MIRANDA IMPERIAL

Hospitality and the ethico-political

Collective gestures for welcoming others – critique and possibilities

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What is hospitality? Who is it addressed to? Hospitality aims at welcoming those who arrive; it demands giving space and time and sharing our own resources with others. In view of the current global migration crisis and in the midst of the social debates and a critique of the failure of affluent countries and Western democracies to respond in solidarity to those in need, this article attempts to re-consider the space for hospitality drawing from the ethical and the political as the two fundamental pillars of social architecture. In an effort to discuss collective grassroots reactions to this general lack of hospitality, I address the Catalan social platform Volem Acollir (2017) in their request to the state to open up the borders for the reception of a larger number of migrants. Far from being an individual choice, or an optional political decision, hospitality confronts us with the moral dilemma of the human response to our cultural others.

Introduction

At present, due to the many challenges of mass migration, displacement, and humanitarian crises that assail our societies, hospitality has come to take centre stage in social and political debates within Western democracies and within the world at large. The existence and arrival of migrants escaping war-torn countries such as Syria has put European democracies' actions under acute scrutiny. Citizen collective action has questioned the lack of hospitality shown by governments. At the same time, democratic disenchantment following the 2008 financial crisis has led to the resurgence of ideologically extremist populist parties that have openly addressed and rejected the issue of hospitality, displaying xenophobic sentiments in the name of their nation. Divisions over degrees of hospitality show how different people interpret acting ethically in divergent ways. Different interpretations and cross-cultural variations make defining hospitality a particularly difficult task, as hospitality scholars such as Judith Still (2013) have suggested. The difficulty in defining hospitality is what leads me to explore the tensions between the ethical and the political constraints that delineate its scope in the twenty-first century. We can say hospitality always involves the appearance of host/guest roles, though these are not always fixed and may change dynamically, depending on time and context.

In this article, I propose that defining unconditional hospitality as relative to social movements that have hospitality as their main goal remains a difficult task. I will look at the ethical and political dimensions of unconditional hospitality in the context of a case study: the pro-migrant social platform Volem Acollir in the secularized society of contemporary Catalonia.

Firstly, I will explore how the boundaries between the ethical and political dimensions of hospitality are interpreted in the literature thus far. This happens theoretically in the work of Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Lévinas and Luce Irigaray, but also in practice, via the emergence of human rights advocacy and rhetoric.

This lays the groundwork for my discussion of the case study, Volem Acollir. I will outline to what extent collective action contributes to understandings of hospitality. I hold that social movements, NGOs and transnational organizations have become crucial agents to redefine and bridge the ethico-political divide, embodying a hopefulness for the real, contextual hospitality to get as close as possible to the ideal notion. Politicians, social analysts and engaged citizens know well the difficulties of institutionalizing an ideal ethical hospitality without contestation and criticism. The paradox associated with the message of unconditional hospitality of Volem Acollir and with the utilitarian aims of a nationalist social movement will be explored further along the case study.

In this article, I will outline the main philosophical tenets involved in endorsing a framework of hospitality at a specific regional level, that of Catalonia within Spain. In a collective endeavour in favour of migrants, displaced peoples and asylum-seekers, the most vulnerable and 'expelled'[1] members of our societies, the grassroots movement Volem Acollir appeared in 2017 as a conglomerate of individuals and social organizations demanding that Spain take in more refugees, as it had previously agreed upon with the EU. As an unprecedented initiative in support of practising hospitality and watching for human rights, I will illustrate the tensions arising within the nation state and its citizens, especially those engaged in activism and civic awareness campaigns for social justice.

Thus, methodologically, this article constitutes a theoretical exploration of the concept of hospitality, tracing its conceptualization across time and understanding its status in the present day. My methodology also revolves around the aforementioned case study, Volem Acollir. It is also a work in progress, attempting to situate the development of the field of hospitality studies with the potential to help future researchers position their work across this trajectory. Throughout the article, I incorporate methodological suggestions and theoretical suggestions for future research on hospitality in collective, social movements. To what extent did the Volem Acollir initiative point to the tip of an iceberg of a taboo subject in political discourse following the financial crisis in Spain, and at a time when the Catalan independence movement was engaged in arm wrestling with the state? At present, various forms of secular, deinstitutionalized collective action confront the state in demand for social justice. In an effort to revisit concepts discussed in philosophy, religion, political theory and human rights, this piece of research attempts to shed light on the current understanding of hospitality's relation between Self and Other, host and guest, inclusion and exclusion, within the nation state and what remains outside.

1 Sociologist Saskia Sassen (2004) has reflected upon the logic of expulsion of populations and individuals in her work on the huge inequalities that contemporary global capitalism performs. This expulsion from territories, means of sustenance and basic resources emerge all over the planet due to pressure and the forms of exploitation that an extractive global economy imposes.

Blurred boundaries: towards the ethico-political – Lévinas, Derrida, Irigaray

Emmanuel Lévinas theorises hospitality in *Totality and Infinity* (2011) and identifies it as being elicited by the Other in an 'exorbitant' demand. In his view, it is not a reciprocal set of practices, but involves a demand that the host responds to in a passive manner. Passivity and lack of reciprocity define hospitality for Lévinas. Lévinas finds no initiative taken by the subject, however, he describes an 'infinite responsibility to the other', as Ida Danewid (2017: 1676) synthesises. This is an understanding of hospitality as thoroughly limited, as 'subject to strict and domesticating conditionalities by a sovereign host' (Baker 2009: 109). Unlike Jacques Derrida in his revision of and addition to Lévinas, Lévinas has a narrow vision of hospitality, one where a normative ideal is not pursued, but rather, hospitality in practice as it is in the world, is narrated and observed. With this contribution, the Lithuanian thinker does imbricate a conceptualization beyond a sole conception of hospitality practices in a Self/Other binary. Rather, Lévinas turns to the political, public realm, and introduces a further category to understand hospitality practices: 'the rest of humanity', which he deems 'the third', those people beyond the Self and Other that exist socially in the world.

Derrida comments on what he deems Lévinas's 'treatise on hospitality'. In his view, 'ethics is hospitality' (2001: 17), though he further identifies a political dimension. More than anything, Derrida captures the tension between the ethical and the political in his outlining of the laws of hospitality. For Derrida, unconditional hospitality is the absolute law of hospitality: it has no conditions and it is offered regardless of who the Other is. It is always 'to come', and in the future, and thus, impossible in the present, but it is an important ideal to measure up against conditional hospitality (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000). It thus entertains ethical considerations. Gerasimos Kakoliris addresses Derrida's conditional hospitality as 'the unconditional law through the imposition of terms and conditions (political, juridical, moral)' (Kakoliris 2015: 145). Unconditional hospitality must become conditional in order to present itself and become consequential in its effects in society (Baker 2010). Gideon Baker (2010) posits that the aporia between both laws of hospitality is positive, and conducive to an understanding of ethical notions, as it better 'dictates the boundaries of responsibility'.

Derrida also contemplated political concerns acutely when considering hospitality facing refugees in his works (Derrida 1999). He moved the Kantian question 'outside of juridical limits' (Marci 2013: 191). Thinking about hospitality as coming from the state as a right is not enough. The hospitality of rights and laws, subject to power and control as sovereign mastery and its implications, must always come after his idea of absolute or unconditional hospitality. Derrida's political interest in hospitality had a wide, transnational scope and was always critical[2] and wary of the restrictions imposed by the state on a global scale.

Concerns with the Self and the Other, on their interaction, on who constitutes them and why, appear as political concerns in hospitality thinking. Following Derrida, conditional hospitality, politically defined, may well depend on particular selves and others to actually materialize. For example, in the case of migrants from a non-Western

2 As it is well known, Derrida (2005) protested the fact that under French law hospitality offered to the *sans papiers*, or illegal migrants, was a crime.

country, who might not be accepted, or on the contrary, homosexual asylum seekers or Christians pursued for their faith who may find a space in the host society. Conditional hospitality depends on who you are and where you come from, and your reasons for deserving or demanding hospitality.

Having established that the Self and Other are inherently political categories, I turn to Luce Irigaray and her theory on hospitality. She goes further in presenting hospitality as more than an exchange from one to another and complicates distinctions between the Self and Other. Irigaray has been for many years one of the leading feminist philosophers, breaking ground in many areas from linguistics to psychoanalysis, engaging with phenomenology and ethics, with political thought, democracy and human rights, and opening up to spirituality, the Eastern traditions, yoga and ideas on breathing, embodiment and environmentalism. Her recent work on issues such as the importance of the green world and 'plant thinking' and on being born, exhibit the dynamism of a profound thinker whose rich epistemological, ontological, semiotic and aesthetic background allow for crucial insights to study the huge changes produced between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In brief, Irigaray 'constructs' worlds in which we dwell, discuss and where we collaboratively imagine better living conditions for women and for the planet. In her fruitful career, of five decades devoted to research on women and feminism in its myriad forms, Irigaray has offered a rigorous critique of the institution of patriarchy and promoted an open dialogue and debate on issues ranging from sexual difference, subjectivities, ethics, relationality, democracy, spirituality, Western and Eastern traditions, creativity, being born and most recently, climate change.[3] Her fundamental contribution to the history of ideas and on thinking through (strategic) essentialism, social justice and outlining 'a sketch of a possible felicity in history' have articulated some of the most compelling issues concerning the individual in the midst of a relational atmosphere and world.

It is along the line of interrelationality, and dependent upon the core question of sexual difference that I would like to demonstrate how with Irigaray's ideas on the encounter and relation with the other we can ground the conditions for hospitality at present. Which are the conditions of possibility for hospitality and its current transformations to take place in the midst of current humanitarian crises?

Irigaray founded her theorization of ethics and the encounter with the Other upon the bedrock of her crucial thesis on sexual difference, the *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985, published in French in 1974). Originally, her research was dedicated to a radical critique of phallogocentric discourse. She has progressively aimed to define the values necessary to ensure the autonomy of the female subject, and in recent years to set up the conditions for a culture and coexistence between different subjects, of which the most salient features are precisely those defining the man–woman relationship. Irigaray analyses in depth the issue of gender differences as a crucial factor to achieve a true multiculturalism. In her view, a full understanding of the differences between men and women is the fundamental basis for accepting others, to make possible an inclusive globalization

3 Irigaray has just published her latest article 'How could we rescue the world today?' in a special issue of a journal *Environmental Philosophy* devoted to 'climate change and the task of thinking' (Irigaray 2020).

respectful of individual subjectivities and cultures. Through major changes, she aims at achieving a more just and happy future for humanity. This future can only be envisioned with recourse to a new relationship with the other nurtured by a reciprocal respect for differences. At the base of all this, there is a culture of two subjects, male and female, bearers of different values, but of equal importance for the development of private and social bonds both in the domestic space and the world at large:

> Working for the liberation or construction of a feminine subjectivity and a culture of two subjects, we are really working towards the liberation of humanity itself, and towards another time of our becoming as humans. Such a task is especially appropriate in a multicultural era as is ours if we intend to reach a pacific and democratic global society and culture. (Irigaray 2004: xv)

Irigaray argues for a new ethical dynamic between two, a site of imagination and cultivation of an ability to love. Both actors meet 'in response', to co-respond in cooperation. This is a unique and novel elaboration that challenges the way we understand the ethics of response and responsibility, inaugurating a genuine ethics of two. Her focus on the creation of the space between is amply addressed in her book *I Love to You* (1996) and specifically in the usage of the preposition 'to'. In French (Irigaray's native language, and in which the book was originally published), the 'you' (direct object of the subject I) precedes the verb 'love', so that the other (you) is 'spatially "assimilated" between the subject and his/her action' (Irigaray 1996: 102). The 'you', when positioned in this way, becomes the object of the subject 'I'. The use of the preposition 'to' in the expression 'I love to you' separates the 'you' from the action of the 'I', and is 'intended to suggest a movement towards the other subject rather than the constitution of this latter by the action of the I' (*ibid.* p. 102).

In the use of the preposition 'to', there is no ordering, no mandate or request. There is no transformation of the other into my property, no confusion of the other with what is mine. As she puts it:

> I love to you means I maintain a relation of indirection to you. I do not subjugate you or consume you. I respect you (as irreducible). I hail you: in you I hail. I praise you: in you I praise. I give you thanks: to you I give thanks for…I bless you…I speak to you, not just about something: rather I speak to you. I tell you, not so much this or that, but rather I tell to you… The 'to' maintains intransitivity between persons, between the interpersonal question, speech or gift: I speak to you, I ask of you, I give to you. (Irigaray 1996: 109)

Clearly, it is the 'to' that opens up a space in which we can fully listen and be present to that other. Right in that 'act', the other is recognized as other. The crucial creation of this space makes room for difference, and for sharing and listening. There is yet another necessary step if we are to experience personal or collective transformation: we must return to the self. Irigaray holds that in order to have the kind of respectful and balanced relationship with the other, there must first be a return to the self. In this return to the self, we assess our interconnections with the other, and consistently, these ask us to re-evaluate the way we view the world and the values and principles that guide our lives. In this constant

exchange of moving outward toward the other and the constant returning to the self, there is 'a rhythmic becoming … [a] return to the self so as to move again toward the other' (Irigaray 1993: 38). Just as the relationship between self and other is constantly moving, never stagnant, so, too is the mindful relationship between self and Self, that is, between the 'who' we each believe ourselves to be and the who we become as the result of our interactions with the other.

From this moment of mutual recognition to the idea of welcoming the other in hospitality there is a small step. In Irigaray's view, 'Welcoming requires an availability for that which has not yet occurred, an ability and a wanting to open ourselves to the unknown, to that which is still unfamiliar to us, and in a sense, will always remain unfamiliar' (Irigaray 2008: 18). The relationship that might arise begins with silence and openness to the unknown and unfamiliar. As Danielle Poe puts it, '[T]he integrity of our relationship depends on preserving space for the other to always reveal herself or himself in new ways and to always be more than what I can fully know, understand or control' (Poe 2013: 65).

Irigaray distinguishes between welcoming and practising true hospitality, 'If our hospitality confines itself to offering a place or a room for guests, it is because we are not yet able to do better' (2008: 21). This predetermined form in which we offer our guest to provide for her needs at a space and during an amount of time we have fixed prior to our encounter, is far from true hospitality. The latter occurs when we are open to all that might occur and abandon any desire for mastery and control of the situation. We should be attentive listeners and tolerate silence and uncertainty.

Irigaray contemplates the encounter with the other from a different culture, and alerts us to be ready to dwell in possibility:[4]

> To open a place for the other, for a world different from ours, from the inside of our tradition, is the first and the most difficult multicultural gesture. Meeting the stranger outside of our own boundaries is rather easy, and even satisfies our aspirations, as long as we can return home and appropriate between ourselves what we have in this way discovered. To be forced to limit and change our home, or our way of being at home, is much more difficult, especially without being unfaithful to ourselves. (Irigaray 2008: 133)

This multicultural gesture allows us to go into a new cultural experience open to new forms of communicating, building relationships and exchanging. In her view, women and men should favour the creation of a space beyond the limits of their own. Hospitality entails an allocation of freedom and an endorsement of sharing amidst differences. It is this action of welcoming that 'returns' us to ourselves, and, in turn, creates and defines the composition of the self: 'Only this gesture gives back to each one his or her own self in its entirety – with its own borders, world and horizon' (Irigaray 2008: 50). This is explicative of the fact that, in Irigaray's elaboration, everything occurs in relationality, with three categories, 'that

4 'Dwell in possibility' resonates with Emily Dickinson's poetry. 'I Dwell in Possibility' is one of the best-known poems by the Poet of Amherst, in which she speaks of the greatness of creativity and observation. The limitless powers of poetry in capturing the myriad forms of nature and life bring the poet much joy. Both Dickinson and Irigaray, in their work, elaborate on how language, nature and spirit go hand in hand and can never be split apart.

of the environing world, that of the other, and my own' (*ibid.* p. 90). Co-belonging to the same world, 'a world that is already there' (*ibid.* p. 124) is an important consideration that must shape how we approach hospitality.

In practices of hospitality, the self will always, necessarily be transformed through and after the encounter with the other. This goes both ways (from Self to Other and vice versa). Citing Irigaray, in spaces for encounter, 'I cannot foresee, for all that, how the other will modify my existence – my already have been – and thus my future – the development of my life' (Irigaray 2008: 93). This emphasizes the importance of taking an active role in hospitality and in the act of welcoming – quite a different understanding from Lévinas's remarked passivity in the role of the subject. For Irigaray, Judith Still suggests, this entails 'modifying our way of thinking and acting, instead of expecting the other to become like us in the logic of sameness that has ruled Western culture for centuries' (Still 2012: 50). Irigaray posits hospitality as going further than a sole ethical concern and an answer to the requirements of the other. Rather, an 'intimate sharing in difference, made possible by the cultivation of self-affection by both subjects' (Still 2012: 50) is what makes it possible.

Irigaray's theory of hospitality is clearly more radical than prior ideas, as it goes beyond Lévinas and Derrida in many ways, particularly in describing the encounter between Self and Other and questioning the boundaries between an inner and a social self. More traditional understandings of hospitality assume a degree of superiority on the part of the self, verging on patronizing paternalism, and do not reflect the changes and dynamism that the 'encounter' brings to those involved and the world around them. As Still puts it, in Lévinas and Derrida's theory, 'you can offer something to somebody because you are richer and more generous than the other, without having the sense that you must be changed by the other' (Still 2012: 49). Irigaray indeed openly critiques the traditional notion of hospitality and claims there is more to welcoming others in hospitality practices than understanding this as 'some political-cultural paternalism or materialism, some social idealism or ideology, some religious or moral commandment' (Irigaray 2008: 22). Irigaray's flexible relational system of exchange allows for a non-hierarchical understanding of hospitality, making room for differences and enriching experiences of transformation.

Social dynamics and Volem Acollir: marching for hospitality

Different points of view and experiences shape hospitality and are shaped by it. Hospitality in practice is a crucial and demanding aspect in modern societies. It involves a dynamic process of becoming, which is not only based on demand, and should be understood as transactional. Judith Butler concurs with Irigaray. In her recent thinking on assembly (Butler 2016b), she observes the encounters where bodies gather in protest or in the expression of collective grief, their interdependency. She explains how these activities, at a global level, display a principle which marks that we share a world. In her view, the ethical and the political are not realities apart, so 'the obligation to extend equality beyond our limited national and linguistic field' is a must (Butler 2016a). Thinking about the limits of hospitality is a pressing question which urges that there is a step that goes beyond simply accepting migrant communities. This should lead us to reflect upon how not only they but also we are transformed in this interaction.

New developments on hospitality address issues as important as those which define liveable lives (Butler 2016b). This is crucial because of the growing migrant crisis with asylum seekers seeking refuge from war-torn countries, poverty and natural disasters. In an international context, there is a 'growing magnitude of globalization and migration, phenomena which define the ways in which "outsiders" relate to each other in many contemporary societies' (Marci 2013: 180). The current crisis of the nation state together with the increase in global mobility exacerbates the problem of immigration. As Nina Perkowski puts it, 'increasingly, the Mediterranean has come to be viewed and spoken about as a space of humanitarian intervention, a space of life as much as death' (Perkowski 2016: 331). Enduring collective imaginaries upheld by intrinsic, popular ideas of ethnic nationalism (Smith 2013) and self-determination, coming from liberal democratic theory, lead human beings to affirm that we belong to a specific place when we share a territory, a language, culture and common ancestors. This rhetoric emphasizes commonality and difference in a stark contrast. The common dweller (national citizen, as host) vs. the refugee (migrant, as needing hospitality) are roles enforced violently in symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Volem Acollir, Catalan nationalism and its discontents

In 2017 the slogan 'Volem Acollir: Casa Nostra, Casa Vostra'[5] was the main motto in the huge demonstration that took place on 17 February 2017 in Barcelona when the opening of the Spanish borders for the reception of a larger number of immigrants was requested. At that point, protesters urged the Spanish government to take in more refugees. The slogan Volem Acollir ('We want to welcome them') and the marches and demonstrations in the city denounced Spain for having fallen short of meeting the target of the EU agreed-upon quota of 16,000 asylum seekers in 2015, as a response to the large migration crisis due mostly to the war in Syria. That was a critical moment for the perception of politics and hospitality by the collective of citizens. In the wake of the financial crisis, a large number of people realized how the world is only global for the circulation of capital, goods, etc. but unfortunately not for human beings.

The movement sought to express staunch criticism of the Spanish government's inactivity. There were responses by former members of the Catalan government saying they were trying to do as much as possible (Baquero 2017). However, this important activist protest was directed against the Spanish state and not against the regional government, with Catalan mayors calling for people to attend the protest (El Periódico 2017). There was an article published on the same day to extend activism beyond the streets by the main organizer Ruben Wagensberg, the President of Omnium Cultural (a pro-Catalan cultural association) Jordi Cuixart, and Oscar Camps, head and founder of Proactiva Open Arms (a Spanish NGO for the search and rescue of migrants in

5 An important source of inspiration for the Volem Acollir platform is the song by singer-songwriter Sisa, 'Qualsevol nit pot sortir el sol', composed back in 1975, at the end of the dictatorship in Spain. Some of the lyrics of this song read thus; 'Be welcome, please come in, come in, our home is your home, if we can speak of anybody's houses'. These lyrics have become very popular. In the 1990s the song accompanied collective citizens' actions to re-appropriate the public space.

the Mediterranean). The article outlined the Spanish state's response to the migrant crisis, receiving only a total of 898 refugees. It was an urgent call to everyone and argued it was everyone's responsibility to find a solution for so many immigrants in dire need. Each and every one in the audience could do more. The article highlighted the importance of joining the march to generate attention to this and spark off similar movements around the continent. Slogans like 'Catalonia, land of reception' and 'Casa nostra, casa vostra' were chanted in the streets and went viral on social networks. This platform did not produce a manifesto or collective written statement establishing any political position. If we apply a critical discourse analysis methodology to highlight major elements for further debate, we should focus on: aspects of futurity in the slogans (Volem Acollir is in itself in the Catalan language a project for the coming future); the repetition of this goal in the name of the platform (VA); the blurred differentiation between the pronouns 'nostra … vostra', always in the plural, replicating similarities rather than differences; and the repetition of 'Catalonia' and 'Catalans'. This bespeaks the nationalist sentiment distinguishing Catalonia (a potentially independent country) from Spain, granting them an 'exceptional' status: Catalonian pro-independence leaders see themselves as oppressed, just like the migrants and disenfranchised who simply 'do not belong' and are looked down upon as second-class citizens.

Volem Acollir is an instance of the pursuit of the ideal of unconditional hospitality invoked by Derrida within citizen collective action. Protesters and organizers alike remind us of the ethics of unconditional hospitality and urge governments to act politically to solve the enduring crises that strike and kill thousands at the edges of Fortress Europe. Their main plight is directed to the state, urging it to act in a time of need. The movement faces the refugee crisis with a framing where the state is lacking in hospitality, where a lack of response to the crisis is neither ethically sound nor showing responsibility and commitment to a better world. Volem Acollir shows the critical activity of a heterogeneous grassroots collective vis-à-vis hospitality practices. Despite Lévinas's argument, it may seem that not all hospitality involves passivity on behalf of the host. What is intended within the parameters of hospitality as theorized by Lévinas, is that the condition of the Other is provisional. Tito Marci (2013) has outlined how thinking around hospitality in the context of the refugee crisis has often erred on collating hospitality practices with a theory of exchange that is capitalist and seeks to find value in the process. In his view, the creation of tangible exchange and value are the only reason for this 'transaction'. I believe Volem Acollir is a good instance of collective action that goes beyond this view of hospitality as exchange. Luce Irigaray's idea of the porosity of borders between Self and Other is also useful, and states that the other reveals to us 'a part … of our truth' in 'welcome(ing) the other as other without intending to dominate, to colonize, or to integrate this other into our past' (Irigaray 2008: 132). The truth and new understandings that emerge in sites of encounter and return offer creative possibilities that would never take place without hospitality, as they,

> can open up a path towards an elaboration of another cultural era, because this other exists outside of our own horizon and because their values and logic are not the same as those of our tradition. It is because the other belongs to another world, and insofar

> as they remain faithful to it, that the other offers us a chance for a future. (Irigaray 2008: 132)

Volem Acollir re-embeds notions of unconditional hospitality into political action and thinking. One of the questions one might raise is whether in a world where the nation state is paramount we can define the ideal of hospitality within its framework. Roxanne Lynn Doty has worked on this, venturing that we must 'eschew this realm', the 'political realm, especially the international political realm where borders and divisions of humanity predominate' (Doty 2015: 56). She argues that unconditional hospitality is 'impossible if we look for it in the realms of policy, law, and sovereign state edicts' (*ibid.* p. 46), as implementing it is doomed to failure. For her, the only way unconditional hospitality can be sought after properly is through collective action. She shows this through her example of pro-immigration groups in the United States. In her work, she emphasizes Derrida's unconditional hospitality and how it always remains 'to come' – as a promise, in the future (Doty 2015: 53). In the case study of Volem Acollir, the state deems it necessary to distance itself even from this collective expression of hospitality, with the words of then Deputy Prime Minister of Spain Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría – 'an autonomous community wants to be the solution to the problem, and this cannot be' (La Información 2016). Here, the state shows its disdain for initiatives that are seen as unproductive and evinces the territorial tensions between Catalonia and the central government.

In any event, without the state's help and support as the organizer of society, this popular request for hospitality seems unfeasible. The onus is mainly on the state to act, and this movement itself enshrines the quandary that thinking about hospitality must face. Criticisms on Fortress Europe reinforce the strong identification of us vs. them, of the self vs. the other. European nation-state governments, such as the Spanish government in this case, are receiving criticism from a polarity of ends: from those who think it is not doing enough (such as Volem Acollir), or doing too much (such as xenophobic populist parties, like Vox[6]). However, they continue to enshrine a very identitarian notion of hospitality, of Self vs. Others, and a hospitality that has a duty to do good within the current political climate. Clearly, hospitality has yet to be understood dynamically in a social landscape which has been transformed by transnational flows, movements and grassroots activism.

We must also take into account the vested interests of the movement in terms of its involvement with pro-Catalonian independence supporters who want to debunk the Spanish state for their own political goals. At present, the most prominent voices within the movement are those of politicians and Catalan pro-independence people. As Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis contend, 'those concerned about the use of categories to marginalize and exclude should explicitly engage with the politics of bounding, … the process by which categories are constructed, the purpose they serve and their consequences, in order to denaturalize their use as a mechanism to distinguish, divide and

6 Vox is a Spanish right-wing, populist political party founded back in 2013. In the 2019 general election, Vox obtained over 10% of the vote, gaining 24 Deputies and entering Parliament for the first time in its history. Vox also obtained three members in the European Parliament elections who joined the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe.

discriminate' (Crawley and Skleparis 2018: 48). Engaged citizens should call for an open pedagogy, learning together as well as acting. Education is a must to understand the dynamism in most normatively good hospitality practices.

At the same time, however, the brief description of what happened throughout the Volem Acollir march displays that hospitality is one of the crucial topics of analytical interest due to the main aims of the movement. The denouncement of the Spanish state's actions vis-à-vis refugees and displaced persons, in effect, the authorities' lack of hospitality, is the crux of the protest. Because of this and due to Volem Acollir's relationship with Catalan nationalist organizations, there is a need to embed the notion of hospitality into research on nationalism, and, more specifically, within the trajectory that Catalan nationalism has followed in pursuit of its interests. The significant lack of embedding of understandings of hospitality within nationalism in academia calls for a re-evaluation of the acceptance or rejection of national categories of different kinds of citizens. At first glance, it seems like Volem Acollir presents an iteration of a nationalist movement that is welcoming and hospitable of refugees.

There are several reasons stemming from trends in nationalism research that point to the exceptionalism of Volem Acollir as the product of a nationalist movement. Research spearheaded by nationalism scholars such as Siniša Malešević, in fact, identifies a 'recent dramatic rise of "nativist," "populist" and various "identitarian" movements' (Malešević 2019: 5). These movements are described as extreme right-wing, xenophobic and ethnicist, as unwelcoming of others and thus, displaying hostility and inhospitality towards others. He argues that nationalism is so pervasive in this form since it has prior stable foundations in modern society. For Malešević, it is grounded in micro-level interactions in the private sphere, as well as imbricated in the social fabric of the public sector and legitimised by the existing bureaucracy of the state (*ibid.* pp. 54–69). The view that extreme right, ethnicist nationalism is widespread in the present-day is seconded by Bart Bonikowski (2017). In his view, the recent 'sense of collective status threat among national ethnocultural majorities' (*ibid.* p. 182) is responsible for this. The form of radical politics that most visible present-day versions of nationalism have acquired threatens the future of 'inter-group relations' and between democratic organizations. This risk overshadows basic conditions of inter-group coexistence, such as tolerance and respect, and, for this reason, poses an acute danger to the notion and practices of hospitality. In contrast to this, Volem Acollir, as part of Catalan nationalist activism, presents an entirely different picture. As aforementioned, Volem Acollir as a march demonstrates a collective expression of unconditional hospitality by a large group of protesters. At the same time, Volem Acollir was planned and supported by some of the most prominent figures in Catalan independence activism (such as Jordi Cuixart). This depicts an entirely different relationship between nationalism and hospitality from recent ethnicist movements in countries like the UK and the USA. In the UK, pushes towards an isolationist and anti-immigration rhetoric have driven the campaign for Brexit (from the likes of Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson). They have also been exemplified in Donald Trump's proclamation of his intention to build a wall to stop immigration into the US.

As we have established, the Catalan independence movement through Volem Acollir has framed hospitality as one of the

core tenets of its nationalist plight, unlike other nationalist movements. Does this make Volem Acollir a hospitable movement due to its embracing of hospitality compared to nationalism, overall, today? And what can the inclusion of a scholarly depiction of hospitality bring to studies of nationalism? I argue that it is of paramount importance to look closely at Catalonian independence's trajectory as a movement of nationalism, and any precedents of hospitality practices that may exist within that. The lack of an ethnicist, 'inhospitable' reaction from Catalan nationalism might fall in line with Hans Kohn's 'civic' nationalism category, distinguished against other varieties of 'ethnic' nationalism (Kohn and Calhoun 2017). For Kohn civic nationalism appeared in the West where states emerged as liberal political communities promising to uphold the rights of their community. These represent nations where anyone promising to adhere to their values and principles would be accepted. It thus constitutes the 'political' nation, where members follow the same code of conduct to coexist in society, thus willing a common future. On the other hand, countries developing from past absolutist monarchies present a much stronger commitment to the nation. Here, engagement with national identities supersedes all other identities and obligations, and can result in dangerous, inflamed passions such as xenophobia. Kohn's distinction has been extensively questioned and criticised by researchers, who take issue most with associations of civic to good and of good to Western nations (Vincent 1997: 294). Yael Tamir argues that, by representing themselves as civic, 'Western democracies pretend to be more peaceful and inclusive than they really are, fostering a self-image that allows them to exonerate themselves' (Tamir 2019: 431). This can be further shown in the field of development, as well as gender studies, where homonationalism studies have exposed Western nations' presumptions of liberalism and human rights while mistreating LGBT asylum seekers (Puar 2008; Mepschen *et al.* 2010; Fassin and Salcedo 2015).

The existence of this distinction in nationalism studies without any acknowledgment of hospitality norms and best practices, be they in the private or public domain, is in itself problematic. However, the criticism several scholars have directed at the track record of 'liberal' Western democracies' moral actions proves that thinking about hospitality in nationalist contexts is important in order to assess the connection between movements' values and their behaviours in practice. Despite the controversy associated with Kohn's civic and ethnic distinction, many present-day scholars continue to employ it to judge nationalist movements. In fact, scholars like Daniele Conversi (2000) have argued that Catalan nationalism is a paramount example of civic, inclusive nationalism. Ultimately, as Volem Acollir branches out of Catalan nationalism's activism, the conclusions it brings for considering hospitality within nationalist ideals must be assessed alongside any further considerations of hospitality held by the Catalan movement as a whole. Academics researching within the domain of Catalan nationalism have discussed the claims of Catalan nationalism in the context of meaning-making. Kathryn Crameri, in particular, poses an important question that leads me to consider important issues dealing with motivation: whether Catalan independence's desire to exercise counterpower at this point in history is really an attempt to seize power in the form of a Catalan state or, fundamentally, a protest against the way power is being exercised by the Spanish

state (Crameri 2015: 108). Like Montserrat Guibernau (2004), Crameri speculates on Catalan nationalism's framing as a movement, and questions whether its messaging deals with its end goals or with an oppositional logic, charging against the Spanish state.

These insights once again add further layers of depth to our consideration of hospitality as the main goal of Volem Acollir. The point of Volem Acollir is a hospitable principle. However, its relationship with Catalan nationalism and its goals immediately means that the goal of hospitality is displaced and eclipsed by the goals of Catalan nationalism that have inherently shaped this movement. Concretely, Catalan nationalism's keenness to attract international support to the movement on the basis of exemplary 'civic' behaviour as opposed to other nationalist movements (e.g. through denouncing the Spanish state to Amnesty International on several occasions) is an example of this. Other arguments, such as Brandon Boylan's focus on the economic reasons behind the pro-independence movement, further put into question the veracity of Volem Acollir's unconditional hospitality. He argues that 'independence aspirations are not only a function of cultural identity but also taxation considerations' (Boylan 2015: 762) and he finds both that support for Catalonia to attain its own fiscal policy is significantly associated with ideas of Catalan self-determination (*ibid.* p. 774). Boylan argues that concerns over accumulating private property in this sense, and a misallocation of funds by Spain, mean that support for Catalonian independence relies on perceiving an unjust distribution of wealth. This point in itself gives importance to the issues surrounding hospitable practices in the Catalan movement. When coupled with the lack of autonomy of Volem Acollir beyond this protest, in the absence of further renewed campaigning, it calls for further academic attention to hospitality in nationalism. Further research around this topic, tracing hospitality in the aforesaid movements across the years, must enquire whether nationalist movements' campaigning is sustained around hospitality best practices or whether these are picked up in utilitarian ways to fulfil other aims upheld by the movements.

Hospitality and the state

Volem Acollir, as a social platform, shows a key fact about hospitality. Hospitality is always beyond the individual; it should be understood as a collective endeavour. It is clearly a moral concept, and this project calls for it to examine its current political significance. Whereas states impose boundaries and borders, hospitality is about welcoming in. Within an increasingly globalised economy, borders become porous for the privileged ones. I consider hospitality to be an important concept that could tell us more about where the ethical and the political converge. It is certainly a useful concept around which to establish policy making. More than just individual ethics and morality, the idea of hospitality must be espoused at a collective level in a process of collective becoming into an expression of the ideals we, as a society, find legitimate and worthy of being promoted and pursued. This notion follows Irigaray's theorization of hospitality where the public domain, as well as the private, is thoroughly involved in a new process of becoming where respect and tolerance for differences, that will always endure between discrete human bodies, are reached.

At the same time, leading with hospitality as an overtly established norm may not be intentional and may have further motivations and caveats than an initial analysis

might indicate, as shown by Volem Acollir's nationalist ties. Though matters of hospitality in nationalism continue to prove difficult, I have ventured an analysis of hospitality as embedded within nationalist social movements, something that has not been compellingly discussed in research thus far. The caveats to unconditional hospitality exhibited by the Volem Acollir protest relate to Pheng Cheah's view that thinking of hospitality as a right positions it too close to power (Cheah 2013). For this reason, hospitality as a right implies a duty on the part of some entity to offer it. The giver of hospitality is in a position of strength vis-à-vis the receiver in terms of ability and capacity as well as the willingness to give. It also entails a violence because it involves exclusion, policing and monitoring. This important caveat to Irigaray's utopian vision of respect and hospitality on offer for difference is exemplified well within this article's case study. Volem Acollir was short-lived and thus, did not follow Irigaray's ideal, where openness to anything that might occur instantiates a true sentiment of hospitality. The uncertainty surrounding the aims of the movement in connection to a nationalist movement in need of support against a pre-existing nation state further complicates this entanglement.

Conclusions

Throughout this article, with a special emphasis on the ethical and the political, I have attempted to show how the dynamics of collectivities like grassroots activism and nationalist assemblages both coalesce and diverge in an interpretation of hospitality best practices. Volem Acollir as a social platform exhibits and promotes ideas of hospitality together with radical contentious action against the state in the form of organized protest, social media mobilization and activist networking. Drawing upon notions of ethical behaviour and hospitality, this collective action has come to embody principles based on how civic citizenship should respond to others ethically. The relationship with the other, thus, comes to be a matter beyond the individual, it shows the 'burden' of responsibility and duty placed on every citizen's shoulders. It is clearly a matter that goes beyond the private sphere, entering the public sphere of governmental decision-making. This line of thought follows my interpretation of Irigaray's theory on hospitality. Irigaray depicts bodies as inherently different from one another, but envisions a future where a reciprocal respect for difference is laid out from the outset to reach a relationship of hospitality and acceptance.

At the same time however, motivations behind collective mobilization in the public realm for unconditional hospitality raise analytical concerns due to links and associations between movements. The issues concerning Volem Acollir's provenance, lack of momentum beyond the one protest and associations question the offer of unconditional hospitality. Even with this paradox, associating hospitality with the dynamics of nationalist movements remains an area of interest for the scholarly community and is worthy of further research. The understanding of identity and belonging in nationalist movements holds a relationship with hospitality and ethical and moral behaviours, and Volem Acollir as a case study is beginning to touch upon these important dynamics that underpin the organization of our democracies.

Picking up on previous views, the ethical, the philosophical and the political delineate a crucial critical moment for offering responses to the challenge of displaced populations who no longer have a home or a land of belonging. Hospitality becomes urgent when so many lives are at

risk. Throughout this article, I have traced the progressive questioning of the division between Self and Other – aware that the other is precisely 'constitutive' of one-self – and the transformative possibilities that creating a space for welcoming others bring about for our societies. ■

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