regulation to minors. There were also movements demanding better work conditions for social workers and searching for alternative forms of social work. In some cases such initiatives were organised through anonymous blog posts, presenting how social work could be different. As we will see, such elements of anonymity in the organisation of social workers are an interesting context to the acts analysed in Chapter 9, which often were secret and unspectacular.

## 9. Three Kinds of Acts

In this chapter, I analyse how the social workers described their individual enactments of social rights and/or obligations in relation to unaccompanied minors risking deportation. The main focus here is not the exact strategies or technologies used by the social workers in order to provide this support, but how the acts can be understood in terms of going beyond/against, or staying within/upholding the status quo. I study how the social workers talk about their acts and present themselves as acting subjects and I also discuss the spaces to act that the social workers describe in relation to their employers, to the minors and to their ideas of justice. Just as in Part I, the social workers were doing things in ways that could be described both in terms of *actions* and *acts*, especially as they often gave their support in secret or in arenas perceived as “private”. I have however chosen to analyse the social workers’ explicit support to the minors in terms of *acts*, as they chose to do something other than most of their colleagues did and actively kept giving support to the minors even when the minors became undocumented. The social workers described acts that took many different forms and were based on different logics (although also having similarities). In order to analyse this, I have made three analytical reconstructions of kinds of acts present in the accounts of the interview participants; these reconstructions form the analysis. The analytical reconstructions are not to be read as ideal types of persons acting in accordance with a coherent logic; rather, often the same social worker described different kinds of acts in different situations and contexts, and sometimes they overlapped or intersected (compare Laanemets, Mattsson and Nordling 2013). The acts are discussed in the sections below, and I call them *acts of “professionalism”*, *acts of “compassion”* and *acts of “activism”*. The quotation marks are used in order to indicate that these wordings are not tied to the theoretical framework, but are emic themes emerging from the interviews. I have chosen not to predefine what I see as “professional” acts or “activism”; rather I make use of the social



workers' own descriptions of their support. When it comes to "compassion", the term is used in order to group a variety of empirical descriptions where the private *relation to the minor* is centred. When analysing the social workers' acts in support of the minors, my focus has been mainly on the different forms of acts rather than on different types of employment or mission. However, as also discussed in Chapter 8, the types of employment/assignment provided different frames for acting.

Below, I present the three reconstructions one by one, analysing how in different ways they open up spaces "in between" what was perceived as "professional" and "private" or what was seen as a formal responsibility and answerability, where the social workers described that they were able to act in support of the minors (compare Squire 2009, Isin 2008). The social workers' descriptions are made at an everyday level, and are not analysed as clear-cut ruptures or acts clearly creating new forms of citizenship. In the last section I bring the discussions on the three different forms of acts together and argue that the logics intersect and overlap more than is often taken into account in the analysis of support to undocumented migrants.

## 9.1 Acts of "Professionalism"

*Acts of "professionalism"* are acts that address the question of what it means to be a professional social worker. The analysis focuses on the different social workers' accounts of their own and others' positions rather than a predefined idea of "professional social workers", and the idea of what it is to be "professional" varies depending on occupation. For example, the guardians did not describe their role as "professional", but they could sometimes relate to their formal assignments in similar ways as the other social workers, and they commented on the positions of the two other groups of social workers. As presented in Chapters 1 and 4, there are different expectations on social work, and ideas of what is "professional" can be mobilised for different types of claims (such as autonomy, being a welfare state representative or ethical concerns). Such different rationales link the analysis of the social workers' acts to the tensions between responsibility and answerability in Isin's theories, and can be seen as a background or context to the discussion below. What is focused on here is

not what the social workers' role *should* be or what their formal mandate *should* contain. I am interested in how the social workers interviewed understood their mandate and what spaces to act in new ways they saw. I analyse how *being professional* is used and expressed by the social workers in the interviews, in the negotiations of the social workers' responsibility and, by extension, their negotiations of citizenship at an everyday level (compare Holgersson 2011).

The positioning of oneself and of the acts performed in relation to social work understood as "professional" was most clearly expressed by the social assistants and by those social workers at the accommodation centres who had had a formal social work education (*socionomer*). In the interviews, these social workers expressed more concern with what they saw as their professional mandate. They also saw clearer limits to this mandate than those who had other backgrounds. In general, the social workers interviewed were sceptical of the word "professional", as they found it to be too distanced (compare Lauri 2016). At the same time, they could express a fear of not being seen as "professional enough" by managers and colleagues or even of losing their employment. However, some of them also argued along what they saw as professional principles and ethics that could help them to see opportunities *within* the mandate in ways that other participants did not experience. Competing views of (and uses of) acts of "professionalism" can therefore be traced throughout the analysis. What is seen as within the mandate, as going beyond the mandate or as going against the mandate is therefore fluid and depends on the social workers' positions and context. This goes back to the idea of dislocations between actions upholding the status quo and what can be understood in terms of *acts*.

In the sections below, I begin with an analysis of how the social workers understand what it is to be "professional", I then analyse how they understand their discretionary spaces and how the relation to the minors is sometimes put forward as a priority. Finally, I discuss potential new spaces opened up by the social workers in relation to their views on professionalism and discretion, sometimes giving opportunity for acts of citizenship at an everyday level.

### 9.1.1 Being “Professional”

Being employed as social workers (social assistants, personnel at accommodation centres, guardians) did not necessarily mean that the social workers would describe themselves as *being “professional”*. Rather, in the interviews there was often an objection to the idea of professionalism within all three groups, as being professional was associated with following rules (a mandate linked to being a welfare state representative) rather than following ethical principles or representing the service users. As expressed by one social worker:

... I am not a formally trained social worker [*socionom*], so I don't have the social work [education], I haven't studied it that way, I have studied human rights and international relations; it's a very theoretical education, so I think that it has been difficult, their approach, to talk about clients and... This professional view that we are there and we do a job and then we go away and then we should think about privacy and... (laughter) (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker expressed that she viewed the professional role as separating between “work” and “private”, an approach that she found difficult to adapt to. Another social worker (who in fact was formally trained, *socionom*, herself) argued that she acted as a “fellow being” in relation to the minors rather than as a “professional”:

Absolutely as a fellow being, I would say. Because I believe that it would be easier to shut your eyes... in the role as a social assistant you can in some way say that ‘this is my limit, this is my work.’ The professionalism somehow, if you want to use that horrible word... it can create limits. But as a fellow being it's just terrible (...) even if I weren't a social worker I would have felt the same, what should you say, duty to help these people. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

This social worker showed a depreciation when it came to the word “professional”. She described being professional as marking limits and “shutting your eyes” to the world of the minors. This is a view on being “professional” that is rather different from, for example, the medical doctors described by Isin (2012) and Castañeda (2013) following professional

principles conflicting with the organisation of the welfare state (see Chapter 3.4). Instead describing herself as a “fellow being”, the social worker argued that she had a responsibility that went beyond being “professional”. At the same time, she expressed ambivalence in relation to her role. Further on in the interview, the same social worker talked about herself as a “social worker”:

...social workers at every workplace have chosen this profession for a reason, social workers often have a... you reward yourself when you help someone else. (...) To know that you are helping someone that doesn't have anyone else, that's, it's tragic but, it's terrible to say it, but it is satisfactory at the same time. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Here, we find an idea of social work as altruistic, an idea that is rather different from the image in the first quote. This reflects the sometimes distinct connotations of social work discussed in Chapter 1. The separation between *being a social worker* and *being professional* made in the quotes above is interesting. Choosing to be a social worker seems to mean choosing to be a “helper”, an image that contrasts with the “professional” approach that means keeping a distance and strictly following an organisational logic. This indicates an understanding that people with certain characteristics often choose to be social workers, rather than describing the “professional” approach as producing altruism or ethical behaviour. In one interview, a guardian described that she had more expectations on ethical behaviour when it came to all people working with social questions:

I think that it is an extra responsibility, for those who work with social questions, at least I have more expectations. I would never ever turn to a business owner or a CEO and discuss the things I do with the teachers or with counsellors and psychologists and, well, people who work with people in some way or another, I don't do that. (Guardian)

Social work was here tied to other groups who “work with people”. The image of the social worker was more linked to what Bourdieu (1998:4) calls “the left hand of the state”: a social consciousness is expected and this is contracted to other occupations that are not expected to have this consciousness. This view on social workers' responsibility seems to open up a space for other obligations than the formal bureaucrat, as it contains an

expectation that the social workers should do something more than acting strictly in the ways that they perceived as “professional” (in the sense discussed above), potentially *becoming professional* in new ways.

Understanding “being professional” mainly as following rules, many of the social workers were however afraid of critique when acting in ways that they saw as being outside of their formal mandate. This was especially true for the social assistants, who expressed a fear of being seen as “without boundaries” (*gränslösa*). Being “professional” was hence often experienced as a marker of borders (compare Nyers 2008) and the space to act was therefore restricted in practice. As one social assistant explained:

...the asylum rights movement was something that you almost should not talk about, I felt. And you could think that it should be a merit to be involved in the asylum rights movement, because you work with the children and then you get more insights in... you can help them in different ways. But I experienced that it was nothing positive, more the other way around. Then it was suddenly a commitment without boundaries and that one would maybe be easier to commit misconduct. (Social assistant)

The social assistant described being involved in the asylum rights movement as “nothing positive”, even if this could give insights that were to benefit the minors. Merely having insights into the asylum rights movement was here perceived as a risk of committing misconduct. Being emotionally engaged in the work was also seen as a risk; the limit between *being committed* (and still “professional”) and *being without boundaries* (not “professional”) hence was experienced as a grey zone. Various social workers were afraid of being seen as without boundaries, and this was often based on signals they got from their employers. One social worker said:

Well, like now when I went to an interview for that accommodation centre in [X city]. After having told a bit about myself and what I have done and the like, he says “oh...”, instead of saying “shit, you have such a broad experience!”, like “I can see that you have worked with this” and so, have been active beyond work and so on. So he says: “Yes, I use to tell those who also have been active in the Red Cross and worked a lot with that, these questions, it’s that you should not take it personally. Well, I don’t want anyone who comes in and thinks that they are going to save the world, or

that one... This is a job. Actually I want it as simple as possible, simple solutions, and then it's not always positive that you have all this on your CV." And I mean, it's just that reaction, it said so much about what they... "just work, don't think, put it away", of course I nodded there and said "yes, sure", because either I start an argument and then I don't get the job... But it says so much about their fundamental approach. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

This and similar experiences led to the social workers keeping quiet about supporting minors who risked deportation, even when this support was given outside of work. The expectations from managers, more or less explicitly expressed, restricted the space for acting on perceived ("misplaced") obligations.

Often, the social workers said that they did not know what would happen to them if they were not "professional" enough, but in some cases they expressed a fear of losing their job if it was known that they were giving extra support to the minors. One social worker at an accommodation centre described a situation when colleagues of hers were relocated. She said that it was never expressed openly but that she was convinced that it was because they were supporting undocumented minors in their private time:

...people got relocated from the workplace, and this makes it very insecure for everyone to be there, also for the minors it has huge consequences. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The fear of losing one's job or getting relocated to another position was also expressed by a social assistant:

And you are rather dependent. The [X] municipality is not so big and it is the municipality that employs social workers, trained social workers [*socionomer*], and it would be very difficult to get a job again. (Social assistant)

Having a job and being employable are dimensions that add to the border of social work; ultimately, the social workers interviewed were dependent on having an income (even if this dependency varied depending on factors such as age, social network, whether the employment was combined with

other jobs or studies, if the social worker had children, local conditions and so on). As social work has been developed close to the Swedish welfare state, the municipalities are central employers to social workers.

Trying to *be* “professional”, and hence strictly follow the rules and keeping distance from the minors, could create rather difficult situations in the daily practice. This was especially visible in situations where the social workers had no formal mandate to give support to the minors and the decision was made by the Swedish Migration Agency: when minors were to be deported, were assigned a new age, or were to be transferred to other municipalities on very short notice. Knowing that someone was to be deported and that this was not formally to be addressed by the social worker created tensions regarding the views of what was a “professional” way to deal with the situation. One of the social workers at an accommodation centre said:

It becomes very difficult to work for the best interest of these persons if they are to... It doesn't help if I do some fun activity during the day and the person is to be transferred to Malta and I do nothing to stop that but only see to it that they have food and shelter [while still in Sweden]. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Seeing the needs of the minors, but not being able to act in ways understood as being “professional”, created a frustration with the work situation. However, this was sometimes contrasted with what the social workers thought *should* be “professional”. The social assistants especially could express a frustration with not being able to follow the Social Services Act in ways that they would have done at other workplaces. As the social workers had no say in the decisions of the Swedish Migration Agency, they expressed frustration with their limited formal mandate:

We didn't follow the Social Services Act because there you are responsible for a person until they turn 21 – it is like that at all the HVB-homes and we, here it was until 18. And then, from one day to the next, the day before we might have done very detailed planning, or the day before someone was assigned a new age, you might have done a LVU [the Care of Young Persons Act] placement, then the person was assigned a new age and everything should just fall. And that is totally absurd. (Social assistant)

The fairly far-reaching responsibility that the social workers had for the minors (managing contacts, seeing to it that the minor is well) could hence shift from one day to the next. In the quote above the social assistant questions the strict age limits, arguing that there is a need for support also after the minor turns 18. It includes a questioning of the practice of age assignment, which has been discussed and criticised also by medical doctors (see Hjern and Ascher 2015). The experienced clash between formal expectations and the situations that the social workers were to deal with at an everyday level created a situation where the social workers expressed that they did not feel satisfied with their work:

But it wasn't about what we as social assistants could do. It was more that one could try to find housing, try to help to solve a situation, and then maybe one could have use of these persons who were around, maybe personnel at the accommodation centres who were dedicated or guardians who were dedicated. (...) And I don't really experience that this was the real social services, to be honest. Because as soon as the Migration Agency made a decision we just had to let go. And therefore, we as the social services did not have much...we were rather wimpy. (Social assistant)

The work with the minors was here described as not the “real social services”. This indicates an expectation or a wish that social work could be different, something that was also expressed by another social assistant:

So in some way I think that it is something that we ought to work on more, there should have been much more time spent on being able to see how one could continue being a support for the adolescents who were assigned a higher age. And then that would mean that I think that the social services should end all the contact with the migration [authorities]... (Social assistant)

The social worker both expressed ideas of what the social services should be responsible for in terms of work tasks and ideas of how the social services should act in relation to other authorities (specifically the Swedish Migration Agency). This clash between the experienced limitations of being “professional” and a wish for another position in relation to the minors sometimes made the social workers act in ways that were not expected of them. Even if being “professional” was often associated with clear frames, a



wish for a contrasting logic (potentially becoming professional in new ways) was present in how the social workers described their work situation.

### **9.1.2 Acting in Relation to the Employer or to the Minor?**

Acts of “professionalism” were made in relation to what was understood as being “professional” and this was very much linked to the relation to the employer. However, working directly with service users, social workers sometimes have room to negotiate rules and laws according to the circumstances. This has been described in terms of a discretionary space (see Chapter 1, Wallander and Molander 2014), a discussion that is broadly established within social work research and can be seen as a context to the analysis presented here. Even if the social workers often showed reluctance to use the word “professional”, and mostly saw it as delimiting their possibilities to act as a support, competing views of being “professional” were sometimes expressed. In some cases, these views could be understood as *enabling* support to the minors. For example, the social assistants described a discretionary space that sometimes gave them a possibility to extend their responsibilities in relation to the minors. This meant that they could see a space to give support to the minors within what they understood as being “professional”. As one social assistant expressed it:

The professional role implies that we need to put the client perspective first, in a way; we do not work for the Migration Agency – we work for the children. (...) To me, these grey zones are a part of my role, but for someone else they might be very much outside of it. (...) But as far as you could argue, within the workplace, as long as you could argue why you did a certain thing, it was all right... (Social assistant)

The social assistant here referred to different forms of support to unaccompanied minors who risked being deported. She described that she could see grey zones and that it was possible to make use of this when in contact with the minors. Defining her role as working on behalf of the minors gave her room for manoeuvre, a space to act that was understood in very different ways by different social workers. The strict line between what was understood as a formal responsibility and acting in accordance with ideas of justice (answerability) was hence blurred in relation to the

individual minors, just as we could see in the case of social assistance in Chapter 6.

In the negotiations of what they should be doing, the social workers sometimes described that they made use of the Social Services Act, contrasting the logic of migration control to the mission of the social services (compare Chapter 6, Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012). One of the social assistants commented on the general understanding that a logic of migration control was to put the Social Services Act to the side:

It is interpreted like that. In other situations you could interpret it as, well that is probably at a higher level, but you could see lots of things only in the Social Services Act that would mean that we actively worked for these adolescents. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

It was put forward that the Social Services Act was what *should* direct social work, and that some forms of support could be legitimised under this law. Just as during the implementation of the Malmö guidelines on social assistance (analysed in Part I), the support for undocumented minors was described as actually being within the formal framework of the law. Following a similar logic, others argued that the perspective of migration control conflicted with the UNCRC. For example, one of the social workers giving minors legal advice outside of work argued that she was actually doing what was her formal obligation, even if she was not following the rules at the workplace:

Because basically it is about following a law: the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a law that is above other laws and I don't care about [the fact] that the authorities disregard that law. I follow that law; I follow my own ethical and moral values, which in fact follow a law as well. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Hence, the social workers sometimes argued that their support to minors who became (or risked becoming) undocumented was – although disregarded by authorities – in accordance with their formal duties. Just as discussed in Part I, the UNCRC could open up a space for the social workers to act and could be used strategically in order to justify a support

that was not understood by the social workers as fitting the expectations on being “professional”.

However, the expected space to act in accordance with the Social Services Act or with the UNCRC was not there in practice, as this was an interpretation made at an individual level and not supported by managers. Even if the social workers argued for a discretionary space, they said that this was not openly stated in relation to managers and colleagues. The knowledge that the Social Services Act could be interpreted in different ways was therefore sometimes expressed with frustration, as the social workers formally needed to follow the present interpretation (that they could do nothing when a minor was to be deported). This led to their often keeping quiet about what they were doing. As one social assistant described a situation when she gave support to a minor that was not formally within her work tasks but that she made for the wellbeing of the minor:

And on that occasion I felt a little bit afraid that they would discover it because then I thought that they would go in and start controlling more of what it is you are doing and not doing at work and what, like... The space in a way, or the discretion that you still had would be more limited. (Social assistant)

Being afraid that the discretionary space would become more restricted, the social assistant opted not to talk about her acts. The discretionary space was in itself understood in ambiguous ways by the social workers – it *should be* there, it was argued, but in many cases the social workers did not seem to trust their mandate to act. This meant that the support of the social workers was often given in a “secret”, or “private”, arena rather than a public or “professional” one.

When not being able to negotiate the boundaries of their formal mandate in practice, some of the social workers started negotiating with their own boundaries. Various social workers underlined that there was a limit to what one was able to do before risking “burnout”. As one social assistant expressed it:

Well, it’s not possible to just turn it off, at least in the beginning it wasn’t possible to turn the job off. It took, it melted into your private... and I am also interested in these questions and then it sort of just became very much.

Then, you learn how to turn it off, but not entirely. I don't think that it's possible... But this was also partly why I quit; it didn't feel as strong, it felt almost like a love that... Well, you feel yourself that you start to become that boring social assistant who I don't want to be, I want to be dedicated... And when you start feeling that it's not so fun, and that is probably a defence mechanism in order not to get exhausted, and then you feel that it is time to do something else. (Social assistant)

The social worker described that being “too dedicated” could imply not being able to keep up the work, and at the same time the work would lose its meaning without this dedication. Leaving the job could hence be a strategy in the long run:

Well, it is very hard to work with this. Partly, it's all these guidelines that you need to relate to, with the Migration Agency, the Social Services Act and so on, and then it's the target group and your own role as an official and dedication... Well, it's an equation that seldom works, it's difficult. And I don't think many people are able to do this for a long time. You do it and you love it and it is really nice, but I think that you, well, you can't do it for too long. (Social assistant)

This double feeling towards the work situation also reflects the competing views of what it should mean to be “professional”; working for the minors was experienced as fulfilling, but the possibility to do so was understood as restricted.

### **9.1.3 Spaces to Act: In Between “Professional” and “Private”**

The social workers described being “professional” as two-sided: on the one hand there sometimes was (or should be) room for negotiation and a discretionary space, on the other hand the social workers experienced a fear of control that made them keep quiet. In this way, they described a clash between the situations that they encountered in their everyday practices and the organisational rules. In some cases, this clash opened up a space for acting in ways other than the formally expected. One such space was the individual dedication: as discussed above, the tasks included in the social workers' assignments could be interpreted differently. For example, the

social assistants and the personnel at the accommodation centres described how they helped the minors with tasks, such as juridical aid, that they were not supposed to do and that formally should have been the guardians' responsibility:

There are lots of people who really don't care, who are like "well, you can do that", don't have the time or don't care, and... that gets really arbitrary. Then there are guardians who are extremely dedicated and really do their job, but I think that many just like come, sign a paper and go away. And that they would never sit down to write an appeal; it is still rather difficult to know how to write, what authorities to contact and so on... Really arbitrary. And now if you think of [the fact] that the share of children that each guardian has is very large – like, one guardian has any number of children – we know that there are many who are overloaded, and that also adds to that one doesn't have the energy to appeal. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

This meant that the minors received very different support, depending on the individual social workers – even when the social workers were acting within their formal mandate. The guardians could, for example, interpret their mission in very different ways. Especially in cases where a minor was subject to the Dublin II Regulation, the support of the guardians varied. As one guardian expressed it:

You feel really powerless when you have a Dublin child. Because it is neither me nor the child who decides about his future, but an authority that decides about his future, and you are so powerless when you can't persuade... you can find regulations, you can find loopholes, (...) and you have to write a lot, make lots of telephone calls, put a lot of pressure on the Migration Agency. (Guardian)

On the one hand feeling powerless and on the other hand actually working to put pressure on the Swedish Migration Agency, the guardian explained that there *were* loopholes and that these were possible to find if you put a lot of effort into it. Being in contact with a "Dublin child" meant that these efforts are needed, but not all guardians had the resources or the will to work with this. In these cases, social assistants or personnel at accommodation centres could instead feel a responsibility to give juridical

support. One social worker said that she and her colleagues supported minors who were to be deported according to the Dublin II Regulation, through writing appeals – even though they weren't officially allowed to do so. However, after working with these issues together for some time, the staff was allowed to give this support:

And there are lots of tasks that aren't part of our job, it's the job of the guardians. But when the guardians don't have the knowledge or the time or the energy or the will, we have to ensure that the legal system is followed. So there was a little bit of war between the management and the staff where the staff finally was allowed to help these boys. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Through openly breaking the rules, the staff moved the boundaries of what was seen as their assignment. There was sometimes a fine line between “inside” and “outside” of the formal mandate, and this also seems to have been experienced as difficult to handle by some managers. Identifying informal structures or directly negotiating work tasks with managers and colleagues, tasks such as helping unaccompanied minors with juridical advice or contacting civil society organisations, could sometimes be included in what the social workers saw as their work tasks. In this case, the social workers' acts led to actual changes and a discussion on what support the minors should get. The working instructions changed and the social workers were able to support the minors who were to be deported according to the Dublin Regulation. Acting on behalf of the minors in order to change a routine or practice could hence sometimes change the interpretation of being “professional” and the social workers' responsibility could *become* something new. This indicates that a form of everyday acts of citizenship could be exercised at the workplaces, going against the work instructions in order to expand the responsibilities to minors risking deportation.

In other cases, the space to act was placed in a grey zone. One of the social assistants reflected upon how the life situations of the minors did not always fit with her work description:

...it has also happened that I sometimes have gone out to the accommodation centre on a weekend and booked a translator or so, for example. And that was something that... that was nothing that I reported, that I had worked, but still I used the municipal translator. (Social assistant)

In this case, the social worker had a discretionary space but she was not sure about how far it reached. Being at the accommodation centre during the weekend, she was in the right *place* but at the wrong *time*; she was doing her ordinary job and what she considered to be needed in order to do it well. Still, she did not report this to her manager. To go to the accommodation centre outside of office hours was sometimes needed in cases where minors were to be moved at short notice; the alternative would be not seeing the minors again and not being able to talk to them about the decision. The decisions of the Swedish Migration Agency, when it comes to deportations as well as movement of minors between municipalities and age assignments, implied a definitive limit in that the social assistants had no power to affect the outcome. Wanting to be there for the minor and making the process as transparent as possible for him/her made the social worker take a step outside of her formal obligations, acting in a grey zone between the official rules and what she thought was just or morally the right thing to do.

Redefining what it should mean to be “professional” could open up other spaces to act. As this mostly was difficult to do openly at the workplace, the support could be moved to arenas perceived as “private”. One social worker described a situation where a group of social workers acted in support of a minor in their time off work:

Well, now we talk about a boy who didn't get, who risked being deported. So we worked for a long time helping him, but that was after work, so we had to write, it was voluntary work. He had a guardian, but the guardian didn't know how he should write and there was a group of social workers at my job who were committed to helping certain adolescents who had no rights as they – well, it was according to the Dublin Convention, they had been to another European country so they didn't have the right to a lawyer or anything but they were to be deported to the first country. And then a group of co-workers was created, who helped with this in their spare time. (Social assistant)

Doing more than was expected of them, the social workers moved between what they saw as “professional” and what they saw as “private”. Another social assistant related that she gave out her private telephone number to an unaccompanied minor who was to be deported, as she could not do more within her work tasks but she couldn’t just let go of the minor either:

And we had a responsibility to do something more, and that could be... But then you started to look in your private [space], then I gave my private telephone number instead and maybe met that person outside of [the workplace], or asked among friends and other networks about finding someone who could be a support to this person. It was like that, and it got very much mixed up... (Social assistant)

The social worker expresses a “we” that can be understood as the social services. Giving her private number instead of the number she used as a social assistant, the social worker found a way to do what she thought that the social services *ought to* do even when it was not within her formal duties as a social assistant. Thereby she moved her work tasks in time and place, in order to be able to fulfil what she perceived as a responsibility or obligation in relation to the minor.

Another space for acting was opened up in cases where the social workers chose not to distinguish between minors with residence permit, asylum seekers and minors who had become undocumented. At the accommodation centres, the guidelines and the formal rules varied between municipalities and between public and private actors. What could be done at the workplace therefore shifted depending on context. At some accommodation centres minors who lived as undocumented or who had had to move for other reasons came to visit their friends. One social worker at an accommodation centre said:

I have talked to some colleague who thought that... well, the [undocumented] boys do come here to visit and sometimes to eat, and this colleague found this to be strange and said that he would never report them to the police or anything but that we do have laws and rules to follow. I can respect his view, but I don’t agree. (Social worker at accommodation centre)



To receive someone visiting did not seem to be very controversial at the centres where this practice existed. This created a situation where undocumented migrants were present in the discussions among colleagues. In the quote, the personnel at the centre acknowledged that the minors who were no longer their formal responsibility did not cease to exist, even if they had different views concerning their obligations towards the minors. To let the minors visit can be seen as one way to deal with the dilemma of feeling a responsibility and at the same time having to let go. The visibility of the undocumented minors at the centres made the distinction between different legal statuses less sharp. This seems also to have been perceived by the minors. One of the social workers explained that her act of helping one boy to avoid deportation (an act that will be further discussed in relation to acts of “compassion” and acts of “activism”) had consequences for other minors at the centre where she worked:

...two of his friends at the centre have also absconded, and even though I haven't helped them actively I have opened a channel that wasn't there before... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

In this situation, her role as a social worker was reinterpreted by the minors, who knew that she had given support to one of their friends. This shows that the different kinds of acts studied in this chapter overlap and intersect; an act that the social worker does without reflecting on being “professional” can be interpreted in new ways depending on context and can have new consequences stretched over time.

The social workers quoted in this section did not think that their responsibility ended with the formal responsibility that came with being employed as social assistants, as personnel at accommodation centres or contracted as guardians. Through their acts, they sometimes questioned the boundaries of who belonged to the welfare state and who did not, as well as the logics of deportation, something that could indicate a form of everyday acts of citizenship. However, the acts described above were made with ambiguity when it came to claims of being “professional”. When studying acts based on a logic of “*professionalism*”, a double picture emerges: the social workers on the one hand described being “professional” as a limitation, and on the other they used it in order to defend their support for the minors – albeit (in most cases) not openly. There were hence

competing views on what it should mean to be “professional”, even if the view of “professional” as a formal following of rules, and therefore as a rather strict border, seemed to dominate.

#### 9.1.4 Summing Up

Having a relationship based on the social worker being formally responsible for the wellbeing of the minor may here be mirrored in the state’s obligations in relation to its citizens, what was also described in the interviews as the rights of the minors. When this established relationship was disrupted, for example because a minor was subject to the Dublin II Regulation or was appointed another age (older than 18) or sent away to another municipality from one day to the next, this responsibility was meant to end. However, the social workers sometimes followed other norms or ideas than what they understood as being formally expected of them to follow; in such cases they moved between the formal responsibility and being *answerable* to what they perceived as justice (Isin 2008). This created tensions in relation to how they (and the minors) understood their roles; the expectation of caring built into the formal responsibility did not always accord with how the social workers experienced the formal expectations. Just as Isin (2012:4) argues, such “affective obligations”, based on being engaged in relationships with others, can create tensions with national laws and norms (see also Pinson et al. 2010). The *face-to-face* meetings built into the different forms of social work could therefore disrupt the view of being “professional” as being mainly a welfare state representative. However, this was often done in secret, even when the social workers described the acts as potentially within their roles.

In social work literature, expressions such as “compassion fatigue” are discussed in relation to social work (Harr and Moore 2011), and the social workers interviewed did express their view that the relation established with the minors was a part of being “professional”. However, when minors became undocumented, they were placed outside of the formal responsibility of the social workers, and this meant that the compassion that could be expressed within ordinary work tasks also had its limits. As discussed above, when the social workers chose to take a stand this choice often seemed to be invisible in the workplace. Their acts were performed at

the intersection of what they understood as being “professional” and of something that was perceived as “private” or, at least, outside of their mandate. The “affective obligations” (Isin 2012:4) linked to being “professional” were therefore placed in a realm understood as “private” when the social workers were in contact with minors who became undocumented or in other ways were placed outside of their assignment. This will be further discussed in the next section.

## 9.2 Acts of “Compassion”

In this section, I analyse acts based on what some of the social workers would see as a dimension of what the “professional” should contain: compassion. However, here compassion is more linked to what was understood as private relations, or being “private”. Acts of “compassion” were not understood as performed within the discretionary space at the workplace. As the work situations as well as the understandings of the discretionary space varied, the acts described as “private” could be of shifting character. In practice, it is not always possible to draw a clear line between the different kinds of acts; the line between “profession” and “compassion” is made for analytical purposes and is based on what the social workers described as “professional” versus “private”/“outside of”. For some social workers, only to have contact with a minor outside of work (for example, giving out their private telephone number) would be understood as having established an “unprofessional” relation. For others that same line was drawn when the social worker actively helped a minor to abscond. Hence, these acts also took place at the intersection of professional and private, especially as they were based on a relationship that was established at the workplace. The regulations of the “private” arena discussed above meant that acts described as “private” evidently could go *against* what was expected within the formal mandate.

What I discuss as acts of “compassion” are acts responding to the suffering of others (compare Squire 2015, Fassin 2012). Throughout the analysis, I emphasise that meeting someone *face-to-face* sometimes made the social workers experience an obligation beyond the formal one. Doing so, I explore whether the proximity in the relation can be seen as having

potential political dimensions (compare Pinson et al. 2010), despite the inequalities in the relation and the new exclusions/categorisations that were brought about. The analysis also draws on the theoretical discussions on “compassionate action” (Squire 2015:34) and the ideals of humanitarianism (Fassin 2007). Acting out of compassion rather than on the basis of professional principles opens up for acts that answer to other obligations than the formal ones. It also opens up for questions concerning who gets support and on what basis. Often, the social workers had established a relation to the undocumented migrant and acted because of this individual bond. As the relation of helping was not built on formal expectations but on personal, the social workers saw various dilemmas related to the unequal relation between them and the minors. Acts of “compassion” were more often mentioned by social workers without formal training (social workers working at the accommodation centres and guardians).

### **9.2.1 Being “Private”**

When the social workers expressed ideals linked to “compassion” they were often sceptical of what they understood as being “professional”. In some of the interviews, the social workers didn’t see the point in having what they saw as a “professional relationship”, as they found the possibilities of being “professional” to be limited. One of the social workers, for example, reacted to the rules formalising the relation between her and the minors at the accommodation centre:

Partly, they say that it’s because of the privacy policy that we may not, we have been told that we can’t greet them before they greet us. And that also concerns the boys who have lived here before. And that feels very strange, from a perspective of integration, that the first people they get to know in Sweden should pretend, or be kind of awaiting their reaction when they meet them downtown... And [...] some of the boys lived there for more than a year, so it was really their home, and then, we were really close to many of them... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker explained that she wanted to have a different relation to the minors to what was expected at her workplace. It felt odd not to greet the minors in the street; as she had close relations with many of them, this

kind of privacy policy seemed limiting. Ideas of “compassion”, based on having established a relation, were hence contrasted with being “professional”. Another social worker said:

I feel much freer when I meet someone in the street than when I meet the person at my work... (...) Just not being in these rooms in some way creates a freedom for the other person as well, you meet more like – well, it decreases very much the relation of power that is built into it, kind of.  
(Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker reflected upon how the relation to the minors changed when meeting outside of the workplace. The relation to the minors shifted character from a formal relationship with fixed positions to a relationship where such positions were not as clear. This opened up for the freedom expressed in the quote, but also, as we will see, for new dilemmas concerning the relationship with the minors – as hierarchies were not explicit or always visible.

To distinguish between what was understood as being “professional” and what was understood as being “private” was described by some social workers as unproblematic. One social worker was very clear about separating such roles:

...well, at the centre, as we have signed a contract and we work, you could say, according to laws and such things that are totally rigid... (...) That’s only eight hours, and after eight hours I am no more on this contract. So I can do whatever I like and no one can stop me. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker seemed to see being “professional” as *one* position among others, a specific role performed in a specific *place*. In this description, the logic of the support to be given could shift after eight hours, opening the door for acts that could give support also to the minors who had become undocumented. However, in many cases this shifting of roles was described as complicated. One of the social workers at an accommodation centre spoke about a colleague who left her employment in order to be able to support undocumented migrants:

I have a colleague who, who has, she left a permanent employment – well, “permanent”... but as permanent as you can get within this organisation – to be a fill-in, in order to have time to work with hidden refugees, have time and energy to work with the hidden. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Distancing herself from her workplace, the colleague was able to do what she found more important and urgent: supporting the children that formally she was supposed to stop having contact with.

As we can see in the discussion above, the support considered as “private” or made out of “compassion” to a large extent related to the rules at the workplace. In some municipalities and at some accommodation centres, there were rules regulating the contact between social workers and unaccompanied minors out of work hours too. For example, the personnel should not give out their private telephone numbers or be Facebook friends with the minors. In an interview with a municipal coordinator for unaccompanied minors, the coordinator said:

Yes, we have that in [X municipality], we have guidelines for the delimitation and it’s for the best interest of the personnel and also actually for the interest of the children... (Municipal coordinator working with unaccompanied minors)

She explained that the guidelines were meant to be a support for social workers and minors. Such regulations meant that the “private” time and the “private” relations were not entirely separated from being “professional”. Apart from such formal expectations on the social workers, the social workers also experienced informal expectations. For example, they mentioned that it would be a problem for them to extend their responsibilities towards the minors if they did it in their spare time. Some of them commented that they were expected to be representing their employer also outside of their work hours:

We are representing the municipality of [X], of course: “the personnel at the Municipality of [X] are hiding refugees” – how does that sound? (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Just as discussed in section 9.1, the social worker here described being “professional” as tied to the municipality and that she needed to act in accordance with this role also outside of work: the social workers employed by the municipality cannot open their homes to undocumented migrants, because then it will be seen as though it is done by the municipality. The support given outside of working hours was therefore not entirely performed on the *outside* of the formal mandate, but sometimes went against what was expected by the social workers.

The social workers understood being “private” as an obstacle at the workplaces, as this was not what was formally expected of them. However, they also saw being “private” as a resource in their contacts with the minors. Being “professional” and being “private” were seen as quite distinct approaches. In some cases, this difference was described in terms of gender. For example, one social worker explained:

Maybe it’s not that all of them are boys that is a problem for me, but that all of us are girls is what feels... But it is also that the ones that manage to escape to a large extent or the ones that are invested in are boys. And when the system doesn’t work, women are working as helpers. (...) And this is how it is at my workplace as well, that the ones that I know of who have helped, who really have helped and not only thought of it, are female colleagues. Other colleagues have definitely told about possibilities (...) and do great things in all ways. But just this to take on something outside of work that actually... it is great to help them with this information but it doesn’t cost themselves as much... As much of your time and your energy, as all my friends who help and act as contact persons [for undocumented minors]. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The acts of “compassion”, which were understood as “private” and related to giving time and energy, were here related to helpers being female (compare Lister 1997b). These acts belonged to a private arena, and considered forms of caring beyond and/or against what was formally expected. Just as with the acts of “professionalism”, these acts was performed somewhere in between what was understood as “professional” and what was understood as “private”. However, the support based on “compassion” followed another logic: a responsibility related to (competing views of) being “professional” was not the reason to act, but rather a

personal proximity to the minors, making the social workers react to the perceived “wrong” made to the minors. This will be further developed in the section below.

### **9.2.2 Building Relations**

Social work in general can be described as a relational practice, even if social workers can have different approaches to their work leading to more engaged or more distanced relationships (Bouagga 2015). Meeting with the minors *face-to-face* meant that the social workers sometimes felt a bond with minors even when they were expected to “let go”. In the interviews, the social workers found it difficult to abruptly end an established relation – for example, when a minor became undocumented and therefore was placed outside of their formal responsibility.

Sometimes the social workers interviewed felt a special bond with some of the minors. As expressed by one of the social workers:

...often they [the minors] have a contact person taking care of them, or often you have not one but maybe two. And often the bond becomes rather strong, a bond of friendship between them and... you get some kind of responsibility that goes beyond work. And then to handle that someone gets deported, to know that, to let go of that person as you actually have to do in some way, it is terrible, to know that someone says “I will kill myself if I go back to Italy or to Malta” and live with that... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Getting to know a minor at a personal level, the social workers interviewed felt a responsibility that went beyond what was formally expected of them or what they understood as their “professional” responsibility. In all interviews, the social workers could recall relations to specific minors that had been important to them in one way or another. Some social workers stressed the fact that some minors needed more support than others as an important factor behind this:

Well, I can say that I worked as a teacher for many years. And when you get these students, you have an entire class and then you get some students who



might have... eh, for example a diagnosis like ADHD, difficulties in concentrating, demand very much of you, who need a lot of support and so on, the student that you need to lay a lot of energy on, who need it... Those are the ones that you get closer to, compared to the more independent students who just sit there quietly and do what they are supposed to do; that's the way it is. And then I believe that it is the same when you are guardian for boys who need a lot – you get close to each other. (Guardian)

Some of the social workers observed that sharing a common language with minors helped them in their contact with the minors. As one of the social workers expressed it:

But of course you get closer. They call me “aunt”, for example; they don't say that to the others – the others are personnel (...), so of course it's, I get warm inside, it is really tender to say that, instead of saying “you”, or call my name... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The relations could hence be built under different circumstances and with different rationales, but what the quotes have in common is that the relation was not purely a formal one. The relations were established outside of what was perceived as the “professional” relation. One social worker spoke about new arenas established due to an initial contact with one minor:

...I went to fix a bike together with a boy, and then he had brought a friend who came along, and then there are like two or three boys who are fixing their bikes and just. ah, “Do you speak [X language]?” And the next time I see them the boy I went with isn't there but I meet them in the city centre and then we say hello and chat for a while. And then yet another time when I go to the bike place to fix a bike, then this boy comes to me and asks “Can you help me with this?” and like “They don't understand, the people who work here,” and then it still gets... maybe that contact wouldn't have been created if it wasn't for the closeness in the language. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker describes a gradual development of new kinds of relations with the minors, as she meets them outside of work and in another role.

The guardians' role in relation to the minors can in general be described as the *least* formal, as their assignment is to represent the minors. Even if the guardians interviewed needed the income that their mission gave, their relationship to the minors was described as different from a formal representation by the guardians participating in this study. Two of the guardians described themselves as *mothers* in relation to the minors they were supporting, a role that was completely distinct to the discussions on being "professional" above. As one of them expressed it:

...you always have to start from how they feel; what do they need? And on this training [course], the chief guardian who lectured said that you should not be a mother, you are a guardian and not a mother; but that's easier said than done. (Guardian)

The guardian here expressed an almost inevitable position as a mother in relation to the minors. To be a "mother" was not what was formally expected of her; rather, she was informed that she needed to separate between the roles of being a guardian and being a mother. In the encounters with minors who needed her, she argued, she had no alternative but to be there for them as a mother. All of the guardians interviewed in this study were women who had their own children of about the same ages as (or a little bit older than) the minors, something that might have added to this positioning. Talking about oneself as a *mother* gave room to another logic than the formally professional described above: a logic that on the one hand made the social workers act, but that also created categorisations and exclusions.

Having a close bond sometimes led to the social workers getting more knowledge about and becoming more aware of the situation of the minors. A guardian related:

...it just has to be that one gets to know a youth, and then they become a Dublin case and they are to be either deported... and who sends youth to Malta or Italy? Who can sleep well after doing that? If you have heard these histories, what they have gone through, there is not a chance. And you can't just say, "Well, go somewhere else and hide" either, so it becomes a responsibility; what the hell should I do? (Guardian)

The experience of responsibility was related to what the social worker knew of the situation in “Malta or Italy”. This underlined the “wrong” committed by the Swedish Migration Agency and motivated the guardian to give support to the minor. Getting to know someone in a specific situation and learning about the circumstances of unaccompanied minors were sometimes also described as factors that made the social workers see the world in a different light. As one of the guardians said:

You know, I want you to know this: my friends are Sweden Democrats. It is totally crazy what you have – in this area live people who believe in this way, and I have also; there was a time when I thought the same, I can honestly say that I have. Eh, what made me change my mind? I think it was when I started to teach these three youngsters, that’s when I started to see it differently. (Guardian)

At the time of this interview she said that she had lost contact with many of her former friends who did not agree with her views. In this particular interview, the new relations to the (undocumented) minors were therefore even more central to the guardian. This can be understood in the context of a formation of new norms; the relation to the minors creates a platform to act in new ways (compare Pinson et al. 2010). However, such new norms also include new forms of exclusion. The same guardian expressed it thus:

Well, I get – it is difficult to explain what one receives; I receive so much. First, it gives me such a pleasure to be able to do this for the boys. Then, I get so much back, I get respect; I don’t know how to say it, do I get love? I guess in a way, but all my life is so much richer, I have learnt so much and I think it is so much fun. I don’t know very much about Afghanistan yet, but Somalia it’s like [minor] told me: “You are more Somalian than I am, almost, you know so much about Somalia.” I love to listen to [minor] when he sits here and tells me how it was when he chased – he had three chickens, he chased them into the shed, and two hours later he went to pick eggs and they had eggs for breakfast. And I can see in front of me how he is and how his mother is... (Guardian)

The story told by the guardian can be understood as *getting to know* the minor and thereby being able to see beyond the category of an “unaccompanied minor”. This could possibly be seen as a renegotiation of

the minor's possibility to act as a subject. On the other hand, it can also be understood as *upholding* relations of power and stereotypical images of *the Other*. This means that the guardian, in her effort to make a difference, also reinforced power structures and a colonial gaze on the minors whom she was supporting (Ahmed 2004). The emotional link, which gave the relation bearing, also upheld the relations of power that framed the relation between the guardian and the minor. This I understand as a dimension integrated into the support given out of "compassion".

In some of the interviews, the dependency of the minor becomes very clear; for example, when one of the guardians spoke about an undocumented minor to whom she was giving support:

And [minor] was the one who was left, and it went to the European Court and it was very close, and he has felt bad at the centre; and finally when he got that rejection I was there, once or twice a week, so it has become a contact that is very strong. And then that [minor] is a bit different than the others, because he has more respect than ever. Because now even his friends have told me that "[name of guardian], you should know that [minor] has very much respect for you," and it's, he has a lot of respect. It doesn't matter what I say, he would do, well, he would do whatever I said to him. So, one has to think; he has a lot, a lot, a lot of respect for me. (Guardian)

Having been through a lot together, the guardian described a close relation, where the minor had "a lot of respect". This meant that she also had a power position in that, as she expressed it, "he would do whatever I said to him". At the end of the quote she indicated that the respect the minor feels came with a responsibility: "one has to think". The unequal power relation was clearly a relation based on positions such as "helper" and "helped" (compare Fassin 2012, 2007).

Also, when having a relationship built on similar language or similar experiences, the power of defining the problems of others was there. A social worker who had own experiences of living as undocumented said:

Well, I understand exactly what they think, what they believe, what they are thinking upon, as I was an asylum seeker who had been at the detention centre (...), so have been through all this Migration Agency system, you could say, from A to Z (...), I know almost everything about how this

system works and how you think and what you should do. (...) Therefore, I have lots of answers to different questions that others might not have found, they might not have thought about it, but I have the answers to this. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The idea of *knowing exactly* what the minors need could lead to a situation where the social worker did not listen to the individual minor. This can be understood as a form of *othering*, where the other becomes what “I” was before, fixed in history. The power to define the situation, and to give the minors advice on what to do, in this situation lay with the social worker.

The individual and “private” relations opened up for new kinds of support to the minors, but they also meant new forms of exclusion. Support based on “compassion” given by the social workers can therefore be understood *both* as negotiations of new roles outside of the relationship established at the workplace and as performing a form of “humanitarian government”, where some subjects are positioned as suffering (Fassin 2012). This movement between status quo and change indicates a duality when it comes to the acts of “compassion” that I will develop further in the following section.

### **9.2.3 Spaces to Act: Individuals “Deserving” Support?**

Having established a bond with the minors sometimes made the social workers act in ways that they had not thought of before. When the acts were understood as based on *compassion*, or a relation that went beyond the formal relation between social worker and service user, the specific individual relationship became important. This relationship was, however, initially established at the workplace, and the regulations of the social workers’ roles in relation to the minors created a situation where the social workers in some cases acted *against* what they were expected to do. The social workers sometimes acted against the rules at the workplace, and in support of minors who had been placed outside of their formal responsibility; what could be understood as a form of “misplaced” claims on obligations (Squire 2009). The acts were conditioned by unequal power relations from the beginning, and the minors were often dependent on the

goodwill of the social workers. The acts can therefore be understood in different ways, something that I will develop throughout this section.

Acts based on “compassion” often had dimensions of exclusion. For example, a social worker at an accommodation centre spoke about a minor who stayed at the centre where she worked:

And then there was this boy who was socially talented and well-adapted, and I just couldn't... the thought that he was to be deported... (...) So I asked him if he had considered hiding. “Yes, I have, but I have no one...” So I talked to him and told him that I could help. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker described the minor whom she decided to help as “socially talented and well-adapted”. Even though throughout the interview she showed an understanding of the complexity of their relation, this description can be read as a precondition for helping. A question in response needs to be: *what would have happened if he wasn't?* Where would the social worker draw the line between helping and not helping? The social workers' acts of supporting undocumented migrants out of compassion had this dimension, in that they were to decide whether the undocumented migrants “deserved” their support. The act of support hence contains a demarcation of borders, related to political and social ideas of worth (Squire 2015, Fassin 2012, Butler 2009). Through the acts based on compassion, the space to act became conditioned by the bond with a specific minor. In many of my interviews the social workers reflect upon similar issues – often with a feeling of insufficiency, since they as individuals were not able to help everyone who needed it and thereby were forced to be selective.

The individual support put the social workers in situations where they had to make judgements that they themselves did not always find fair. One social worker said that she had friends in common with a colleague and in order to protect the minor she did not tell these friends about him living in her home. She described that this created tensions in relation to the minor:

He – that is also a conflict. I can see that he says that it is okay, but I don't think he really feels that way... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

She said that on one occasion she invited these friends for dinner and she asked the boy if he could be away from home for the evening and eat at a restaurant with one of her other friends. So he did, and the friends never noticed him. But the social worker said that she didn't feel good about this solution, as her house was also his home. She said that she noticed that he wasn't very happy about having to sneak away:

...so, then I asked a friend to entertain him during the dinner. They went out to play pool and to eat, and I do notice that he is not entirely okay with this, and I can understand him, it is after all his home... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker was here reflecting upon and partly trying to balance a relation that is marked by very different positions and possibilities. Through her act of support, that she said had quite far-reaching consequences in her personal life and went against the rules at her workplace, the undocumented minor was dependent on her goodwill as long as he stayed in her home. The wish that her home would feel like his home became a difficulty in the present circumstances: the citizen employed within the welfare state had a position that was completely different from the non-citizen's, and this affected, or maybe even determined, their relationship.

However, the informal relationships did open up spaces that the relationships based on ideas of being "professional" did not open. To invite a "friend" in need of help to one's house was seen as something other than inviting a "service user". One of the relationships also discussed above was the sometimes informal relation between guardian and minor, described in terms of mothering. As another guardian said:

...you are not to treat these youngsters as your own children, but I don't think that I have ever made a difference between my own and these kids actually; I think in the same way. If I say to my son that it is important to go to school, I say it to them. Well, you think the same, it doesn't matter if it concerns your own kids or the kids of others... (Guardian)

The guardian explained that she thinks according to the same logic as when it comes to her own children. The image of *motherhood* is historically powerful (Mulinari 1995, Hill Collins 1994) and could therefore give the

guardians a position with a space to act in ways that differ from what was formally expected of them. This gave the guardians a possibility to negotiate their formal roles – even if they did not do it in a “public” arena. The line between the formal responsibility (the assignment as a guardian) and a more far-reaching obligation (based on ideas of motherhood) could sometimes be blurred, and the minors who became undocumented were not seen as placed “outside” of the guardians’ responsibilities. In the case of the guardian quoted above, this resulted in one of the minors who had become undocumented staying for a longer period of time in her home after he had absconded.

However, these kinds of relations were not established with all minors. For example, one of the guardians described a situation where she decided not to help a minor because she did not think that he would get permission to stay in Sweden:

Because it was, as I said, you can see for yourself that if they come from a country where they are not under any threat, there is no meaning, I think. Because then, if he goes back to his country and will be quite well also there, I don’t see the point and, and to convince the Migration Agency would be difficult... Even if he had stayed as undocumented his chances would be minimal. (Guardian)

Here, the probability of the minor not being able to convince the Swedish Migration Agency affected the guardian’s decision. She also argued that the minor would be okay if returning to the country of origin, something that indicates a limit to the compassion; the guardian in a way distinguishes between minors “deserving” or “undeserving” of her support. Demarcation of borders could thus exist alongside far-reaching support to the minors. Such decisions also had to do with practical limits. One social worker reflected upon her possibilities to give support, as she was feeling a responsibility towards her (citizen) friends:

...and then I guess it has also been difficult at work: when there have been aggressive persons who have threatened colleagues I have thought that it would be difficult to offer a living or look for a place among my friends for a person who I don’t entirely trust... (Social worker at accommodation centre)



The social worker here indicated that the support needed to be based on some form of trust. The space to act based on compassion was hence limited by the social workers' situation in life (what space did they have in their private life to be a support for the minors?), but also on their views of the minors (would it be possible to see that the minor was doing okay?). Even if some of the social workers argued that they had no right to distinguish between the minors, not admitting such limitations could sometimes create difficult situations for both social workers and minors. One of the social workers said that she sometimes felt like she was being a "social worker" in her own home when having an undocumented minor staying there:

To ask him to turn off the computer at eleven so that he could go to bed. I woke him up in the morning during the first four months, and he was still late for school every day as it was, it was so difficult with keeping time...  
(Social worker at accommodation centre)

Even if she had no formal role in relation to the minor or any expectations as regards being "professional", her initial role as social worker at an accommodation centre kept forming their relationship. This was because the minor needed a lot of support. She said that she was very tired by the time he finally got to reapply for asylum, and that this has resulted in her making more "demands" before opening her home than she had done before:

Well, after these ten months that it took, they wore me out. So I have felt that I am demanding more of the situation now, so that I shall be able to function in it. For example, we said that if we are going to live with someone, we want to be able to communicate without a translator. Because it is our home environment. And it has been difficult to talk about these things, because it is so easy to... well, a person needs help and then we have demands... But that, even if we have a really privileged situation compared to all these persons, that we should not forget that we also have needs and we want it to work in a good way at home and we want to feel that we are able to help the person in a way that is good for this person as well. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

As the support was given at an individual level, more as a reaction to the fact that there was no one taking formal responsibility, than as an organised and planned activity, the acts were often arbitrary – but also based on finding creative solutions.

#### 9.2.4 Summing Up

The acts I have discussed as *acts of “compassion”* were often performed at the intersection between what was perceived as “private” and “professional”, but more on the “private” side. Such acts contained a personal and individual bond that opened up a space for the social worker to act in new ways. Acting *in relation to* undocumented migrants and experiencing a personal responsibility meant that the social workers’ acts had many dimensions that were perceived as difficult. Above, I have discussed some of these dimensions, such as having to delimit the support and/or distinguishing between minors. The social workers often *reacted* to situations created by circumstances that were beyond their control to change, resulting in acts that were at the same time transformative of some citizenship practices and reinforcing others. The social workers tried to balance the power relations inherent in the informal relation with the minors. Even if they could not erase them, they discussed them and tried to act upon them in different ways. Mixing different logics of compassionate action, some of them talked about injustices rather than focusing on suffering. The individual bond sometimes made the social workers act in ways that went beyond their formal responsibilities and that in some cases went directly against the expectations they had on being “professional”. The social workers were actually *doing* something beyond their formal responsibilities, and sometimes against the rules at the workplaces, as they invited minors to their homes or in other ways supported them when awaiting a new possibility to apply for asylum. I therefore read these acts as potentially disruptive at an everyday level, even if they have many problematic dimensions in regard to power hierarchies.

## 9.3 Acts of “Activism”

Just as acts of “professionalism” and acts of “compassion” overlap and intersect, a third dimension was present in the social workers’ practices: what I call *acts of “activism”*. These are acts that are made by the social workers in a context of addressing the question of social change in a larger context of antiracist and asylum rights activism. This context is also described in Chapter 8, both in relation to deportations (8.1.1), and to welfare cutbacks (8.3). Below, I address the support to undocumented migrants in general and unaccompanied minors in specific as being politicised and discussed beyond the individual acts of social workers. The acts of “activism” could therefore contain both voicing critiques and more silent/secret forms of resistance. Some of these initiatives were organised by a group of colleagues who were critical towards the way their work was organised. They could also be inspired by activist initiatives within the civil society. Some acts were based on own reflections about societal injustices and guided more by own principles. However, it is important to remember that all three forms of acts analysed are analytical reconstructions and that the social workers’ motives or rationales were not “pure” in the sense that they were always based on being “professional”, “compassionate” or “activist”. Ideas of “activism” sometimes intersected with ideas of “compassion” in ways that were not always easy to disentangle. I have chosen here to discuss acts based on a more straightforward critique as acts of “activism”. The acts of “activism” were described by all types of social workers participating in this study.

### 9.3.1 Being an “Activist”

The social workers’ support was sometimes given in a context of civil society activism rather than based on an individual bond with the minor. The social workers participating in this study had to various extent contacts with organisations working with asylum rights or undocumented migrants, either through own activism or finding the networks when starting to give support to a minor. One of the social workers who had a minor staying in her home said:

...the reason why I came into contact with it [helping minors to abscond] was that my classmate's sister had a boy living with her. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

As she had met someone who was active in the asylum rights movement, she explained, taking the step for her to give support was not as big as it could have been. The idea to help was related to earlier encounters with an activist hosting an undocumented minor and the acts of the social worker can be placed in a context where such practices did exist: she knew that this was possible. In a similar way, many of the social workers interviewed knew of others supporting undocumented migrants. One social worker explained that her work with undocumented migrants had begun gradually:

...before, it was more that I listened and took in a lot – yes, this is needed here, these things exist, this and this...Like, one had already seen gaps, and this was a gap that you wanted to do something about, like that. It didn't come from nowhere; I think it already existed; there had been lots of talk about it... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

She explained that there had been talk about the “gaps” that the work with unaccompanied minors brought about in relation to social work practice and that this had made her react. Notably, however, the social workers giving support in this context of activism were the same social workers quoted in the analysis above: often the rationales behind the support intersected and relations to individual minors could be an initial reason to get involved in more organised forms of activism. The social workers did not necessarily identify as being “activists”, even if they sometimes thought that their acts did have such dimensions. For example, one social worker described her acts of support to an undocumented migrant as political, even though she had not been “politically active” before:

I haven't been politically active, it hasn't been... But everything becomes political in that I oppose how the system is run. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

In this case, a decision to let a minor stay in her home was made on a personal basis, as an act of compassion, but the social worker laid something more onto the act: in a way she saw it as a political protest against injustices.

Some of the social workers were more actively involved in civil society initiatives concerning refugees and unaccompanied minors outside of work. One of the social workers related how her encounters with minors who were to be deported according to the Dublin II Regulation led to her taking part in the campaign *The Best Interest of the Child First*:

I think it was on Facebook that I saw that some people from the asylum rights movement had come back from Malta. And then I thought about coming into contact with some organisation that was in some kind of borderland, like, Malta, Greece, Italy, something, and I thought that this is really good, now I have to ask them how it was there. And at the time I hadn't read up on this so much; it was actually more an information meeting about starting a campaign... that was when *The Best Interest of the Child [First]* started. (...) So, suddenly I was at this information meeting with all these people who were active in different places, or in this case they worked with unaccompanied, or children actually, but above all unaccompanied. And then I went to the next meeting because it sounded really good, and then suddenly I was just, I just became... I didn't plan it that way. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Seeing a deficiency at the workplace and not being able to deal with it as one of her tasks there, the social worker chose to participate in this campaign outside of work, choosing to be an “activist”.

Identifying as being “activists”, the social workers had access to a network of civil society organisations through which they could offer support that otherwise was not available to the minors. A guardian who had been active in the asylum rights movement for a long time said:

Yes, but nothing organised. It's each person. I actually know some around the city, but I wonder if everyone knows where they can find this help. I know, for example, without looking it up in any catalogue or having to know anything more than trusting my own brain, I can, I find numbers up here for a midwife, psychiatrist, dentist, all kinds of help that you need, but I wonder if everybody knows. Because there is neither any leaflet nor any organised work... (Guardian)

Having a broad network, the social worker explained that she could give support to minors also when no formal organisation was taking place. This

gave her possibilities that she would not have had without having been active for a long time in different movements. Such contacts within the civil society could also lead to the social workers being contacted by people who needed their advice. The same guardian added:

I don't know where people get, I have never asked where they have got my number or my home, how they know where I live; I just open the door. The people just know, I don't know how but they come and they call, so... (Guardian)

One of the social workers at an accommodation centre described a similar situation:

...sometimes people call from, I don't know where they find my number, and they start to ask about different things, that "I have got a rejection to my appeal." (...) Well, I don't know, I said that "First, do you know who you are talking to?" He says "No, I know someone, I have heard from friends that you give them advice." Then I start to give them advice... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Both of the social workers above described persons calling at their homes as a part of their everyday life. Being involved in the asylum rights movement or similar movements gave the social workers a platform and resources to activate when they encountered situations that did not fit within their formal assignments. In the quotes analysed above, these resources were there prior to the social workers being contacted by individual minors.

In some cases the social workers were met by an expectation to be "activists" or "political". However, moving in "activist" circles within the civil society did not always mean that the social workers had these types of contacts. One social worker said:

My boss asked me the other day, he told me that I shouldn't work with hidden refugees outside of work because he didn't want me to wear myself out, so he was taking for granted that I did it only because I am a political person. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker described herself as a "political person", and her manager seemed to draw conclusions about what she did out of this fact. Actually,

she was not supporting the minors outside of work, but she did speak up for them at her workplace. Identifying as being an “activist” did not automatically imply a far-reaching support for undocumented minors; the support must also be related to context and to the resources of individual social workers.

Some of the social workers at the same time criticised the responsibility that was put on voluntary forces and actors outside of the welfare state institutions:

Children have been hiding for years, in (X municipality). It is like “Hush-hush,” we don’t talk about that, “they might have gone somewhere else.” That’s the argument they use. And everyone who is working voluntarily with this, they aren’t made visible either. And the extreme burden on voluntary forces, it’s kind of a joke, the municipality just doesn’t care. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Voluntary work was described here as an “invisible” solution, but also as the “only” solution as the municipality was not perceived as being willing to take responsibility. When asked what would happen if the voluntary forces did not exist, one social worker said:

I don’t believe that there would have been any great difference. There would have been bigger misery among the children, probably more of them would have been found by the police and would have been sent out faster. Because they would have to steal or find other ways to get money and would be easier found by the police. (...) No, as I said, no one cares, no one cares. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The invisibility and the lack of change at a structural level hence became parts of how the social workers explained their acts: they felt that they were doing what no one else would do.

### 9.3.2 Living One's Ideals

Another dimension where “activism” was the motivation behind the acts was in the cases where they in one way or another related to social justice, rather than directly to a relation to the minors. In some interviews, the social workers stressed that they were acting because the system was not working. This could, for example, have to do with the practices concerning the Dublin II Regulation or age assessments or with the organisation of the reception of minors, but also with critique at a more structural level. Being critical of the way society is organised was sometimes seen as a ground for acting in order to support the minors in other ways than formally expected at the workplaces:

I think that it's about thinking that you have a responsibility. Because what I see among lots of the persons who help others is, also, we are the ones who see the whole... well, the persons at my job who have opinions about [the minors'] age are not the ones helping, they are focusing on other things in life; and there are colleagues who just look at cars on the Internet, fashion sites, when we work, and it's not them who are interested in spending time on helping persons in their time off. So it is connected; the ones who do it have many criticisms towards our organisation and, well, criticisms towards all the world (laughter), towards the structures that there are and towards the asylum politics in Europe and Sweden, and who see that we ourselves have a responsibility. When the state fails we have to help these persons in some way. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker here talked about colleagues who had “opinions about age” and were not interested in helping in their time off. Giving support outside of their formal responsibility was thereby linked to a certain approach to work and a certain view on society. She linked the commitment to a critique of asylum politics and a responsibility that came out of this critical position. The support was also motivated by the view that asylum politics as well as the state failed, and was not based on ideas of being “professional” or showing “compassion”. However, later in the interview the same social worker problematised this:



And then I don't know how the social work education looks, but I imagine that it is a lot about following this and that, following the Social Services Act and following... Then it is also a lot about what kind of personality you have. Some, and here I have felt that I don't do these things, it's not always us who do the best work... There are so many creative persons who only during their working hours – I have felt that these things would not occur to me – they find activities and they really see the minors and their needs and work very hard for them. And that's so interesting, they take their job very seriously and it happens a lot of time that I don't, I mainly work night shifts and I do socialise with the boys and we do stuff, but I am not as committed as many of the colleagues who work during the day. (...) But then they are still not committed when they [the minors] are being deported, they have such a different view on the job. It is really that "this is my work description" and, this that you asked about borders, that some help the guardians, they print appeals and show what possibilities there are, give the guardian the phone number to asylum rights groups, but some would not even do that. It is outside of our work description. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker here distinguished between being committed during working hours and being committed outside of work. In this view, social workers could be very committed to the minors (and have a lot of "compassion"), but still let go if the minors became undocumented.

As some social workers took a more critical stand in relation to their work and to asylum politics, they could argue for a more far-reaching responsibility in general:

When you see the deficiencies you get a responsibility; you know that if I don't do it no one else will. No one will be there to make sure that these boys get their rights. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker here argued that she had a responsibility because of her knowledge of the minors' situation, rather than based on her being "professional" or having established a specific relation. Even if the acts were often triggered by a specific situation, the motives to give support were in this case of a more general kind. Another social worker at an

accommodation centre related how he was contacted by minors who had lived at the centre where he worked:

I have met a boy for the last four years, and then he had more or less managed on the street, been exploited a lot, 15 SEK per hour at McDonald's at night and eating old hamburgers there. Some religious institutions that sometimes give them a place to sleep, but they manage on their own living outside. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Seeing the minor's situation contributed to the social worker engaging in it. The support (continuing to meet up over a period of four years) could be read in various ways. On the one hand, the initial contact was made in his role as a social worker, and could be seen as an extension of what he perceived as a "professional" responsibility. On the other hand, he and the minor had established a relation before the minor left, leading the minor to contact him – this could therefore be read as an act of "compassion". However, the reason the social worker gave for his acts was that he had got to know about a situation that he found to be unacceptable: he found it to be wrong that the minor lived on the street, and this can therefore also be read as an act of "activism". In this case, the different forms of acts intersect and overlap, the common denominator being that the social worker decided to move outside of what he perceived as his formal responsibility.

Some of the social workers had motivations based on ideas of a more just or solidary world. These ideas were sometimes tied to the idea of doing something that they found meaningful, and thereby to their identity;

Well, I think it's just, it's as simple as the feeling of solidarity. The feeling of what, what is right, kind of. I wouldn't judge anyone, I don't say anything if a colleague just goes home after work and chills out and spends time with their family or so. But it's not the life that I want to live, it's not the life that I – I wouldn't even feel good about it, to work with something like eight or nine hours and then just come home and turn on the TV or be with my kids or whatever. So it's not, I wouldn't, I don't think that I would feel that I was being honest with myself... I guess it has some ideological background as well, it's not just something that has come up, but an idea of where I want to place myself, kind of. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Living in a way that was meaningful *for the social worker* was in this quote tied to being able to stand up for one's ideals and not "just come home and turn on the TV". She connected her acting to her general approach in life rather than to an acute situation. In a similar way, another social worker said that he wanted to help in order to feel hope that things were possible to change:

So for me, I really want to help as much as possible with all kinds of things because, because it's not just that I help them, I help myself as well. It is something that makes me stronger and gives me hope to do, to go further, there isn't a stop, and I learn something new every day, from a case I learn something new. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Acting in support of the minors had in such cases a meaning beyond helping with the immediate needs of the individual minor; it had to do with who the social worker wanted to be. Identifying as being an "activist" could therefore both give meaning and room for manoeuvre for the social workers to act in support of the minors.

Own experiences was another motivation that could go beyond the individual cases. One of the guardians said that it was harder to shut your eyes having experienced injustices yourself:

I think that my own life as a refugee has taught me a lot. What I do, I do it because I have been affected myself. And I found it so terribly unfair, so I would rather not see it happening here, in this wonderful country. (Guardian)

The guardian argued that her own experiences had taught her to see injustices, an argument that was based on ideals.

In the quotes discussed above, the social workers' support can be understood as based on ideals of equality and/or solidarity rather than ideas of being "professional" or on "compassion". They stretched beyond the immediate needs of the minors and were based on principles of justice. However, the acts were performed in a context where the preconditions were far from equal and also the solidary acts reproduced inequalities and distinctions. They can therefore also be read as a way for the social workers

to picture themselves as “good” or “activists” in a situation where they had little possibility to create more structural changes.

### 9.3.3 Spaces to Act: Solidarity and its Limits

The support based on ideas of “activism” was performed both in a context where such support was politicised and by social workers reacting to what they saw as an unjust world. As creating changes at a structural level was not possible in the daily practice, the social workers experienced a personal responsibility for things that they thought *should not* be their responsibility. For example, one social worker explained:

Well, when one has tried to apply pressure that someone should take responsibility – the municipality, the guardians who are there – when you see the deficiencies of the system and continue to always work in order to spread the information, continue trying to see that those who have the responsibility take it, but they don’t, then when there are always deficiencies then the responsibility is laid on me because I have that knowledge. (...) Because I know that there is no one under me who can take care of it, there is no one to whom I can pass it on to. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

This responsibility, that the social worker found was “laid on” her, created a situation where she had no one to “pass it on to”. When asked about solutions, the social workers often addressed structural changes:

On the one hand at a political level there has to be a change, and not only in Sweden but also bigger... Because all this EU pact and, like, all this Dublin thing, it is so obvious that it’s some kind of contract written that favours the Western, like Northwestern countries in Europe, from having, not having responsibility. I mean, Greece, Italy, and why do they even want Turkey to enter the EU? It is of course that the border will be extended, and it will be their problem. But at the same time, if Sweden continues selling weapons and has the biggest export of weapons per capita in the world, Sweden is also the reason that people get into wars, and that in turn leads to different groups of refugees coming, to varying extent... And then back to Sweden in some way, so it’s, it’s so small and so big at the same time. Yes,

were Swedish politics to change, if there was a radical change in the issues of refugees, what difference would it make if there is still the EU and the Dublin Treaty? And were that pact to be torn down or, what should you say, be taken away, there is still the trade policies, all the economic interests that lead to all these conflict, so... Shit (laughter). What should I say? Revolution? No, but... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker here connected the concrete problems that she was working with in daily practice to processes at a global level. She addressed EU politics and the weapons industry, not only the organisation of her daily work. Seeing “the whole picture”, the problem was intertwined with so many different processes that she found it difficult to point to everyday acts that really would create a change in the long run. Another social worker expressed a similar view:

Well, actually I think no one should need papers to live in – I mean in Sweden but everywhere in general. We live on one, how do you say, earth, yes, one earth; it is actually not that big. So we, we don't need any permission to live on this earth. Actually I think that I am against the proper borders and I am against nationality. If I could choose I would remove all the borders and all those documents showing who I am; we should have only one document for everyone and it should be valid for everyone. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

For this social worker, the solution was visionary but seemed to be very far away. The social workers expressed a frustration with not being able to change the conditions for unaccompanied minors more thoroughly. The clash between the overall structure and the situations experienced in everyday life created a frustration, as the social workers wanted to change much more than they were able to. However, sometimes this wish resulted in the social workers being able to identify ways of thinking and acting beyond the formally expected at the workplace, which could create a space to act. Often, the social workers described their acts as something necessary due to the situation, rather than a long-term solution. One social worker said:

SW: ...Change will be needed both at a political level and... it is really difficult to know where to start. Maybe some people think that we who get involved in this way are undermining the system, that it's artificial breathing...

V: What would be the alternative?

SW: Yes, exactly (laughter), what would be the alternative? (Social worker at accommodation centre)

The social worker's reaction here, "what would be the alternative?" can be read as a comment on the impossibility in her situation. Meeting direct needs and experiencing a responsibility, she knew very well that her acts were not contributing to the structural change that she thought was needed. At the same time, she saw a space to act in support of the minors and thereby tried to do something different.

The Dublin II Regulation was often addressed in the interviews as one of the main wrongs that the minors were subjected to. As one of the guardians put it when asked about what would change the present situation:

Well, what I said, that the Dublin Treaty doesn't work in practice and it's partly because all countries in Europe don't follow the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the human rights. (Guardian)

Identifying Dublin II as the main problem, some social workers saw their acts in relation to the political discussions at the time. As the Dublin II Regulation was addressed in activist campaigns, supporting minors who were to be deported could be understood in a context where the situation of the minors was contested not only at an individual everyday level. However, speaking out loud about the problems was often perceived as difficult:

No, but really, the social services should put their foot down and protest against, they should protest and enter the movement "The Best Interest of the Child First". To think about being against the Dublin Regulation in the case of children, or for everyone. But why didn't the social services, why shouldn't one be able to make a statement about that? Because we saw on a daily basis that everyone was very badly off. (Social assistant)

The social assistant here expressed the view that the social services should be braver and that they should take side with the “clients”. That the campaign against deporting minors subject to Dublin II existed, and that some social workers had joined it, can here be seen as a form of support for the social workers. However, the social assistant also expressed a wish that the social services would participate actively in such campaigns. Alternative views on being “professional” or of acting in responsible ways (closer to answerability) could here open up new spaces to act.

Wanting to create changes for the minors, some of the social workers expressed frustration over the fact that the support was often individual and thereby arbitrary. A possible way to deal with this was to try to make the relation to the minor less “individual”. One social worker said that she sometimes tried to conceal that she was helping, in order not to humiliate the minor:

Many times I have done, you know we talk about people and most of them are boys, in order not to humiliate or tread on something cultural, I have actually given them money and said that I have got it from the social services, even if that is not the case. Because they are proud, they don't want to accept money. (Guardian)

Giving support, but at the same time describing it as general, rather than as a gift, was a means of underlining the principle: that the minors should access support no matter the circumstances. Another strategy to deal with individual limits was helping the first person that the social worker met, trying not to make a selection:

V: What made you bring this boy to your home, how did it happen?

SW: He was the first boy who was to be transferred, from when I started to work. And then it probably was that I already was a part of that environment – lots of my friends worked at accommodation centres and had boys and... and that I in some way already had that network and I had persons to call and ask for advice. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Giving support to minors who were to be transferred according to the Dublin II Regulation was seen here as intrinsically motivated – not because

of an established relation, whether it be “professional” or out of “compassion”. Identifying the asylum politics as the problem could hence give the social workers a motivation to act and to try to open up new spaces where the deportation regime could be questioned. As the minors subject to the Dublin II Regulation could have their asylum applications assessed in Sweden after waiting for eighteen months, the minors often had rather good prospects of getting their asylum application approved if the social workers gave them support to abscond for a period of time.

As the contacts with the minors were established through the formal assignment as a social worker, having supportive colleagues was seen as important in most interviews and this support could help in opening up spaces to act. The social workers were not able to talk to any colleague about this, but often they had someone whom they trusted. One guardian explained:

Well, what was good here in [locality] was that we started a small network, guardians started a network and it was in [three different localities]. And there were various places. We had some meetings and then we have a network that [can] call each other, tell each other, because being completely alone is difficult; you need a network. (Guardian)

Having a network where you knew that you could get support was important to the guardians, as they mostly worked on their own with the minors. Others found a similar support among their colleagues at the office or at the accommodation centre. One social worker at an accommodation centre said:

There was a colleague who I knew was very active in different ways [in social movements] and she knew that I was too, but we never talked about it at work. Then sometimes in the city centre we could say hello and chat, and then finally there was a boy who brought us together, because both of us had helped him, and now we are friends. But it was still that we didn't bring it up at work or outside, because you never knew who, it was so much just... and I have the experience from the accommodation centre where I work now as well (...) a lot of this that many friends work there – that the manager either employs family, relatives or friends, so that you are careful in general if you are going to criticise... (Social worker at accommodation centre)



Being afraid to talk to colleagues, but still knowing that others were dedicated to similar questions, this social worker described how she gradually found a support in this specific colleague. This meant that the individual support sometimes gradually became part of a larger context.

Being involved at the everyday level of social work practice was often experienced as demanding and difficult, and this gave little extra time and energy to be involved in campaigns or other activities:

And then sometimes I have felt, eh, not bad maybe but still I have had some bad conscience because I see other asylum rights activists arranging camps for children and help with homework and stuff, leisure-time activities and make things happen for the boys. But I have felt that I am able to, that I am not able to do that at all right now, so what we do for [minor] must be all we do for the moment. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

This social worker was supporting one undocumented minor, and this was as much as she felt that she was able to manage. Another social worker talked about the consequences of not keeping up personal boundaries:

There are periods when you feel that there are almost no limits [for what you can do] because you feel “I am not important in this, I am privileged, I have a well-functioning life” and so on; but the limits are drawn by themselves when you notice that you start to go off things. When you... get tired, you get whiny, you notice that you don't really have the energy to meet the people that you meet, you just have the feeling of duty left, when you feel that you simply start to get useless... (Social worker at accommodation centre)

To act in support of the minors, knowing that one has a position that is far better off, and still not being able to go “all out” because of personal boundaries, was described by some of the social workers as a big challenge. Taking one step closer to the everyday practice, living an ideal of taking responsibility and giving support to those who needed it was often difficult, not least because the social workers had limited capacity to give support. Sometimes, the social workers could instead see forms of support that went beyond the individual level. For example, some of them argued that they

could spread knowledge about the work situation and about unaccompanied minors:

...the knowledge needs to be spread and I have tried to do that and I talk about my job constantly among my acquaintances. I also see it as advocacy, of course, in everyday life. It is the everyday, when people ask what I work with, to spread the knowledge then. There has started a network now, more or less similar to the one we had before, but a little bit more focused on our occupations, I think. It is on its way to get started and I will participate because I feel that I have the energy again. So that will start more now. There is a blog that I will write in; I am thinking a little about what to write. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Participating in writing blog posts or talking about the situation at her workplace was seen here as a form of activism that the social worker could use also when trying to create changes at a more structural level. To work with the question of undocumented minors at a more structural level could be a way to avoid stress:

To advocate at another level instead of the social contact. I don't think that if I meet the persons again... I will of course be a person who gives support socially, but to start following up and taking responsibility, I won't do that. (Social worker at accommodation centre)

Addressing the issue of undocumented minors through campaigning was seen by this social worker as a way to create changes without having to put as much pressure on her private life. In this way, the social workers dealt with the frustration of not being able to support individual minors and instead tried to open up spaces in more public arenas.

### 9.3.4 Summing Up

What has been discussed as *acts of "activism"* above are acts performed in a politicised context and acts motivated by a need for changes beyond what is understood as the "professional" framework or the individual relation. The social workers related to political discussions that they sometimes participated in through blog posts or campaigning outside of work. In such

cases, the different logics of acting sometimes intersected, as they could make use of the discussion of what professional social work “should be”. What I have described as acts of “activism” hence relates to the discussion on being “professional” above. The acts of “activism” also intersected with acts based on a logic of “compassion”, as it was not always easy to separate individual relations from “pure ideals” in practice. The social workers could describe their acts in terms that made them “answer to justice”, but the acts were often more ambivalent. However, just as in the analysis of the two other forms of acts above, the social workers’ views on “activism” sometimes helped them to open up spaces where they could act in support of the minors and challenge the present citizenship regime, at least at an individual everyday level, but also sometimes at public arenas. This could be analysed in terms of acts of citizenship, but, as I will develop further below, there are tensions between *actions* and *acts* in the material.

## 9.4 Conclusion: Acts Overlapping and Intersecting

In this chapter, I have addressed situations where social workers encountering unaccompanied minors risking deportation have acted in accordance with logics other than what was formally expected of them. The acts of support were presented in the interviews using different rationales, and were performed mostly at an everyday and unspectacular level. In the analysis I have chosen to describe them as *acts of “professionalism”*, *acts of “compassion”* and *acts of “activism”*. *Acts of “professionalism”* are acts relating to what the social workers described as being “professional”. Often, the social workers were reluctant to being “professional”, as they saw this as a position with clear limits and distance towards the minors. These acts were hence often done in relation to the employer. However, there was a space for relations to the minors, and the social workers sometimes saw different forms of discretionary spaces as they were to perform their work in accordance with the best interest of the minors. In the meetings *face-to-face* with the minors, the social workers sometimes chose to act in accordance with other ideas of social work than what they saw as formally expected of them. Being “professional” hence opened up some spaces to act, but these

spaces were often in between what was understood as “professional” and “private”. *Acts of “compassion”* were acts relating to what the social workers described as being “private”. These acts were based on relations to specific minors and were made because of bonds that were not described as “professional”. The spaces to act that were opened up in relation to the minors were characterised by some arbitrariness, as the social workers participated in categorising among minors. At the same time, the acts based on “compassion” could be more far-reaching than acts made within the discretionary space at the workplace/in the role as a guardian. They were therefore often more demanding for the individual social worker. The *acts of “activism”* were acts relating to what the social workers described as being an “activist”. The individual support to the minors was made in a context where such support was politicised and sometimes the social workers identified as being “activists”. Such acts were not made because of specific relations to minors, but motivated by ideas of a more solidary world. Identifying injustices in, and/or problems with, the asylum politics, the social workers could see spaces to act that were not open for them when identifying as being “professional”. Some, however, argued that the social services should take side with the minors.

The three analytical reconstructions have helped me to analyse different dimensions of the social workers’ acts. The acts have been discussed separately for analytical purposes, but when analysing them they also need to be understood in relation to one another, especially as all three types of acts were described by all types of social workers (to different extents). Below, I will therefore discuss them together. All three kinds of acts grew out of perceived responsibilities; what could be discussed in terms of “misplaced” acts of obligation (Squire 2009). The different forms of acts of the social workers shared many things in common. The social workers reacted to situations that came up in their daily work but that did not fit into ordinary routines or regulations. The acts performed by the social workers in this study were often made at an individual level and in secret, and often by women. Supporting “clients” with juridical advice or helping them to contact civil society organisations, these social workers’ acts can be understood as “social shims” (Tilly 1999:53) between the organisation and the “client”; an effort to diminish suffering but not aiming at structural changes. This, as social workers acted at an everyday level with few means to create structural changes. The acts were not “pure” in the sense that they

were based only on a logic of justice in contrast to, for example, a humanitarian logic. However, in many cases their acts did create changes at an individual level; in the long run, the minors were often able to receive a residence permit through the acts, and new spaces where the social workers could act appeared. In some cases, the social workers giving support to the minors were acting in ways that were perceived as “political” by others, as there was a context of organising around the issue of undocumented migrants. At the same time, all of the social workers were giving support to children specifically. As discussed also in Part I, this is a dimension that seems to make the acts appear as less controversial, even when the social workers crossed the boundaries of what they understood as their formal mandate. The acts hence re-established some power hierarchies while questioning others.

All three kinds of acts were sometimes based on *answerability* in that they did follow an ethical obligation rather than what was formally expected of the social workers. Ideas of “solidarity” or “social change” were described as motives behind individual acts, but they also had dimensions of “professionalism” or “compassion”. Reacting to a perceived wrong and doing something that was not expected of them, the social workers performed a form of activist acts at an everyday level (compare Bhimji 2014, Castañeda 2013, Holgersson 2011). As new spaces to act appeared “in between” what was understood as “professional”/public and “private”, the acts sometimes opened up for new subject positions; the social workers could find new platforms to actually do something different and the minors were in practice entitled to certain support. However, the social workers were also creating closure, in that the acts seldom addressed structural causes and in that the minors were often fixed in a position of “being helped” and/or “being worthy”. The ambiguity of the acts, as both containing clashes with the established mandate (going against managers and/or rules at the workplace) on the one hand and reinforcing power structures and categorisations such as “deserving”/“undeserving” on the other, makes them difficult to describe and analyse in a straightforward way. The acts studied were not of an openly disruptive character, and they were often not identified in public debates. However, they did point in the direction of new responsibilities and obligations (compare McNevin 2012b, Squire 2009).

# Summary Part II

In Part II, I have analysed social workers giving support to unaccompanied minors risking deportation. I have described the discourses on unaccompanied minors at the time of the study (2011–2013) as on the one hand focusing on vulnerability and on the other on “bogus” asylum seekers. I have also presented the debates on the Dublin II Regulation and the campaigning against deporting minors and minors becoming undocumented. Further, I have described the municipal reception of unaccompanied minors and the HVB homes/accommodation centres (the main form of reception focused on in this study). As the minors were assigned to the municipalities by the Swedish Migration Agency, social workers sometimes experienced clashes between meeting their assignment to support the minors and following the decisions of the Migration Agency. The three employment types in this study (social assistants, personnel at accommodation centres and guardians) experienced this in different ways depending on the framework of their employment. Further, the social workers participating in this study worked in a context where their working conditions were debated. This context, which I describe in Chapter 8, is of great importance to bear in mind when analysing the social workers’ acts in support of unaccompanied minors risking deportation. In Chapter 9, I have discussed how they describe their acts of support and made three analytical reconstructions of acts following different logics: acts of “professionalism”, acts of “compassion” and acts of “activism”. Just as in the analysis of the municipal guidelines in Part I, the three logics of acting all had their tensions in relation to being and becoming, actions and acts, and responsibility and answerability. Below, I summarise the three reconstructions reflecting on the possibilities and limitations in each one of them when analysing them in terms of acts going beyond/against present citizenship practices.

*Acts of “professionalism”* related to what was understood as “being professional”, on occasion using conflicting views of what it should mean to “be professional” (possibly “becoming professional” in new ways). They were sometimes made within what was understood as a discretionary space, and sometimes they opened up a space “in between” what is understood as “professional” and “private”. In a context where social workers see obligations that are not formally there in relation to undocumented migrants, there seems to be room for new understandings of who has citizenship rights. As discussed in Part I, the differences in interpretation of the Social Services Act can be understood in relation to a *citizenship in flux* (Isin 2009). However, in practice this room for negotiation is limited. The social workers in Part II described an expectation of “being professional” as through strictly following rules. The support given by social workers who were acting in order to avoid a situation that they found unjust or ethically unacceptable often seemed to be marked by spontaneous acts and not by a “professional” logic. “Professionalism” was understood in relation to a formal responsibility to follow rules rather than a more far-reaching obligation towards minors risking deportation. In some situations, the social workers in this study acted on the experienced tensions between responsibility (as following present rules) and answerability (answering to principles of justice) (Isin 2008). When the social workers experienced the rights of the minors being threatened, they *reacted* but often this was not stated openly. The social workers often hid their support from managers and colleagues, and the acts were thus understood as performed in an arena between the “private” and what was perceived as “professional”. This became a space “in between” where the social workers could act. Here the obligation towards the minors became something else, more related to Isin’s (2008, 2012) term of *answerability* than formal *responsibility*. Through their acts, the social workers participated in creating potential new understandings of social work and potential new positions for social workers. These positions were not present in public debates, and can therefore be described as private or secret; they were of another character than what is traditionally understood as political and can therefore possibly be understood in the light of a feminist understanding of citizenship (compare Yuval-Davis 2011, Lister 1997b). The social workers did create changes in individual situations and in the prolongation they participated in creating new forms of being responsible. By refusing to “let go” of the

minors, the social workers challenged their own complicity in the deportation regime in ways that put their personal interests at stake, for example by risking their jobs (compare Canstañeda 2013). However, they often saw limits to what they could do because of their understandings of what it meant to be “professional”.

When the social workers chose to take a step outside of what they saw as being “professional”, their acts could sometimes be described as based on a logic of “compassion”. This can be understood in relation to meeting the minors *face-to-face*. Feeling a bond with a specific minor created an experienced obligation beyond the formal one, and this was not understood within the frames of “being professional”. These acts were based not on abstract principles of justice, but on a relation to a specific minor and through reacting to a situation that suddenly appeared in front of the social workers. The *acts of “compassion”*, however, need to be understood also in relation to the formal mandate of the social workers: sometimes the social workers acted in ways that were not in accordance with the rules or formal expectation at their workplaces. The acts in these cases were not seen as entirely “private”, as they were made in relation to the formal expectations – yet hidden from managers. For example, having contact with minors outside of work or helping minors to stay away from migration authorities conflicted with the rules at many accommodation centres. Just as in the case of acts of “professionalism”, the acts of “compassion” opened up new spaces “in between” an area considered as “private” and one considered as “professional”, but the acts were performed because of a relation considered to be private. The acts of “compassion” were, however, often more far-reaching than the acts that the social workers considered to be within their discretionary space and sometimes conflicted directly with the rules at the workplaces (especially the accommodation centres). To act in relation to the minors created new understandings of the world of the minors among the social workers, but also new categorisations and images of “deservingness”. They created new forms of exclusion and power hierarchies – at a more informal level than the acts of “professionalism”, as they were based on individual relations. Acting in accordance with a logic based on “compassion”, but often also taking into account the “wrong” committed to the minors, the social workers’ acts could sometimes be understood as acts made out of *answerability*. Here, we find a tension between compassion as solidarity and compassion as pity (compare Squire 2015, Pinson et al.



2010). Acts of “compassion” create dilemmas due to the inequality in the relation: the social workers are in a position of judging who “deserves” their support. This was sometimes acknowledged by the social workers as a dimension that they found to be difficult to handle. Still, the social workers acted upon a situation in ways that were not expected of them, sometimes with very little resources to back up their support.

Who is “our common responsibility” and what ought to be the obligations of the welfare state are questions posed at many levels, not least by migrant groups across Europe. In a context of civil society organising on issues of antiracism and social justice, some social workers get into quagmires in responding to perceived injustices. *Acts of “activism”* came about in such a context, and addressed injustices in a more direct way than the two other logics of acting above. These acts were made with a more general approach than acts based on “compassion”, for example by giving support to the first minor one met who was in need of help instead of based on a specific bond. These acts were not seen as being “professional”, even if they sometimes consisted in collective organising among professionals. The acts of “activism” contained dilemmas of not being able to address the causes identified at a structural level and therefore instead acting upon situations here and now that are not seen as creating long-term change. However, some of the social workers saw their acts as “political”, in that they were made in a politicised context and they questioned the way things are structured. In the clash between a wish for another world and the specific situations that the social workers met at an everyday level, a space for acting was sometimes created. This space “in between” the formal requirements and the wish for other circumstances was sometimes made public – for example, when the social workers participated in campaigns or together put pressure on their managers. However, identifying as an “activist” did not necessarily mean doing more far-reaching interventions or creating ruptures. The acts of “activism” could also be more similar to the acts of “compassion” in that the social workers chose not to act publicly – both out of concern for the minors and because they were afraid to lose their employment (which was often of a short-term character). Some of these “secret” spaces were nevertheless already existent because of activist practices of supporting undocumented migrants within the civil society (where the boundaries between “compassion” and “activism” were also blurred, see

Sager 2016). We can see here how the different reconstructions intersect and are not always easy to separate.

In Chapter 9, I have discussed the three reconstructions together, showing that they overlap and intersect and that the different logics cannot be entirely separated from one another. The acts were often made in secret and they both challenged and upheld present hierarchies. This means that they did not create straightforward ruptures but that they did show that ideas of social rights and obligations were in flux.



# 10. Social Work and the Boundaries of Responsibility

In this study, I have analysed social work in support of undocumented migrants. Studying such practices of inclusion, which can be understood as exceptions in relation to the practices within the present citizenship regime, my aim has been to analyse if and how migration destabilises present citizenship practices. The movement between on the one hand being in line with present practices and, on the other, challenging the status quo has been central throughout this thesis. I have found that the different forms of support should not be understood as straightforward forms of change, but rather as upholding certain practices while challenging others. In this concluding chapter, I begin by summing up the main results from the two cases studied. I then discuss potential changes in citizenship practices and to what extent it is possible to analyse my cases in terms of acts. I draw on authors who expand Isin's (2002, 2008, 2012) theories and discuss potential changes regarding citizenship. Finally, I use the recent, restrictive, developments in Swedish migration politics as a backdrop in order to understand my cases in relation to time perspective and duration.

## 10.1 Summing Up the Two Cases

I have studied two cases of social work at a local municipal level and at an individual level. Both cases can be described as being in line with the present citizenship regime, as social work in both cases remains a practice marking borders and also as the deportability of undocumented migrants remains in place. However, just as in line with much social work research, both cases also show that borders and boundaries are not set in stone in social work practice and that the boundaries of citizenship and social rights are being negotiated. The phenomenon of irregular migration particularly brings to the fore questions about social workers' responsibilities as undocumented migrants lack a residence permit (and thereby a formal entitlement to social rights) but still are present in front of the social workers. This presence *face-to-face* means that social workers in some cases need to take a stand in one way or another: either to give or to deny support.

In *Part I*, I have analysed the implementation of the Malmö guidelines on social assistance that explicitly address undocumented migrants; how the involved actors (politicians, policymakers and social workers) understood the rationales behind the guidelines and how the guidelines could be analysed in terms of change and/or continuity. I have argued that the guidelines can be analysed in terms of *action*, or maybe a counteracting in relation to child poverty, rather than in terms of *acts*. Three forms of action have been identified: actions of legal confirmation, actions of codification and actions of disregard. Along with this, I have argued that the inclusion of undocumented migrants into the guidelines was more or less indirect – treated as an administrative issue in line with present practices. When implemented, the guidelines did, however, imply a formalised responsibility for undocumented migrants. Through everyday social work practice, the guidelines were interpreted and negotiated in order to fit individual cases. In the individual assessment, both *responsibility* and *answerability* could be found within the frames of the organisational mandate, as the social workers could decide to act upon different logics (for example, based on migration control or on social justice) when assessing the needs of undocumented migrants. In relation to how the guidelines were discussed in other contexts and in relation to later political developments, they may

also be analysed in terms of *acts*. They did diverge from the practices in other municipalities and were also presented in news media as diverging. The Malmö case therefore could also be explained in relation to the local context, not least due to the physical *presence* of undocumented migrants at the level of the city, which implied that addressing the group was seen as a smaller step than it might have been in municipalities where such issues were not as visible. An image of the Malmö municipality as actively taking responsibility was mobilised and the extension of social assistance in relation to undocumented children reached beyond a confirmation of the law (even if not stretching beyond the law). This image of the Malmö municipality has been challenged over time, not least after the criticised eviction of EU citizens (mostly Roma) in 2015. These developments show how hierarchies of “deservingness”, and borders are being reinforced. They also indicate that *duration* as well as level/scope of analysis are of relevance when analysing the guidelines in terms of an event.

In *Part II*, I have studied social workers actively giving support to unaccompanied minors, acting on situations when they experienced a responsibility beyond what was formally expected of them. The social workers were selected because of their support, and this support can be understood as diverging from the organisational protocol. I have especially focused on how the social workers described the rationales behind their support and in what ways their support could be analysed in terms of enactments of social rights and responsibilities. I have analysed their support in terms of acts of “professionalism”, acts of “compassion” and acts of “activism”. The social workers were *becoming responsible* in ways that had not been expected of them beforehand, as they crossed what they perceived as the boundaries of what was understood as being “professional” or the premises of their assignment through their support to the minors. This was sometimes done in arbitrary ways – for example, mainly by giving support to minors described as “deserving” (as in the acts of “compassion”) – and thereby drawing new lines around citizenship and reinforcing social hierarchies. Some acts were instead based on ideals of solidarity. Often the participants described dimensions of all three kinds of acts. With inspiration from Squire (2009), the addressing of social responsibilities could be interpreted as a form of “*misplaced*” *claims on obligations* in relation to the minors. Often the acts were not made in public and they could therefore not be analysed as classical forms of political mobilisation or as in

themselves bringing about changes in the Swedish citizenship regime. I however argue that their efforts should not be dismissed, while neither glorified. The acts sometimes opened up new *spaces* “in between” where the social workers were able to act in support of undocumented migrants (compare Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017, Squire 2009). The support from the social workers could lead to individual minors receiving a regularised residence status, and being able to access social rights such as housing and, in the prolongation, healthcare and schooling. In this way, the spontaneous acts of support did lead to changes in the long run at an individual everyday level. The social workers also found new positions from where to act, both at an individual level (for example, taking a minor to one’s home) or through collective organising (that often was based on individual experiences) at the workplace or within the civil society. This means that the acts questioned the boundaries of responsibility, although often in ambiguous ways, and while creating new boundaries. The acts made out of “professionalism”, “compassion” and/or “activism” intersected and overlapped, and often the social workers described many different rationales behind their acts.

The results show forms of social work that are in balance between upholding and challenging social structures, and that new spaces to act may appear in social work practice – albeit on an everyday level. I have therefore found it useful to describe my cases as moving between *actions* and *acts*. The relation between citizen/non-citizen remains; however, the boundaries for social obligations/responsibilities are sometimes destabilised. In my analysis of the movement between citizenship as a status and citizenship as enacted, I have made use of theories expanding Isin’s concepts. At an everyday level, acts appear as more ambiguous than when studying large historical events, not least due to the fact that the long-term consequences of the everyday acts are difficult to foresee and also that individual rationales may be contradictive. The social workers described how they would sometimes respond to responsibilities that were not formally there, and the institutionalisation of such responsibilities seemed to be difficult to obtain. I have, however, argued that the *presence* of undocumented migrants contributes to open up spaces “in between” citizen and non-citizen (compare Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017, Squire 2009) where new forms of social responsibilities potentially can be addressed.

## 10.2 Can Social Workers Act Politically?

I have in my analysis argued that the support practices studied did not create ruptures in the overall citizenship regime, and that hierarchies and norms of “deservingness” were re-established. Considering this, question marks may arise regarding the framework of citizenship theory: is it at all suitable to analyse these social work practices as forms of citizenship enactments? In this section I however argue that the theoretical framework has helped me to shed a light on the position of the social workers, as they do what they do in the borderlands of citizenship rights and obligations. Isin’s (2002, 2008, 2012) conceptualisations have been a good analytical tool when wanting to direct attention to the conflicts and tensions in today’s citizenship regime met by practitioners within the area of social work. The table presented in Chapter 3 will be used in order to structure the analysis below:

**Table 4:**  
Citizenship as practised, from Chapter 3

	<b>Status quo maintained</b>	<b>Status quo challenged</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	BEING	BECOMING
<b>Form/practice:</b>	ACTION	ACT
<b>Logic/rationale:</b>	RESPONSIBILITY	ANSWERABILITY

Analysing social work with undocumented migrants through the lens of citizenship theory has helped me to study the exclusionary character of today’s Swedish welfare state, but also to analyse potential challenges to this exclusion. Above all, the theoretical framework has been useful when studying the tensions regarding social obligations/responsibilities that appear in social work with undocumented migrants as the distinction between citizen/non-citizen comes to the fore in the social workers’ practices. The movements and tensions between practices on the one hand reinforcing the present citizenship regime (as a way of being political, actions affirming the status quo, based on ideas of a formal responsibility) and destabilising citizenship practices (through new subjects becoming political, acting creatively, based on ideas answering to justice) have been highlighted in my analysis. In the sections below, I will discuss how my



results can be understood in the light of the movement between these concepts.

### 10.2.1 A Conditioned Responsibility

The social services can be described as a moral institution guarding the boundaries of the Swedish welfare state. However, there is also a space for redrawing these boundaries through social work practice. Social workers are most often positioned within the welfare state, and a central question is therefore what roles they can take in such a redrawing. The participants in this study had to relate to the formal rules regulating their work as well as to the experienced responsibility towards a group that did not always fit into their work descriptions. The support to undocumented migrants, sometimes described as in line with present citizenship practices and sometimes described as going beyond or against what was expected, can be analysed as negotiations between *being* and *becoming* what could be described as a responsible citizen or a responsible social worker (something that I have also analysed in terms of *being* and *becoming* “professional”). These negotiations both challenged and re-established present hierarchies. The concepts of *being* and *becoming* have served as a backdrop to the analysis, and as a way to illustrate the fact that the practices studied are not static. The idea of *becoming* has been useful in theorising practices that are not fixed in meaning and that emerge when the social workers try to adapt their work to new situations.

The cases selected in this study explore the possibilities for social work to give support to undocumented migrants in a context where this support did not have a strong legal ground and the mission of the social services was vague. As there were not always self-evident rules to follow, tensions were actualised between what was perceived as a formal responsibility and a logic of justice closer to Isin’s (2008) concept of *answerability*. Especially in the case of social assistance, where the law was practised in different ways in different municipalities, the line between *responsibility* and *answerability* was not always clear-cut. Also, in the direct encounters *face-to-face*, there was sometimes room for expanding the responsibility of the social workers, and this was above all done in the second case study. In some cases the wish to do something in support of the minors in order to make a difference made

social work practice go in new ways. The social workers' support could in such cases be described as *becoming responsible* or as *becoming "professional"* in ways that weren't formally expected of them (in contrast to *being* professional, something that was often related to a strict following of rules).

At the same time such practices upheld distinctions and hierarchies, for example reinforcing ideas of "deservingness". This means that the practices coming into being did not entirely stretch beyond the present regime with its norms of "deservingness" and boundaries between citizens and non-citizens. The responsibility that the social workers took on was porous and often it landed in ad hoc solutions. The practice of giving access to social rights was therefore not straightforward; instead it often depended on individual assessments or individual bonds. The migrants' deportability remained, and in some cases it can even be argued that this was a condition for the inclusion: the support was enabled as long as it was not seen as permanent (compare Lind and Persdotter 2017). Throughout the analysis, I have discussed the social work practices in terms of an inclusion that is *partial*, in the sense that undocumented migrants only access a protection that is conditioned by deportability (compare Sager 2011, de Genova 2010, Bosniak 2006). Even the perceived responsibilities for the undocumented population could be understood as partial; there were limits to what the Malmö guidelines addressed and to what the social workers working with unaccompanied minors found that they were willing or able to do. It is therefore important to realise that the new modes of becoming responsible had their limitations; they could be analysed in terms of a partial or *conditioned responsibility*. The support was conditioned by how far-reaching the social workers' responsibility was perceived to be.

A *conditioned responsibility* could be interpreted as following the logic of the present citizenship regime rather than in terms of a rupture; no substantial changes were made in relation to undocumented migrants. At the same time, the social work practices studied were to some extent destabilising ideas of who is a responsibility of the welfare state in that they directed the attention to having a responsibility not only for citizens in matters of economy and housing. Their acts can therefore be analysed as based on *answerability*, although at an individual level. The social workers could describe their acts as based on principles of justice, but both my cases indicate that these principles were perishable: the understandings of motives

were described in different ways in different situations and depending on context. The social workers were acting in a context where ideas of rights and responsibilities were in flux; ideals of migration control existed parallel with ideals of human rights. The role of the social services could be interpreted in different ways, and there were no clear regulations at a national level (as in the cases of healthcare and schooling). However, the responsibility that the social workers experienced was often of a less abstract character than in the debates on human rights; it was based on *presence* in the municipality or in front of the social worker. In this sense, the support was given because undocumented migrants were understood as belonging, for example because they already went to school and had other networks at the level of the city, or because they had been in contact with the social workers as asylum seekers. Even if the social work practices studied could be reinforcing the borders and boundaries of citizenship through conditioning their support, they did also expand the scope of the social workers' responsibilities. When undocumented migrants were directly addressed as a group having legitimate claims on rights, this could be done in ways that were neither straightforward nor creating grand changes in the citizenship regime. The acts of the social workers were in these cases made at a private and individual level, but they did bring into being alternative modes of responding to perceived responsibilities that could be understood in terms of "misplaced" claims on obligations (compare Squire 2009).

The experienced (although conditioned) responsibility for undocumented migrants makes the borders of the welfare state more visible at the same time as it questions those borders. Analysed together with other events, not least the public demands by undocumented migrants at the time of this study, the practices examined here can be understood as contributing to destabilisations regarding citizenship (compare Saunders 2008), even if they were partial. The social work practices studied did not in themselves bring about historical changes, but, analysed in relation to other events and developments, they may add up to changes in the long run. Just as in the case of undocumented migrants going to the library acting "as if" they had this right, the social workers sometimes acted "as if" they had formal responsibilities towards undocumented migrants (compare Holgersson 2011). I would therefore argue that the forms of social work studied can be described as potentials for change rather than as having straightforward consequences (compare McNevin 2011, 2012).

### 10.2.2 Movements between *Actions* and *Acts*

To analyse the social workers' support as acts of citizenship has its problems, as it was given on behalf of "others" in relations of power that are far from even, and as the support at an everyday level is not easily described in terms of rupture. I have instead analysed the practices of the social workers as moving between *actions* and *acts*, in that they both can be placed within present citizenship practices and stretching beyond (and sometimes going against) them. This has meant that occasionally the line between *actions* and *acts* becomes blurred. For example, what I have understood as *acts* stretching beyond present citizenship practices did not always have the most far-reaching consequences: the changes described in terms of *action* could sometimes be understood as more enduring forms of change, as they did not openly challenge the citizenship regime.

Both cases had consequences for social support to undocumented migrants, although at different levels and to a different extent. In the case of the Malmö guidelines, a formalisation of the inclusion of undocumented migrants was done locally, providing a form of substantive citizenship: undocumented migrants were explicitly entitled to certain support. This was especially so in the case of children, where undocumented migrants accessed a welfare state subsidy on similar terms as citizens/residents. This inclusion, even if partial, can be described as a formal inclusion where undocumented migrants were directly addressed as rights-bearers, albeit in the borderlands of citizenship. This meant that the boundaries of citizenship were dislocated from an individual level (with social workers interpreting a framework law in different ways) to being institutionalised by a more influential actor. In my analysis, I have described this institutionalisation as made possible just *because* it was not understood as divergent at the time. It was presented by politicians and policymakers in terms of *action*: new ways to give support were found within the present legal framework. This way of presenting the guidelines can be understood to have facilitated the support to undocumented migrants and to have made it more stable than if the guidelines had been perceived as controversial at the time of their implementation. At the same time, when ideals of social responsibility are being renegotiated and a logic of migration control dominates in political debates, the support to undocumented migrants is questioned and the practice of the guidelines seems to be more restrictive.

This means that the institutionalisation made in terms of *action* is destabilised once again when new political discourses and debates arise.

The social workers giving support to unaccompanied minors, on the other hand, did not seem to create many changes beyond the individual level. As they chose to give support to undocumented migrants even when this was not expected of them, I have still chosen to discuss their support in terms of *acts*. Some of their acts actually led to changes in how the work was organised and hence what support minors risking deportation formally could receive. However, most of the social workers' practices were not formalised, and these are the ones that have been the main focus in my analysis. Such acts were performed by a small group of social workers, who acted more at a personal level than as civil servants or "whistle-blowers" (this was the case both for social assistants and guardians, two groups with very different frames for acting). In some cases the social workers acted upon other logics than the rules and regulations directly regulating their work, and new ways of understanding the undocumented subject as well as social workers' responsibilities were brought into being when undocumented migrants were actively addressed as rights-bearers. When acting against perceived expectations, the social workers most often chose to do so in secret. This was mainly due to the fact that the active inclusion studied in Part II put more at stake for the individual social workers than the inclusion studied in Part I; for example, some of the social workers explicitly went against the rules at the workplace in their contacts with minors outside of work, and in that sense there was more of a rupture (at an individual, everyday level) than in the case of the Malmö guidelines. To the social workers performing them, the acts meant a rupture from perceived expectations – both from the workplace (breaking contract with employer) and from friends and families (how their life should be lived) (compare Castañeda 2013, Isin 2012). The step from being there as a thorough support during working hours, but not engaging with minors who are placed outside their formal responsibility, to actively go against rules and regulations at the workplace and bring a former "service user" into one's home is what makes me consider the social workers' support in terms of *acts*. To be considered a "good" or "responsible" social worker by, for instance, managers and colleagues, this further engagement was not required.

Also the rationales behind the support could be understood in different ways. In the Malmö case, the support to undocumented migrants was described as a codification of present praxis and as a confirmation of the law. In this way political conflicts were avoided. The rationales were placed within an organisational logic and within the range of the law. However, other rationales, such as the image of Malmö as a municipality taking responsibility and responding to the presence of undocumented migrants (not least through the ideal of sanctuary cities), existed alongside these actions and this could be understood as pointing at a more active inclusion. I have discussed this in terms of a movement towards *acts*. This means that how we interpret the rationales behind the inclusion is of importance – to actively address undocumented migrants can be seen as something else than letting them “pass”, even if the consequences are the same. This is of interest when turning to the second case, where the social workers could act in very similar ways, but still were describing the acts in accordance with different rationales. To some extent, the rationales behind the acts had direct consequences in that they could challenge or reinforce social hierarchies. For example, an act described as made out of “compassion” could differentiate between minors “deserving” support and minors who were not given the same support and contribute to the upholding of postcolonial relations. The individual and arbitrary support could in such cases diverge from what was expected by the social worker as well as address new subjects as rights-bearers, but it can be discussed on the basis of the acts being *answerable* to justice. The acts based on ideals of solidarity, that I have analysed as acts of “activism”, are easier to understand in terms of *answerability* as they are explicitly described as responding to justice. At the same time, acts of “compassion” could sometimes be more far-reaching than an act described as based on “activism”. Also, acts of “activism” could have both motives and consequences that are limited by the social workers’ individual capacities, networks and self-images. The rationales could therefore not be seen as entirely separated from each other, and should not be the only ground for understanding the acts.

Analysing *acts* at this everyday level brings ambiguities and contradictions in terms of individual rationales to the fore. Many of the support practices studied can be analysed in terms of *actions* within present frameworks, as the social workers partly did what was in line with present discourses – for example, on child vulnerability. However, taking one step back, analysing

the support as a social phenomenon instead of at an individual level, the support of the social workers can also be understood as an active inclusion in conflict with present citizenship norms and addressing a wrong committed to the minors. In both the cases studied, different forms of active inclusion performed in order to expand the support to undocumented migrants have been analysed in terms of *acts*. In my analysis it is clear that such *acts* are not “pure” in the sense that they answer only to justice. The *acts* studied can be said to traverse some frontiers and uphold others, something that makes it difficult to describe them in terms of solidarity. Active inclusion can hence also contribute to an upholding of the present, in that it does not necessarily challenge present categorisations, at the same time as it may be seen as a statement towards justice at some levels. The active inclusion studied is therefore better understood as a balancing, or movement, between *actions* and *acts*.

### 10.2.3 New Spaces to Act?

As the social workers were involved in acts at an everyday level, I have argued that their support could be described as destabilisations rather than in terms of rupture. The support practices studied are hence more in line with what McNevin (2012:127) describes as “acts which disrupt citizenship norms yet which are not in themselves aimed at gaining legal or conventional citizen-status”. Even if unstable and porous, new spaces to act in relation to undocumented migrants appeared in both cases studied. Through the everyday acts of the social workers the range of citizenship, as well as of what groups were to be included into citizenship practices, were negotiated.

Undocumented migrants had *become present* to an increased extent in different spaces in the city of Malmö. Support structures within the civil society contributed in that forms of substantive citizenship (although partial and often arbitrary) were already established at the level of the city and various welfare state institutions were in contact with the group. The social workers can be understood as actors contributing to the development of the guidelines, as in response to this presence they sometimes saw spaces to give support to undocumented migrants even before the guidelines. Both politicians and social workers had contacts with civil society organisations,

and this meant that there were sometimes spaces to act “in between” the formal responsibility of the municipality and the informal organisation within the civil society. Inspired by authors such as Bhimji (2014), I see the presence of undocumented migrants as contributing to new forms of urban citizenship coming into being (see also McNevin 2012, Holgersson 2011). The Malmö guidelines can be seen as a public recognition of undocumented migrants’ presence, and therefore a subtle transformation of political belonging at a municipal level (compare McNevin 2012). When the rights claims made by undocumented migrants as well as citizens within the civil society were met by the municipality claiming (partial) obligations, more enduring forms of change could come about. The argumentation when implementing the guidelines was based on presence (or residing), giving the social workers more space to give support through social assistance. Undocumented migrants could be seen as addressed in a space “in between” citizenship and non-citizenship, as belonging to the city albeit without a formalised status (Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017, Squire 2009).

In the case of social workers giving support to unaccompanied minors, the spaces they found to act were often “in between” the welfare state (providing the frames for their assignments) and the civil society, in that they could find support structures and possibilities to give support beyond the formal expectations at the workplace. The *site* for the social workers’ acts can be described as a space “in between” what was perceived as “professional” and “private”, a site that may be of interest to explore further in relation to political transformation (compare McNevin 2012). Spaces to act were created when expectations (be it on being “professional”, out of compassion or based on ideas of social change) clashed with organisational expectations. In the *face-to-face* encounters with unaccompanied minors risking deportation, different forms of emotional work also opened up for new forms of support, often coded as feminine. The minors’ rights claims were met, but by obligations claimed at an individual level (compare Squire 2009). The secret and “private” character of these acts is one dimension that makes the acts appear as less political than different forms of public mobilisation. Even if departing from citizenship norms, I have therefore chosen to describe such acts as destabilisations rather than in terms of rupture. Reacting to everyday situations, the social workers’ acts were spontaneous forms of acts with little room for reflections on the reasons



behind the acts or the possible consequences of the acts. Performing acts in the borderlands between “public” and “private”, the social workers in this study chose to destabilise the boundaries of the welfare state, which the social services otherwise took part in preserving.

The civil society appears as a space where social workers’ responsibilities for undocumented migrants could potentially be renegotiated. As new understandings of who is a rights-bearer became (partially) established within the civil society, this could influence local policies and/or individual social workers. Also, social workers could find spaces to act within the civil society. This position of social workers in the borderland between welfare state organisations and civil society is not without problems: it was not possible to give support to everyone, and the ad hoc solutions that came about were not stable and often arbitrary. Performing acts *on behalf of* undocumented migrants, the social workers had a power to differentiate among lives. This is important to underline and of interest to explore further, especially as it is not unique for social work practitioners within the welfare state; when giving support while having scarce resources, support structures within the civil society also participate in categorisations and in creating hierarchies of “deservingness” (see Sager 2015, 2016). This means that there are always negotiations going on and exclusions coming into being, also in the spaces that aim at expanding access to social rights and social support.

## 10.3 New Developments: Citizenship Practices in Flux

I understand citizenship practices as dependent on the political discourses at the time of the study and the material organisation of the welfare state. The boundaries of the welfare state cannot be understood without understanding these practices, and they are not stable – even if they are being reinforced, for example through social work practice. As I do not understand *acts* as fixed in meaning, I argue that the interpretation changes with social context and with time. In the analysis of the social workers’ support as moving between *actions* and *acts* at an everyday level, *duration* is

therefore a dimension that I have found to be central. In this final section I will use the recent developments regarding Swedish (and EU) migration politics as a contrast, in order to better understand the cases studied. The presentation of this study in the context of harshening migration politics (due to, among other things, the interim legislation and the developments in the EU) and discourses on securitisation and border controls adds another dimension to how the *actions* and *acts* can be understood. In the light of the recent developments, which on the one hand have meant that Swedish migration politics are more restrictive and, on the other hand, have resulted in a large mobilisation (by social workers, among others) against the deportations of unaccompanied minors and other asylum seekers, the issues analysed in this text are actualised in new ways. What does such a polarisation mean for the understanding of social workers' support to undocumented migrants? This is a time when values and rationales of social work are brought to the fore and the social question of international migration seems to need new answers.

The *actions* and *acts* studied here were performed in a context with many parallel processes addressing undocumented migrants. During the years studied (2010-2014), an expansion of formal rights was made in relation to undocumented migrants, through the laws on healthcare and schooling implemented in 2013. This means that the negotiations of the role of the social services in relation to undocumented migrants can be related to the human rights discourses present at the time (see Nielsen 2016). Looking back at the time period studied, the perceived responsibilities of social workers may be seen as in line with the development in general towards a partial inclusion, and therefore not as spectacular or diverging. Afterwards, what have been interpreted (at least partially) as *acts* can therefore be described in terms of *actions*. Seeing the inclusion of undocumented migrants into the social services as “uncontroversial”, however, implies a risk of “idealising” the time period beyond what was actually expressed by the participants in this study. In many cases, the support to undocumented migrants was given in secret and with little support from others. This means that the social workers did not often experience their support practices as being in line with the general development.

Simultaneously, the later developments of Swedish migration politics and the interim legislation put the support practices studied to the test. For

example, when the border police in Malmö contacted the social services for help to find undocumented migrants in their registers as recipients of social assistance in 2016-2017 (see section 1.1.4), this fuelled debates on what role social work should have in relation to migration control (Sydsvenskan 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, Socialhögskolan 2016). A recent court decision in the Supreme Administrative Court (Court case 1527–1529-16) does not confirm that the Malmö guidelines are in line with present citizenship practices (even if they do not go against the law either). Harsher migration politics and narrower interpretations of the law show how unstable the social workers' support might be. Just before finishing this text, the Malmö guidelines are being debated in local news media, and some suggest that they should be reworked (Sydsvenskan 2017a, b). Today's developments may hence make the guidelines seem more radical and, as they appear as more diverging/interrupting, they can also be described more in terms of *acts* than *actions*. Because of this, they may also come to be challenged.

At the same time as the municipal support is being questioned, we find a new context of social workers organising resistance, above all on behalf of unaccompanied minors (VLT 2017, Vi står inte ut 2016). Together with a broad range of welfare state employees, social workers encountering minors risking deportation react by raising their voices instead of acting in secret (SVT 2016a, Svenska Dagbladet 2016a). In the context of harsher migration politics, there are more welfare workers directly in touch with unaccompanied minors risking deportation, and a larger mobilisation on behalf of the group has therefore been made possible. This means that the resistance to today's migration politics is formed not only within the civil society but also by employees within the welfare state. It is too early to predict what will be the result of this, but it is of interest to follow a development where social workers organise in protest against having to uphold the borders of the Swedish welfare state instead of doing what is beneficial for the service users.

As the issue of social work in support of undocumented migrants becomes more politicised, the forms of social work analysed in this study can be understood *both* as in line with the citizenship practices at the time (that today have changed) and as diverging from the overall tendency to restrict access to support for undocumented migrants. The understanding of

potential changes is therefore not straightforward; as I have argued throughout the text, social work practice may be analysed as both challenging and upholding present hierarchies and borders. One question that arises is: what will be the consequences of the recent developments for social work practice? Maybe that the present organisation of social work as aligned to the welfare state is being challenged by the recent development of migration politics and by the phenomenon of irregular migration? The position of social workers in the borderlands of citizenship and in spaces “in between” public and private is of interest to explore further, as it potentially opens up for new forms of social work. Social work has historically been developed between public and private spaces, and perhaps today’s social work will move back towards the sphere described as “private” and away from the welfare state? Forms of social work performed closer to a logic of the civil society would imply that the responsibility for undocumented migrants to a larger extent lies with individuals who encounter injustices, rather than with welfare state employees, indicating further arbitrariness. But it could also mean that the responsibility for creating changes is moved from subjects placed as “outsiders” or “not belonging” (in this case, undocumented migrants) or subjects categorised as “activists” within the civil society to also encompass welfare state employees.

Another question is to what extent the developments regarding migration within the Swedish welfare state may challenge ideas of being a responsible social worker. Probably, many social workers can find means to act in ways that they find to be responsible within the framework of their present assignments, but the amount of social workers reacting to issues related to migration and responsibility seems to increase. It is too early to say if this is a development that will continue. However, it can be concluded that the understandings of responsibilities and social rights will continue to change. The social work practices studied here can be understood as a handful of many examples of such destabilisations. Rather than searching for “real” or “grand” changes, I have seen the movements between *being* and *becoming*, *actions* and *acts*, and *responsibility* and *answerability* as important to acknowledge when studying potentials for change at an everyday level. The fact that there are reactions at an everyday level, in meetings *face-to-face* with undocumented migrants, is therefore of interest to follow: what will these encounters mean in the long run?



# Appendix

**Table 5:**  
Swedish Political Parties (Inspired by Amanda Nielsen 2016:181)

<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Swedish name</b>	<b>English name</b>	<b>Ideological orientation</b>
(c)	Centerpartiet	The Centre Party	Liberal-Agrarian
(l)	Liberalerna	The Liberal Party	Liberal
(kd)	Kristdemokraterna	The Christian Democrats	Christian-Conservative
(m)	Moderaterna	The Moderate Party	Liberal-Conservative
(mp)	Miljöpartiet	The Green Party	Green
(s)	Socialdemokraterna	The Social Democratic Party	Social democratic
(sd)	Sverigedemokraterna	The Sweden Democrats	Nationalist (far-right)
(spi)	SPI - Vålfården	Swedish Senior Citizen Interest Party	Pensioners' interests, single-issue politics
(v)	Vänsterpartiet	The Left Party	Socialist



# Sammanfattning

Ett växande fokus på gränskontroll och diskurser om säkerhet i dagens Europa gör det svårare för människor som migrerar både att passera gränser och att få uppehållstillstånd. Detta har skapat en situation där fler personer tvingas leva som papperslösa, det vill säga utan giltiga handlingar som ger dem rätt att befinna sig i landet. Denna utveckling påverkar förutsättningarna för det sociala arbetets praktik, eftersom socialarbetare möter människor som befinner sig i utsatta situationer. I denna studie analyseras socialarbetare som en grupp som verkar i medborgarskapets gränsland, eftersom de antingen kan utvidga eller begränsa välfärdsstatens stöd till just papperslösa. Socialarbetare agerar ofta som upprätthållare av gränser och makthierarkier då det i det sociala arbetet finns en hjälparrelation inbyggd där människor kategoriseras och bedöms. Denna studie vänder blicken mot de, något mer ovanliga, praktiker som syftar till att ge stöd till papperslösa och tillgång till sociala rättigheter.

Den svenska medborgarskapstanken har historiskt byggt på en relativt stor tillgång till sociala rättigheter för personer med uppehållstillstånd eller medborgarskap. Den har samtidigt haft desto tydligare gränser utåt. Tillgång till exempelvis sjukvård har varit mycket begränsad för personer som vistats i landet som papperslösa. Under den period som studeras här (2010-2014) ändrades detta något. Nya lagar gav tillgång till skola och sjukvård, främst för papperslösa barn. Detta skedde efter flera år av kampanjer inom det civila samhället, där också professionella från olika yrkesgrupper deltog. Men parallellt har även kontrollen av papperslösa och ett fokus på att deportationer ökat. När det gäller socialtjänstens ansvar har regleringen varit otydligare än för skola och sjukvård. Socialtjänstlagen har använts på olika sätt i olika delar av landet samt i olika individuella fall i förhållande till papperslösa.



## Studiens syfte och tillvägagångssätt

I denna avhandling riktas intresset mot hur medborgarskap praktiseras och vilka som räknas som personer med rättigheter i en svensk kontext. Jag har valt att studera just socialarbetare eftersom jag är intresserad av hur papperslöshet som fenomen bemöts av en grupp som till viss del faktiskt har möjlighet att påverka människors livsvillkor, inklusive de personer som hamnar utanför välfärdsstatens ramar. Syftet med studien är att studera om och i så fall hur mötet med papperslösa destabiliserar praktiker inom den rådande medborgarskapsregimen. Med medborgarskapsregim avses både lagar och regler för vem som räknas till ett samhälle (och därmed har tillgång till rättigheter) och normer och idéer om hur någon ska bete sig för att uppfattas som medborgare. Mina övergripande frågeställningar är: *På vilka sätt kan socialt arbete till stöd för papperslösa förstås inom ramen för den rådande medborgarskapsregimen alternativt som handlingar som bryter med denna? Till vilken grad destabiliserar detta stöd dagens medborgarskapspraktiker?*

Frågorna undersöks i två delstudier. Jag studerar dels Malmö stads riktlinjer för ekonomiskt bistånd, dels socialarbetare som arbetar med ensamkommande barn. Delstudierna är valda för att de aktualiserar frågor om gränsdragningar och för att papperslösa i båda fallen inkluderas i det sociala arbetets praktik, i alla fall delvis. Studierna bygger främst på intervjuer och dokumentstudier, men även på material från nyhetsmedia samt på forskarens egna erfarenheter. Socialt arbete förstås i studien brett, som en form av stödpraktik snarare än i termer av en profession.

## Medborgarskap som teoretisk ram

Teoretiskt utgår jag från begreppet medborgarskap som i den här studien förstås i en bredare bemärkelse än som en juridisk status. Vanligast är att studera medborgarskap som just en status, alltså något som individen antingen har eller inte har tillgång till. I denna studie analyseras istället medborgarskap som någonting praktiserat eller skapat i ett socialt sammanhang. Forskaren Engin Isin (2002, 2008, 2012) menar att dagens medborgarskap är något som formats och omformats i och med att olika grupper genom historien utmanat rådande former av medborgarskap. Att

vara medborgare innebär därför också att vara med och definiera vilka som inte räknas som medborgare. I min analys använder jag mig av några av Isins begrepp som visar på antingen upprätthållande av det rådande eller utmaningar av status quo. Att vara politisk (*being political*) innebär enligt Isin att man agerar inom ramarna för det rådande och därmed är med och utesluter vissa grupper (främlingar, outsiders) från tillgången till rättigheter. Att bli politisk (*becoming political*) sker i det ögonblick en grupp ifrågasätter denna ordning och därmed avslöjar den godtycklighet som ligger bakom ordningen. Isin är intresserad av de tillfällen då medborgarskapet utmanas och nya förståelser blir till. För att beskriva detta använder Isin begreppet *acts of citizenship*, vilket på svenska kan översättas till medborgarskaphandlingar. Handlingarna förändrar former och uttryck för att vara politisk och skapar nya aktörer som gör anspråk på rättigheter. Det sker därmed ett ”brott” med den tidigare förståelsen av medborgarskap. *Acts*, eller handlingar, skiljs från *action*, som innebär ett bekräftande, eller ”görande”, inom ramarna för den rådande ordningen. Medborgarskaphandlingarna har en etisk dimension, i det att de utförs utifrån en tanke om rättvisa snarare än att de enbart upprätthåller rådande regleringar. För att begreppsliggöra detta skiljer Isin mellan *responsibility*, som innebär ett ansvarstagande som följer etablerade lagar och regelverk, och *answerability*, som innebär att man ”svarar till” rättvisa bortom de ansvarsområden man i vanliga fall har. I och med handlingen kan ansvarsområdet förändras. Vad som förstås som ett gängse ansvarstagande (*responsibility*) vid en tidpunkt kan alltså också komma att förstås annorlunda när människor handlar på ett nytt sätt.

För att bättre förstå de praktiker inom det sociala arbetet som studeras här har jag använt mig av flertalet teoretiker som utvidgar Isins begrepp. Några av dem diskuterar hur nya utrymmen för att handla skapas både i samklang mellan aktivister med och utan medborgarskap och genom vardagliga praktiker i staden (former av urbant medborgarskap). Andra studerar professioners möjligheter att handla politiskt, till exempel utifrån yrkesetiska överväganden.

## Delstudie I: Actions och Acts i lokal policy

I den första delstudien analyserar jag de riktlinjer för ekonomiskt bistånd som infördes i Malmö stad 2013. Papperslösas rätt till ekonomiskt bistånd har tolkats olika i individuella fall och vid tidpunkten för studien fanns inga beslut på nationell nivå i denna fråga. Malmös riktlinjer tydliggör kommunens ansvar att hantera ansökningar från personer som vistas inom kommunens gränser och fastslår att papperslösa har rätt till ett begränsat stöd i den omedelbara nödsituation de befinner sig i. De pekar även på att det är möjligt att utifrån ett barnperspektiv ge barn fullt ekonomiskt bistånd. Stödet till barn går utöver vad kommunen ansågs vara absolut skyldig att göra men är ändå en tolkning som ligger inom ramen för Socialtjänstlagen. Trots detta är det svårt att hitta kommuner som har följt Malmös exempel.

I avhandlingen analyserar jag införandet av Malmö stads riktlinjer utifrån tre former av görande inom ramen för det rådande: *actions of legal confirmation* (bekräftande av lagen), *actions of codification* (kodifiering av praktiken) och *actions of disregard* (förbiseende). I analysen argumenterar jag för att riktlinjerna ansågs vara i linje med den rådande ordningen och att de inte sågs som kontroversiella av lokala beslutsfattare. De ansågs förtydliga vad som redan gällde enligt Socialtjänstlagen, de gav socialsekreterarna något att luta sig mot och de blev inte föremål för någon större politisk debatt. Dock kom riktlinjerna att framställas som avvikande i media (mer som en *act* eller handling) och det fanns en parallell argumentation hos lokala politiker om att man aktivt tog ansvar för utsatta barn. För det sociala arbetets praktik innebar riktlinjerna att papperslösa blev en tydlig målgrupp. Samtidigt uppstod nya frågor för praktiker där individuella bedömningar behövdes. Min tolkning är att detta öppnade upp för en rörelse mellan responsibility och answerability i det vardagliga mötet med papperslösa (något som även kan ses i förhållande till andra utsatta grupper). Ibland skedde gränsdragningar i socialarbetarnas praktik, bland annat mellan gruppen före detta asylsökande och gruppen utsatta EU-medborgare. En tendens att begränsa omfattningen av ekonomiskt bistånd till papperslösa kunde också ses i materialet, dels i relation till ekonomiska argument och dels utifrån den generella utvecklingen mot en mer restriktiv migrationspolitik.

I min analys menar jag samtidigt att riktlinjerna också kan studeras i termer av *acts* eller handlingar, när de sätts i en kontext av andra skeenden. Under den tid då riktlinjerna diskuterades infördes lagar på nationell nivå som utökade tillgången till sociala rättigheter för papperslösa, något som gör att Malmös praktik kan sägas ha "legat i tiden". Dock reglerades inte socialtjänstens ansvar på samma sätt som skola och sjukvård på en nationell nivå och därför kan Malmös lokala riktlinjer ses som ett aktivt ställningstagande. Lokalt fanns också debatter där Malmö lyftes fram som en ansvarstagande och öppen stad av vissa politiker. I Malmö finns det en aktiv befolkning när det gäller frågor som rör migration och många med erfarenhet av att migrera. Detta kan vara en faktor som bidrar till att frågan har blivit extra relevant just där. Papperslösa var närvarande i staden både i det offentliga samtalet och på gator, torg och arbetsplatser. Detta bidrog till att skapa nya utrymmen där rättighetsanspråk kunde framföras. Papperslösa fanns även på välfärdsinstitutioner som t.ex. sjukhus då Region Skåne redan 2008 gav tillgång till sjukvård för papperslösa. Det innebar att välfärdsarbetare kom i kontakt med papperslösa och ibland såg papperslösa som en grupp bland andra tillhörande Malmö. Detta menar jag kan förstås i termer av urbant medborgarskap (om än begränsat och villkorat av risken för utvisning).

## **Delstudie II: Skapande av sociala skyldigheter och rättigheter**

Den andra delstudien rör socialarbetare som mött ensamkommande papperslösa barn under perioden 2010-2013, en period då Sverige fortfarande utvisade barn till andra EU-länder (såsom Malta, Italien och Ungern) enligt Dublinförordningen. Detta var något som kritiserades både av professionella och av politiker under denna tid och som idag har ändrats så att barn inte längre omfattas. Socialarbetarna arbetade som socialsekreterare för ensamkommande barn, som boendestödjare på HVB-hem för ensamkommande eller som gode män. Alla hade engagerat sig utöver vad som förväntats av dem i deras arbetsbeskrivningar i mötet med papperslösa, något som var ett kriterium när jag sökte efter intervjudeltagare.

I analysen visar jag på tre former av handlingar: *acts of professionalism* som baseras på deltagarnas beskrivningar av "professionalitet", *acts of compassion*

baserade på idéer om "medkännande" och *acts of activism* som deltagarna beskrev i termer av "aktivism". Vissa former av stöd fick plats inom ramen för det handlingsutrymme som socialarbetarna upplevde sig ha i det individuella mötet. Detta ser jag som en omförhandling inom rådande ramar, något som liknar de resonemang som fördes när det gäller Malmö riktlinjer. Andra gjorde sådant som de upplevde inte fick plats inom deras arbetsbeskrivningar, till exempel träffade de barnen utanför arbetet och ibland fick något barn som blivit papperslöst hjälp av socialarbetarna att hitta någonstans att ta vägen. Detta arbete skedde alltså på frivillig basis, men samtidigt agerade socialarbetarna inte helt utanför sin roll. De fick kontakt med de papperslösa barnen på sina arbetsplatser och i relationen till barnen var de fortfarande delvis socialarbetare. Tydligt i analysen var att socialarbetarna upplevde att vara "professionell" som att strikt följa regelverk snarare än att arbeta för en aktivt stödjande relation till barnen. Samtidigt fanns uppfattningar i konflikt med denna bild och en önskan om att bli "professionell" på andra sätt. När socialarbetarna handlade till stöd för barnen kunde detta göras genom att öppna nya utrymmen mellan det som upplevdes som "professionellt" och "privat". Socialarbetarna kunde också handla utifrån "medkännande" och då tog de ett steg närmare det "privata". Relationen var central i många intervjuer och det var ofta specifika relationer som fick socialarbetarna att handla på nya sätt som de inte tänkt på förut. Det innebar att det kunde bli godtyckligt vem som fick stöd och inte, eftersom socialarbetarna hade en maktposition och kunde bestämma vem de valde att ge stöd. Samtidigt menar jag att de relationer som skapades genom det sociala arbetet ibland låg till grund för skapandet av nya idéer om tillhörighet. När handlingarna baserades på "aktivism" förklarades de utifrån tankar om en mer rättvis värld snarare än som medkännande för specifika individer och kan därför tolkas mer i linje med termen *answerability*.

Samtidigt överlappade de tre formerna av handlingar varandra och samma socialarbetare kunde beskriva sina handlingar på flera olika sätt. I de fall där socialarbetarna ställde sig på barnens sida trots att detta inte förväntades av dem behövde de aktivt ta ställning för att ge stöd till papperslösa och detta tolkar jag som att de var med och destabiliserade idéer om medborgarskap och idéer om vilka som kan förstås som ett gemensamt ansvar. De papperslösa ensamkommande barn som fick stöd kunde ibland få möjlighet att stanna i Sverige och därmed också tillgång till skola och sjukvård och, i

förlängningen, oftast uppehållstillstånd. Detta skulle, tillsammans med aktivistiska initiativ som lyfte papperslösas rättighetsanspråk kunna ses som att nya grupper gör anspråk på tillhörighet, delvis med hjälp av socialarbetarnas handlingar.

## Slutsatser

Båda delstudierna visar på hur socialtjänstens ansvar diskuteras och omförhandlas i mötet med en grupp som hamnar utanför ramarna. Inom det sociala arbetet sker ständigt förhandlingar och förskjutningar och det är inte självklart att dessa gagnar de personer som möter socialarbetare då nya kategoriseringar och hierarkier uppstår. Ibland beskrev socialarbetarna att de strävade efter rättvisa, men denna strävan kan inte förstås som en gång för alla fastslagen, utan existerade parallellt med idéer om social utsatthet och medömkan. Jag har beskrivit detta i termer av en destabilisering snarare än som ett ”brott” mot den rådande medborgarskapsregimen.

Vad som kan förstås i termer av ”görande” (*actions*) eller handling (*acts*) kan tolkas utifrån vilka konsekvenser socialarbetarnas praktik får. Till exempel verkar Malmös riktlinjer ha möjliggjorts just för att de inte sågs som ”brott” mot det rådande och de blev därför mer stabila än de individuella handlingar som socialarbetarna utförde i delstudie två. Samtidigt stod mer på spel för de socialarbetare som handlade utanför ramarna och på en individuell nivå kunde de ensamkommande barnen få ett mer långtgående stöd. Socialarbetarnas stöd till papperslösa kan också förstås i relation till en närvaro som i sig öppnar upp nya utrymmen för rättighetsanspråk. Migration som fenomen, såväl som nya frågor drivna av sociala rörelser, är med och påverkar både det sociala arbetet och vår förståelse av medborgarskap. I denna process menar jag att själva mötet och de nya rum eller möjligheter som uppstår när socialarbetarna stöter på papperslösa, en grupp som det inte finns tydliga ramar för hur den ska bemötas, kan bana väg för nya sätt att handla.

Den senaste tidens utveckling med en restriktivare migrationspolitik och öppna protester från yrkesverksamma sätter mitt material i delvis nytt ljus. Under perioden 2010-2014 gjordes reformer som gav papperslösa viss tillgång till sociala rättigheter, och de praktiker som jag studerat skulle

kunna förstås som i linje med andra praktiker under denna tid. I förhållande till dagens hårdare politiska diskurser om migration kan Malmös riktlinjer komma att framstå som mer avvikande än hur de förstods när de infördes. I och med en bredare mobilisering av bland annat socialarbetare till stöd för ensamkommande barn kan även praktikerna i delstudie två ses i en kontext av social mobilisering snarare än enbart individuella handlingar. Detta visar på att det är av vikt för analysen i vilken kontext tolkningen görs.

Studien väcker frågor om socialarbetares och välfärdsstatens ansvar. Vad händer med socialarbetares praktiker när de står ansikte mot ansikte med personer som genom migrationspolitiken räknas bort, men som samtidigt kräver ett ansvarstagande här och nu?

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# Destabilising Citizenship Practices?

Social work and undocumented migrants in Sweden

Globalisation of the economy, as well as movement of people and increasing securitisation of borders, have challenged and to different degrees destabilised forms of national belonging and solidarity. Such developments produce new borders and boundaries, separate citizens from non-citizens and create hierarchies of "deservingness". This dissertation analyses if and how social work contributes to the destabilisations as well as to the reinforcements of present citizenship practices in Sweden. Through two case studies, it critically investigates the acts and actions provided by social workers when giving support to undocumented migrants, a group most often excluded from the social services. The book raises questions on the responsibilities of social workers as well as of the welfare state. What happens with social work practice when persons who are excluded from the welfare state through migration policies appear in front of the social workers, requiring social workers to act in ways that they find to be responsible?

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