



# Master thesis

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## Civil Society action for an *integrated Nordic Region*

How the Nordic *Vision 2030* positions the Nordic  
Council of Ministers and Civil Society in a dynamic of  
reliance

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## Abstract

Title: Civil Society action for *an integrated* Nordic Region: How the Nordic *Vision 2030* positions the Nordic Council of Ministers and Civil Society in a dynamic of reliance

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This thesis addresses the relationship between civil society and the Nordic Council Ministers (NCM) within the frame of the Nordic Vision 2030 to become “the most integrated and sustainable region of the world”. It reviews civil society's role in Vision 2030's social sustainability objectives by focusing on integration and social challenge response. As the analysis discovers a dynamic of interdependence between Civil society and the Nordic Council of Ministers, it observes how the NCM attempts to encourage Civil Society action by promoting shared values of a collective “Nordic Identity” and inviting them into policy conversation. The results are drawn qualitatively from policy papers and audio-visual panel discussions of the NCM and Civil Society by following a mixed method of thematic and content analysis. This study concludes that civil society is value-driven and eager to engage in social challenges and participate in policy changes. However, decisions on integration policies are a matter of nations, not the NCM, despite the Nordic Cooperation, which limits their agency to include civil society in policy work. This study contributes to the awareness of civil society being a source of empirical best practices, which has the potential to influence integration policies sustainably.

*Keywords:* Civil Society, Nordic Council of Ministers, Integration, Social Sustainability, Nordic Identity

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## Introduction

“The Nordic Region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world”

- Our Vision 2030, Nordic Council of Minister

The shared Nordic Welfare Model is a symbiosis of maximized social security implemented in economic growth that flourishes society's development. The Nordic system developed on a foundation of societal principles, which enabled a common ground for the Nordic cooperation that companions the Nordic countries for over 60 years. This cooperation functioned due to public communality and efforts of civil societies to work closely with issues they encountered. Social trust and shared values carried the cohesion of the sectors working towards a common vision. This cohesion in shared action has been challenged and created disharmony in the governmental cooperation of the Nordics. Communication difficulties and disharmony in strategies disrupted the Nordic's cooperation in the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The disruption of free movement and mobility was the opposite of an “integrated region” as the nordic *Our Vision 2030* (here Vision 2030) aims to be, creating uncertainty in the cooperation's sustainable sincereness. In an effort to recover from the events in 2020, the Nordic Council of Ministers redesigned the cooperation image, which unifies the countries once again in the eye of societal challenges. Becoming “the most sustainable and integrated region of the world by 2030” is the Nordic Vision inspired by the UN Sustainability Development Goals. With 12 Objectives, the Nordic cooperation created Green, Competitive and Socially sustainable priority areas to fulfil the Vision's goal. Social cohesion lies in the “integrated” part of the Vision by rebuilding the pillars of social principles that all Nordic countries can identify with: “For the Nordic Region, integration primarily means a shared Nordic identity, a cohesive societies of same values, and mobility and freedom of movement within the region”. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021a, p. 4) But why is rebuilding a collective identity important for the Vision 2030 fulfilment? Emphasising Sameness through values can be interpreted as an attempt to strengthen social trust by creating a collective with which citizens and civil society can identify with. In that case, it could be questioned to what extent societal action is related to the Vision's fulfilment.

The Nordic Council of Ministers identified priority areas according to the countries' challenges in the past years. Next to environmental goals are education, labour market upskilling, culture, and knowledge exchange, also at the Vision's core. Although all objectives aim to support sustainable development for each individual in society, objectives 11 and 12 address the direct involvement of civil society in working close to the individual, aiming

for social cohesion. The objectives speak of “greater participation” and “louder voices” of young people and civil society in the Nordic cooperation. Further goals are to “maintain trust” and emphasise shared values on culture, inclusion, and non-discrimination for the “cohesion” in the “Nordic community” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020, pp. 23–24). Creating a Nordic community plays into the field of individuals identifying with the community’s (or group's) values. The Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner says that this is a process of categorisation, comparison and identification, ultimately leading to humans acting according to community values. However, is the identification with Vision 2030 enough to mobilise civil societies for the Nordic cooperation interests?

The political strategy to address the socio-psychological layer of collective identity suggests the need for the agreeance of the civilians in Vision 2030, especially those active in civil society organizations. Policy documents of the Nordic Council of Ministers acknowledge the influential relevancy of civil society in social challenges, especially those targeting interactions of individuals. The development of the Ukrainian war since 2022 put civil society in immediate action once again, as they had at the pandemic's peak. Conversations on Integration policies were opened between the Nordic Council of Ministers and Civil society to enhance the integration strategies in Nordic comparison. Integration policy is one area that has been navigated by the countries individually, though it has an impact on the shared labour market and common welfare system. Simultaneously, integration is a process close to the individuals migrating for various reasons, where social, psychological and inclusion of societal participation need to be considered. Paul Ricoeur's Narrative Identity Theory suggests that every person and social group carries a narrative that influences further interactions with new encounters. A perspective that matters equally for the migrating social group but also for the social groups they encounter, like the new society. Exchanges in conferences and panel discussions spread awareness of these layers and deliver qualitative knowledge from the experiences of civil society working with several social groups. This raises the questioning hypothesis: Elevating civil society’s engagement in policy processes might have the potential for governance strategies which are based of empirical best practices. The involvement of civil society in questions of migration integration and social cohesion in the Nordic Council of Ministers enclosers the question of the agency and structure in mobilisation towards the region's vision.

This thesis discovers the Nordic Identity as a mediator for commonality and agreeance on the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Vision 2030 for multiple stakeholders. Civil society is a value-driven sector that mobilises when its values are activated. Therefore, it is possible that a shared view on values and collective identity is one part of motivating civil engagement. However, civil society’s involvement goes beyond being supportive of immediate and

consistent social challenges; civil society carries much responsibility when it comes to crisis response. Though the shared Nordic social welfare system creates societal security, it alone does not cover humanitarian actions. Civil society gets highly engaged in acute arising social tasks, for instance, working actively for integrative support for refugees and immigrants from Ukraine since violence from Russia made life in the country unsafe and life-threatening. Civil society organisations are created by collectives of people with similar ideas of how living in a socially cohesive society should look, such as what rights and opportunities exist for the individuals and collective to grow. Solidarity and support are motivated by their visions being threatened by external factors, for example, a pandemic or war. Identifying with a collective of people (social group) which experiences threat or exclusion can influence the engagement of civil society volunteers. However, civil society's actions are influenced by the opportunities and restrictions that are given by the public sector. Nevertheless, it is expressed that attempts of the Nordic Council of Ministers need the involvement of civil society for the vision's achievement. Therefore, it is in the interest of the Nordic Council to motivate the society to engage in social concerns. Parallel the civil society has the interest enhance the efficiency of their efforts towards social cohesion, which also means that their knowledge is included in new best practice strategies. This dynamic of reliance represents traits of the Structuration Theory by the Sociologist Anthony Giddens. This created an interest in how the two sectors influence each other regarding structure and action activation.

This thesis aims to follow up on these dynamics by answering the research questions: *What role does civil society action play in questions of integration and social cohesion within the "Vision 2030"? How is the Nordic Council of Ministers encouraging civil society's engagement? And How can perspectives of social and narrative identity theories be used to understand civic mobilization?*

The following research will discuss Nordic strategies to mobilise civil society in questions of integration and social participation within the frame of becoming "the most sustainable and integrated region". By analysing policy papers and reports on Vision 2030, the institutional perspective will lay the foundation for further comparison. Two panel discussions that address the questions of integration and crisis response will be contextualised, leaning on the theory of structuration by Anthony Giddens and two theories addressing the creation and activation of collective identity: Social Identity theory by Tajfel & Turner and Narrative Identity by Paul Ricoeur. The aim will be to provide a draft of the recognition of civil society's involvement on the Nordic cooperation level in relation to how socially and solidarity-driven identification mobilises societal participation.

## Background

### Context of the shared welfare policy

“Our Vision 2030” (here Vision 2030) is inspired by the UN-generated Agenda 2030 for sustainable and future-oriented development, which emphasizes the topicality of the vision. Nonetheless, Nordic cooperation precedes a history formally and practically established after the Second World War (Kharkina, 2013). At that time, an era of international collective creations began, such as the UN in 1945. The founding of the Nordic Council in 1952 marked the beginning of structured cooperation. In the same year, this platform provided the opportunity to manage joint initiatives, making the introduction of the Passport Agreement in 1952, one of the most significant achievements of Nordic cooperation (Kinsten & Orava, 2012). The Passport agreement paved the way for the shared labour market, which followed two years later in 1954 (Kinsten & Orava, 2012, p. 10; Tervonen, 2016). This unified decision made by Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland enabled citizens of the region to live across national intraregional borders and seek cross-border employment. This established the possibility for rural border regions to use the labour market infrastructure of the neighbouring countries. It was a development ahead of its time in terms of intra-migration, and it served, among other things, as inspiration for the European Schengen Agreement that followed later in 1985. In their Nordic Convention of Social Security, the Nordic co-operation countries decided that their citizens would also have free mobility in the social security system and enjoy the social benefits of the Nordic countries (Christiansen, 2006). This agreement thus ensured that the inhabitants of one Nordic country could move freely across the borders of other Nordic counties, where they were entitled to social and economic freedom and support. In 1962, the Nordic cooperation was settled legally by signing the Helsinki Treaty (Nordisk Ministerråd, 2018). Today, the Nordic cooperation consists of the countries Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Finland, and the autonomous region Åland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

### Cooperation with limits and potential

From a European perspective, these developments were ahead of their time and formed the framework for an integrated and aligned region. However, Nordic cooperation faced ongoing challenges that strained the region's unity. One example of this is Sweden and Finland's accession to the EU, both of which became official members in 1995. Norway and Iceland decided against membership, and Denmark was already part of the European Union in 1973 (Etzold, 2020). Moments like these have led to debates within the Nordic countries. (Neergaard, Paju, & Raitio, 2021; Nordisk Samarbejde, 2022; Strang, 2016)

External influences are causing internal communication strategies to falter and challenging the political and administrative cohesion of Nordic cooperation to be challenged. This was not an isolated phenomenon in the case of the partial EU accession. In an article, political scientist Tobias Etzold comments on the political relevance of Nordic cooperation, in particular that of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). Questions of security, migration policy, as well as strategies in crises for the welfare system were matters tackled at the national level without achieving concrete intra-regional solutions. One reason for this could be that a general guideline of cooperation was that its work and decisions ‘never [go] further than the interests of each country permit’ (Etzold, 2020, p. 12; Nordisk Rådet, 1973, p. 27). In the first decades of its existence, the activities within the Nordic Cooperation developed from an exchange forum without decision-making processes to a division of tasks through the establishment of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). (Etzold, 2020; Wendt, 1965) The NCM, founded in 1971, was intended to achieve a stronger structure in the coordination between the governments, which served as a ‘separate inter-governmental institution’. In addition, the interparliamentary Nordic Council was responsible for monitoring, which took more initiative in making recommendations for action before the NCM was founded. (Etzold, 2020; Wendt, 1965, p. 21). Contrary to the statement that the decisions must not interfere with those of the individual states, there are areas of activity of the NCM which are inclusive and community-orientated. The tasks range from social and welfare stability to environmental developments, research and education concepts and cooperation on cultural issues. Cooperation in the latter three areas is particularly central ‘as these topics form important elements of the Nordic identity in terms of languages, culture and values’ (Etzold, 2013). These areas express a shared interest in social exchanges, which is paving the potential for intra-migration to create an interregional workforce for the Nordic region. These efforts have the potential to evolve into further integration policies as in questions regarding non-Nordic and non-European migrants. The communication in these areas arose in 2015/2016 when the number of protection seekers and migrants increased in Europe. It was a new opener for exchanges focusing on integration strategies and labour market integration, as the Nordic countries have pursued their own national policies so far (Hernes et. al., 2023). Shared research of the Oslo Metropolitan University has shown that these integration services have been often carried out by actors of the civil society, and were not seldom “outsourced” by public authorities during high influx in 2015/16 and 2022/2023. (Hernes et al., 2023, p. 8) The recent political developments in Ukraine put the integration question back into the focus of the NCM, as the war forces Ukrainians to seek refuge in securer countries like the Nordics. As the Nordic cooperation stands for a live in freedom and democracy, these development increase the attention

of the interregional cooperation in integration question and immediate crisis, striving for best practices exchange (Hernes et al., 2023).

### Identity creation and Activation in state collectives

The concept of identities connected to geography occupies the minds of various social science disciplines (Pan, Gruber, & Binder, 2019; van Lange, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2012; Verdugo & Milne, 2016). Especially in the social psychologies are the questions of self-identification and the process of othering between groups vital for the understanding of human social behavior (Rebughini & Colombo, 2022; Siouti, 2022).

In 2012, Johan Fornäs wrote the book "Signifying Europe" where he discusses the systematic understanding of symbols representing Europe and "Europeanness" (Fornäs, 2012). In the context of Europe he points out to understand the "meaning of an entity" of country collectives like Europe it is necessary to include "the concept of identity" (Fornäs, 2012, p. 50). A country union can be understood as a cultural and political community which unites individuals that (might) identify themselves to the values and characteristics of that community. These cultural collectives are dynamic and get passed through symbols within the community and in exchange with 'other' groups; they empower the individuals and the collective to act from a point of motivation they identify with. To identify with a politically acting country collective might include the belief in ideologies and how the social community sees itself in context to other collectives and how they interact with them. Fornäs includes aspects of the Social Identity theory and is explicitly referring to Paul Ricoeur's Narrative Identity theory which both are included in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Hans Anderson criticized in 2020 the lack of research addressing the identity behavior of states. In his view as well as individuals 'states may look for situations that activate the identity' (Andersson, 2010, p. 49). Anderson analyzes the activation of identity in the case of the Nordic Cooperation, by comparing the states' actions in empowering the passport union and the communication in environmental questions. He emphasizes that the conceptualization of the self and their collective has less to do with 'altruism', the needs of a group lie with the individual needs (Andersson, 2010, p. 47). Just like individuals, states also have many identities" (Andersson, 2010, p. 46). For instance, state's corporate identity follows mainly economic goals while a collective identity addresses social ones. Anderson sees how interests follow identities and therefore each identity consists of its situational relevance (Andersson, 2010, p. 47). In the case of the collective Nordic identity, one aspect is believing the Nordic welfare model is worth strengthening or might be even seen as better than other governmental systems. Looking at the situational cases, Anderson observes a higher

“commitment” of the Nordic countries to one another when the passport union was threatened in the 1990s compared to the initiatives of negotiating environmental questions at that time. This brought him to the conclusion of existing relations between the situational relevance of the collective identity and to what extent the commitment to this identity is activated. He raises the question of how identification with and European identity interferes with the Nordic one. He discusses the need for further studies in this field but suggests that geography can only be one little part of it, as he gives the example of Denmark choosing a passport union with Sweden and Norway over Germany, which they share a border with (Andersson, 2010, p. 49). In terms of individuals, he briefly touches upon citizens' experiences of national belonging, which is maintained through the education system and the media landscape (Andersson, 2010, p. 49). This also suggests similar conduct in creating and maintaining an interregional identity.

## Problem definition and aim

The governance of the Nordic region connects welfare politics with a regional sense of identity based on shared values and norms. In their aim to become most sustainable and integrated, the definition of being *integrated* is based on the “shared Nordic identity” which defines social values that might align with those of civil society (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021a, p. 3). This commonality might be a reason for civil society mobilization towards social cohesion with the goals of Vision 2030 in mind. However, even though Vision 2030 is supported by several policy documents, action plans and evaluations, it remains rather unspecific how civil society is expected to get involved.

The term civil society is here understood as a broad range of voluntary, non-governmental organizations and other associations that actively engage in settings of political and social agenda. According to the European union law, these cultural, social and political communities pursue societal transformation “through a democratic process” and play the “role of a mediator between public authorities and citizen” (European Commission, 2024). In the Nordic context civil society refers to a “sphere of human engagement and self-empowerment” such as people movements and became a common political vocabulary in the 1990s in the Nordics (Götz, 2019).

Vision 2030 by the NCM has not been studied much, although academics have recognized civil societies' relevance in shaping societal development for multiple decades (Hort, 2017; Smith, 2008). However, the Nordic cooperation started to shift its attention more towards civil engagement by creating financial funds and project databases for value and culture exchange in the Nordics and Baltics (Andersen, 2023, pp. 28–32; Kuusik & Raik, 2018; Nordplus, 2023; Rissanen et al., 2023). What has been missing is the strategic

involvement of civil society in policies of interregional and social concern, like integration. This inclusion seems to be a step towards discovering best practices based on empirical experiences by civil society.

Understanding the relationship between the NCM and Civil society can open the discussion on renewing power dynamics. As the NCM is a representative of the Nordic public sector, giving civil society exclusive responsibility in social matters could be interpreted as the public sector “outsourcing” tasks of social concerns. With this critical view of the problem definition, this analysis will focus on how the NCM addresses the cross-sectional cooperation. This study aims to review the dynamics of civil society and the interregional public sector by including policy strategies and stakeholders' perspectives in the two sectors. It will review how civil society has been included in policy conversations in the past years, what civil society’s engagement motivation is, and what challenges and opportunities the relation has with the aim of creating sustainability and integration in the Nordic region.

The way civil society gets included in interregional cooperation marks the sustainability of cooperation between the Nordic region and other countries, as their action become increasingly important in coping with international social challenges. Civil society’s motivation for engaging in social questions is therefore crucial in the Vision 2030 of the NCM. The social actions could be motivated by, for example, identification with values and dedication to a way of living in a community. To what extent this could be connected to geographical identities and mobilization for social cohesion will be included in the results of answering the research questions: What role does civil society action play in questions of integration and social cohesion within the “Vision 2030”? How is the Nordic Council of Ministers encouraging civil society's engagement? And how can perspectives of social and narrative identity theories be used to understand civic mobilization?

Ultimately this thesis aims to outline the relationship in context of social challenges such as integration. Based on the two questions it can be drafted what present structural settings are impacting the agency of civil society. By understanding the dynamics, the research aims to exhibit the gaps and potential of a cross-sectional cooperation in social matters.

#### Relevancy for Health & Lifestyle Studies

Societal cooperation shapes the system humans live in. In the case of the Nordic region, citizens experience liberty of accessing an interregional cooperation welfare system. Independently of what kind of lifestyle a citizen is choosing, the individuals and groups within that welfare model are provided with a broader range social supportive opportunities including the accessibility to civil society organizations.

Social engagement and voluntarism are actions created by collectives of individuals with the mindset of increasing social cohesion. It's said that human interactions increase hormones like dopamine and oxytocin which are vital for the happiness and general health of an individual (Gordon, Martin, Feldman, & Leckman, 2011). Actions by civil society organizations narrow gaps between social groups and their individuals. They get access to the personal experiences of an individual which possibly creates a sustainable link to their mental and general health (Borgonovi, 2008).

Following through studies on civil societies' relevance, the radiance of their actions creates and gains knowledge for the academic world, public and private sectors. First by observing civil societies' actions as a collective, researchers have the opportunity to gain more and new knowledge on social psychology as well as sociology of groups. Studies in that field could expand the knowledge of how social interaction shapes an individual's values and goals. Second, research on civil society leads to understanding their influence on governmental or supranational activities. This is also an aspect of why it influences the private sector. For more than 10 years, the private sector is engaging more in societal challenges and the awareness and potential for cooperate social responsibility increased (Defourny, Hulgard, & Pestoff, 2014; Gjølborg, 2010). Similarly to civil society, the private sector gets more involved in taking action in the field of social concern. One example is the engagement in upskilling and networking processes for the labour market integration of migrants. Though the relationship between the private sector and civil society is not observed within this research, the outcomes of this study can be utilized as starting points for further research analyzing the cohesion of structure and action between the private sector and civil society (Defourny et al., 2014).

## Theoretical framework

The thesis addresses two influential aspects in the observed dynamics of civil society and the NCM. One part is the presence of the “shared Nordic identity”; therefore, it will be analysed how collective identification is causing civil mobilisation and how it is used linguistically in the policy papers of the NCM to encourage civil engagement. The other part is the interdependence of the NCM and Civil society. This is why NCM relies on a mobilised and active civil society and why civil society relies on a structural setting that acknowledges their work and supports it sustainably.

This thesis will consider three theories to answer the research questions. Social Identity Theory by Tajfel & Turner; Narrative Identity by Paul Ricoeur; and Structuration Theory by Anthony Giddens.

## Social Identity Theory – Tajfel and Turner

In the discipline of social science, several schools and theories deal with the construct of the collective and the socialisation of collective identities. This sociology of the group ranges from habits in living spaces, such as the teachings of Pierre Bourdieu's habitus, to self-identification with a group in which the individual feels the 'sense of self', as Henri Tajfel and John Turner describe in their Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to this theory, humans create social groups by assigning themselves and others to certain groups, for example, through cultural, national, or organisational belonging; this is the step of categorisation (Tajfel, 1978a). As socially conditioned individuals, we associate certain attributes with social groups and in the process of categorising one individual to a group, we see them as an individual with that group's attribute. By identifying ourselves with the group's attribute and their way of being, humans can experience an increase in self-esteem by experiencing group confirmation. The theory identifies the process of identity creation as dynamic. Identification is highly contextual and moves as the individuals live in a constant comparison between an "in-group" and an "out-group" (Tajfel, 1978a; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory also addresses the social issues of prejudice as bias-confirmation sustains self-esteem because it favours their current in-group identification. The affiliation could be driven by norm orientation and cultural comfort but can also follow organizational purposes. The potential of social identity dynamics unfolds when identity categorization and comparison are loose from belittlement or discriminating judgments. When social groups view another as different but not more or less valuable, space is created for reevaluating the relations for new or further group creation.

## Narrative Identity – Paul Ricoeur

The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur thematizes the concept of a narrative identity. The narrative identity observes how individuals and groups see their experiences as part of themselves. The theory is based on the concept that individual and group identity is impacted and reconstituted through narratives (Fornäs, 2012; Ricoeur, 1991). The identity process is a circulating comparison of selfhood and the sameness to others (Ricoeur, 1992). Throughout their lives humans experience moments of strengthened identity or those where identity traits get redesigned. Meaning moments in which their identity consists of but develops with challenges and experiences at the same time. Ricoeur argues that the narrative identity isn't static nor isolated, it is rather impacted and developed by the individual's experience with other human beings and society (Ricoeur, 1991). This concept could be relevant for the evaluation of national or regional identities. Individuals living in similar geographical settings are likely to be exposed to the same happenings and collect similar experiences regarding external happenings, for example, natural disasters, war or revolution. The core of Ricoeur's Narrative Identity

concept is that historical contexts shape cultural values that get passed through generations which has the potential for the individual to identify with certain history or experiences (Ricoeur, 1991).

### Structuration – Anthony Giddens

In the 1980s Anthony Giddens developed the structuration theory to explain the duality of structure and action within a social system. Giddens doesn't see those two phenomena as independent from one another. He developed a model where structure is mutually the frame of action but a result of it as well. This theory of structuration includes three major disciplines relevant to this study (Giddens, 1979)

1) Duality of structure: as mentioned before the duality of structure allows the actors to influence the structure by their actions but also being restricted by it at the same time. Meaning that an individual's and the collective action reproduce and transform the structure they live in. This principle opens the perspective of the relative power that civilians hold.

2) Reflexivity in agency: Giddens' idea is that the individual has the ability to act independently from the social structure, this is what he calls agency. He argues that actions aren't completely determined by the structure. As long as the individual is aware of the social structure, they can act within it or change it through what they are doing (Giddens, 1979). This reflective interplay of agency and structure makes an individual more of an active than passive participant in society.

3) The aspect of time in space: The third principle is about the structure being a progressing element which develops over time through the social actions happening in it. The relevancy of this aspect of the structuration concept lies and the questions of when something happens and where. Consistency or changeability of structure gets discovered when put to a test by inside or outside influences.

The theories on Social Identity and Narrative Identity will be useful to understand how Nordic identity is addressed by the NCM and civil society organizations. The hypothesis of this thesis assumes an interplay between identity and civil involvement in social integration. By considering the principles of Giddens's structuration theory, the analysis is enabled to discover results in the relation of structure and agency within the cross-sectional cooperation of the Nordic region.

### Methods

Giddens structuration theory provides a basis of principles to analyze the how civil societies agency is included in the policy work for the vision 2030 which is setting the structure of the NCM's aim.

## Design

The study is based on a qualitative-interpretative approach, to gain insights into the dynamics of civil society organizations and political decision-makers in the context of Vision 2030. The study design consists of a cross-method concept combining steps of thematic and content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Smith, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1991). By combining the two methods, assessing the relations stays in thematic focus and viewing the data content openly. This setting is to explore concurring and idiosyncratic perspectives on cooperation in Vision 2030 and to what extent the data suggests the presence of a Nordic Identity in the communication. The methodological design favours the contextualization with a theoretical interpretation inspired by the concepts of Structuration Theory, and Social and Narrative Identity Theory.

## Sampling

The Nordic Council of Ministers evaluates their work process biannually. This exchange is stated live in several locations under the umbrella of the Nordic Day. As 2024 is one of the Nordic Day years, new developments of the Nordic Cooperation get published simultaneously with the conduction of this thesis. To ensure the measurability of a “status quo,” the researcher of this thesis decided to set the Program of the Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council 2024 (published 31.10.2023) as the measuring frame.

Policy documents and panel discussions form the basis of the qualitative analysis. To include perspectives from both sectors equally, the data selection included samples from three different settings: One, written policy documents and reports created by the Nordic Council of Ministers and bodies of the Nordic Cooperation; Two, an audio-visual panel discussion from the Nordic Conference on Integration 2022, including representatives of the NCM and Civil Society; and Third, an audio-visual panel discussion between Civil society representatives only, from the Nordics and Lithuania supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers Office Lithuania.

## Data gathering

The text materials were gathered systematically by focusing on policy papers addressing the strategies of Vision 2030 between 2020 and 2024. The time frame was chosen because it marks the public beginning of the vision 2030 of becoming the most integrated and sustainable region of the world. The main documents on Vision 2030 were published in 2021 on the Nordpub platform, the database that collects all publications by the entity of the Nordic Council of Ministers and its bodies. The two audio-visual panel discussions were gathered from the video platform "YouTube". The first panel discussion of the "Nordic Conference on Integration 2022" was published on 17.03.2023 on that platform by the participating Icelandic NGO 'Oma hai'. However, the original source of the audio-visual is not stated or visible. The second panel

discussion was published October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022 by the organizer of the Lithuanian culture and discussion festival „Būtent!“. Both panel discussions were transcribed by the author of this thesis. The transcriptions are content-oriented, therefore filled speech pauses were excluded. Further, the transcriptions are organized in line numbers instead of time stamps for an orientable quotation of the transcripts in the appendix.

### Data processing and analysis

The data was reviewed by using an open coding process. This is a methodological step used in thematic analysis and grounded theory methodology as a tool to get engaged with the data openly. The step of open coding prevents a narrowed view of thematic bias and provides a broader overview (Strauss & Corbin, 1991; Williams & Moser, 2019) The open coding is followed by thematic-orientated coding from which further analysis can be drawn. Coding the data material unfolds patterns and the theme strategy and linguistics, which are used to establish categories which are set in relation to another (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 52). The understanding of the relations is visualised in self-created graphics and visuals by the NCM, which serves to make the analysis procedure comprehensible. Contextualizing the categories with the theoretical concepts of structuration, social identity and narrative identity supports the creation of the results to answer the research questions.

### Ethics

“First, do no harm”. As a product of social sciences, this thesis has the responsibility to sustain social development and human well-being (Favaretto et al., 2020). The study doesn't include self-conducted empirical data by the author and therefore wasn't ethically influenced in its production. However, this study includes quotes and paraphrased opinions of human beings. The study addresses societal circumstances and humanitarian crises of contemporary political relevancy, which are subjectively commented by the panellists in the audiovisuals. Political opinions can develop and change as well as political circumstances can develop from secure to uncertain ones. Even though the panel discussions happened publicly and are currently published, the author decides to not reproduce political views connected directly to the individuals' names. Spoken data will be used by assigning each individual an anonymization which is named in the analysis.

## Analysis & Results

### Policy Papers

#### An Overview on what “Our Vision 2030” is

The Nordic Vision 2030 is based on values and goals that have accompanied the Nordic cooperation since the beginning of its creation, including inspirations from the UN Agenda 2030 on the Sustainable Development Goals. Documents that address the details and strategies of Vision 2030 name Mid 2019 as the starting point, however, the term “integrated region” has been used already in 2016 (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2016, p. 29) This suggests that the idea of interregional integration solutions has been around for longer than Vision 2030 gets promoted by the NCM. In 2021 the definition of an integrated region by the NCM in following way: “For the Nordic Region, integration primarily means a shared Nordic identity, cohesive societies based on the same values, and mobility and freedom of movement within the region” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021a, p. 4).

“Our Vision 2030” is the head term used for the goal: “The Nordic Region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020). In various paraphrasing, this future vision of the Nordic Region is a fundamental guideline of the NCM and the Nordic Cooperation as a whole. The three equally prioritised areas are categorized: A green region, competitive region and socially sustainable region. One is the transition towards a “carbon neutral”, circular and “bio-based” economy to create a development of the Nordic societies being environmentally sustainable and moving towards a green future (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020, p. 2). Second “a competitive Nordic Region”: the economic and simultaneously green growth shall expand and in exchange of knowledge, as in education and research, digital development, mobility of citizens and goods (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021a, pp. 11–12). This priority attempts a globally competitive economy, promoting services and production, especially through a shared labour market in the Nordic region. The third area is “a socially sustainable Nordic Region” upgrading inclusiveness and equal living further by strengthening the interconnectivity of the region in their “shared values”, and “culture exchange and welfare” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021a, p. 5). The priority areas are linked to another and are designed to create cohesion for the vision, which is captured visually in multiple documents by the NCM:



Figure 1 "Our Vision 2030" priority areas  
(Nordic Council of Ministers 2020, p.2)

## Measures of the Vision 2030

In their publication on the “Nordic Indicators for Our Vision 2030” the NCM presents a structure of aimed standards by referring to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030. The “Green” aspect addresses the SDGs: Climate action (SDG 13); Affordable and clean energy (SDG 7); Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12); Life on land (SDG 15); Life below water (SDG 14). This means tasks like greenhouse emission reduction, material footprint, fishing and organic agriculture get attention in Vision 2030 (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021a). Green transition is a major challenge of the regional and global society, which is influencing economic sustainability as well as health and lifestyle and therefore plays into the quality of competitive and socially sustainable development. Cross-sectional attempts at green transition are vital for social development, however, this area will not be in focus of further analysis, as the research question addresses the social and integrative angle of Vision 2030; these play mainly into the field of the competitive and social sustainable Nordic Region.

The indicators for the competitiveness of the region are designed around the infrastructural opportunities for the Nordic community and the accessibility to Quality education (SDG 4), Decent work (SDG 8) and the freedom to move cross-border within the region. Cross-border movement and utilization of a common welfare network build a core element of Nordic cooperation. “Intra-Nordic immigration” brings the countries a shared workforce and the citizens receive and benefit from a common welfare system (Karlisdóttir, Norlén, Rispling, & Randall, 2018). The Nordic states have their counties built on the Nordic Welfare Model and part of Vision 2030 is to continue the interconnection of the social security system and economy. The shared Nordic Welfare Model created the opportunity for each Nordic citizen to make use of the welfare offers of any Nordic state, a shared value that falls

under the area of social sustainability (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021a). The NCM intends to promote good health and well-being (SDG 3); enhance equal rights and opportunities for all gender (SDG 5) as well as the reduction of inequalities (SDG 10) in the labour market and private life. The NCM aims doing this by addressing the reduction of social exclusion, risk of poverty, employment inequality and discrimination between those born outside of the EU and born in the Nordics (Nordic Council of Ministers & Lunde Rasmussen, 2021). The area on social inclusion of migrants and societal participation of migration voices in the Nordic development gets further discussed as it's the focus of the civil society representatives in the analyzed panel discussions.

### Baseline report 2030 from 2021

The NCM published a baseline report in 2021, which brought together a strategic script and with 45 indicators for the development phase between 2021 and 2024. This report unites the NCM' understanding of the overall status of the Nordic region. "The baseline measurement views the countries as a single region." (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021b, p. 5). This foundation is important to consider in further analysis and view on the vision's development in the past three years. It indicates that the development, within the pre-identified 45 sub-areas, has to be fulfilled by all Nordic countries and autonomous regions by the year of 2030, if the region, as one, wants to be understood as the most *integrated* region of the world.

The baseline report provides a detailed understanding of how the status quo in the Nordic region in 2021 addresses or covers the Sustainable Development Goals. The measuring is done by identifying how the Nordic region is/has: I) currently fulfilling the ambitions II) still some challenges III) still significant challenges and IV) still major challenges. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021b, p. 10) Regarding the social sustainability area, the baseline report confirms the need of interconnective strategies between the priority of becoming competitive as a region and socially sustainable:

"Without widespread social inclusion in example everybody playing their part in society and the world of work the regions competitive and workforce will not release the full potential by 2030". (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021b, p. 13)

This quote confirms the needed balanced development in all priority areas for the success of Vision 2030 by considering multiple challenges within the societies. This is why the SDG Quality of Education, plays into an equally educated and skilled workforce. Alongside to current state of the indicators and SDG fulfillment, the Nordic Council of Ministers formulated 12 Objectives within an action plan suggesting specific actions of the stakeholders within the Vision 2030. It is expressed that these stakeholders

include the civil society and private sectors as well. “The Nordic regions civil society and businesses have been consulted to greater extent than ever before” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020, p. 4)

### Civil society in the Objectives from Action plan 2021

The role of civil society is placed in the headline of solely one objective of the action plan: in the strategy area of becoming a socially sustainable Nordic region. Objective #11 phrases: “The Nordic Council of Ministers will: give the Nordic civil society and especially children and young people allowed a voice and greater participation in Nordic cooperation as well as increase their knowledge of language and culture of neighbouring countries.” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020, p. 23). This objective wants to enhance the aspect of being an integrated region by “creating cultural communities” through exchanges in the field of education and language as well as raising understanding for the artistic and cultural scene of the neighbouring countries. This perspective of a cohesive cultural and value-based community gets extended in Objective 12 which says. “the Nordic Council of Ministers will maintain trust and cohesion in the Nordic region its shared values and the Nordic community with an emphasis on culture, democracy, equality, inclusion, non-discrimination and freedom of expression” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020, p. 24)

In both objectives, the civil society's position is placed as a mediator and coordinator for lifelong learning programs and encounters of young people in the Nordics and the Baltic states (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020, pp. 23–24). The inclusion of the Baltic states within objective 11 and Objective 12 is recognizable when looking into the multiple exchange programs and initiatives (Nordic Council of Ministers & Ramboll Management and Consulting, 2021; Nordplus, 2023). One example is the biggest funded program by the NCM called “Nordplus”, which is a supporting network for school exchanges and interregional and international project and effort initiatives. These initiatives aim to increase Nordic citizen's interest in the culture and language of other Nordic states and the Baltics, which the region has a close connection and collaboration with (Asser et al., 2004).

Even though the NCM placed the importance of the civil society in the introduction of the action plan 2021, the term 'civil society' is only one time specifically mentioned in one of the objectives headlines. Which could lead to the interpretation, that the civil society is not seen as a priority or the potential for the cooperation between public authorities and civic society organisations hasn't been fully captured.

## Changed recognition of Civil Society in the Mid-term evaluation- Objectives in 2023

The NCM published a mid-point evaluation of the action plan for the period 2022-2024 in 2022. This report's purpose was to draft how effective the efforts of the NCM have been to act towards the objectives defined in 2021. Regarding the civil society's presence within this midpoint report, it is noticeable how the amount of mentioning of the term 'civil society' increased. While the term 'civil society' was mentioned in the baseline report 14 times, it has been mentioned 62 times in the midpoint evaluation (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2022). This is just a surface observation from linguistically inspired content analysis, which is yet providing an understanding increased value of civil society in the Vision 2030 discourse. The evaluation report mediates that the Nordic cooperation worked towards the vision 2030 on multiple levels including the Nordic council and the Nordic civil society.

## Panel discussion 1

Due to the existence of Nordic cooperation, regular meetings take place in the form of conferences, panel discussions, and lectures, such as the Nordic Day, or in relation to specific topics dealt with by the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). The following is an analysis of two panel discussions that took place within the framework of such events or were organized by the NCM and its cooperation partners in the Baltic States.

The setting of the first panel discussion is within the framework of the Nordic Conference on Integration in 2022 (Oma hai, 2023). The year 2022 was also the year in which the cooperation partners reflected live upon their communication strategies during the peaks of the COVID-19 pandemic (Neergaard et al., 2021). The Nordic Day 2022 was therefore a time to reflect on the organisational and communication flows within the cooperation that had taken place and how to evolve new strategies further (Nordisk Samarbejde, 2022). As part of the Nordic Conference on Integration 2022, various presentations and discussions took place on what new steps and changes need to be done to achieve more sustainable success in integration policy questions. As in most events of the Nordic cooperation, the vision 2030 was placed as a central element during the discussions. Even though this vision of becoming the most integrated and sustainable region was created in 2019, the topic of integration has had a major impact on the Nordics for years. As a response to the migration flow in 2015/2016, the Nordic cooperation created a program on the cooperation for integration to discuss and evaluate possible unifying actions. It has to be said though that the countries of the Nordic cooperation followed individual national strategies (Johansson, Ihlen, Lindholm, & Blach-Ørsten, 2023). Within the Nordic conference on integration the speakers agreed upon the need for best practices and that the

inclusion of migrant representative voices in policy processes are vital for innovative and lasting integration processes.

The first panel discussion brings three guests together: One being a representative of the programme on integration of the Nordic Council of Ministers (Speaker 1). The second is an NGO founder and a consultant in the Icelandic policy council (Speaker 2) and the third is a representative from the Faroe Islands who works in the office for immigration affairs (Speaker 3). This constellation contains mostly representatives of the public sector, however two of the speakers are participants in the NCM initiated Migrant Expert Forum which is going to be discussed further. The following quotes can be found in the Appendix A (Appendix A, pp. VI–XI).

### Reflection on institutional limitations

As mentioned above one of the major findings of the analysis is the recognition of lacking expertise and a common pool of knowledge that can be used for integration policy improvement across the Nordic nations.

“You have quite similar states but at the same time you also have different outcomes in terms of integration policies (...) we wanted to have something to compare and identify best practices, that we could learn from each other” (Speaker 1, ll.24-27)

The exchange of experiences increases the opportunity to exercise best practices based on empirical knowledge. Vision 2030 emphasized maintaining educational exchange, not only at a policy level but also for individual awareness of the practice in neighbouring countries.

“We have traditionally focused previously on identifying similarities and differences for example in terms of labour market inclusion” (Speaker 1, ll.213-214)

“One of the conclusions was that Norway and Sweden are investing more in immigrants’ competences when they arrive. Either the existing ones or [...] they will develop them before immigrants are sent out in the labour market. Whereas in Denmark there’s a focus on quick access to the labour market and then in the long term that has not as good an effect as in Norway and Sweden.” (Speaker 1, ll. 244-249)

The focus on integration policies through the lens of the labour market isn't a unique governance approach. This emphasis is to be found in the program of the Swedish presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2024. There it's said that upskilling and vocational training will be one of the presidency's foci as it's creating a skilled workforce within the Nordic region. In the Swedish presidency program, it is very closely connected to cross-border mobility within the Nordic region (Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat, 2023, p. 6). The NCM representative in this panel discussion however presents the

findings of researchers stating differences between three of the Nordic countries and how they follow different integration strategies. Presenting this in the Nordic conference setting provides the opportunity for raising awareness of missing cohesion between the reality of governance in integration tasks, and the vision of an integrated united Nordic region that promotes the willingness to tackle challenges in unity. Speaker 2 is the one person in the panel discussion being a NGO founder and with that also being the only representative of the civil society. As she is expressing gratitude for the exchange through a cross-sectional conversation, she does use the opportunity to disclose shortcomings of program initiatives created by institutions.

“There are so many policies that are made in the Nordics [...] about specific category of people without taking into consideration to listen to them” (Speaker 2, ll.62-36)

“Unfortunately the programs that we have for immigrants and refugees, under the umbrella of integration and we keep giving, giving, giving the materialistic things [...] programs that we have in Reykjavik or Iceland, I talk about my area, is about addressing the materialistic needs.” (Speaker 2, ll. 136-141)

This comment underpins the limited abilities of institutions to look into empirical layers of humanitarian needs. Especially the gap between immediate humanitarian help and the institutions' ambition to have a skilled workforce in the labour market. The Speaker 2 emphasises the importance to go beyond materialistic gestures such as bus tickets and housing. She doesn't belittle the institutional efforts; however, she expresses through a metaphor the status that people are left in through the exclusive material support in her eyes.

“I remember the movie Tom Hanks “The Terminal” when he just stayed in the airport [...] we are turning people into passive passive people. They receive and they receive, and they receive and they stay in the terminal forever” (Speaker 2, ll.135-143)

Speaker 2 criticizes a certain dependence that is kept alive by providing material goods and substantial support for the people without giving them empowered opportunities to engage in societal processes. The latter point creates an aligning layer discovered in the analysis of the second panel discussion.

### **Including representative voices – creating societal participation**

As the panel discussion addressed the question of integration all panellists had experience in this field from different angles. One was a representative of the NCM within the program for cooperation on integration of refugees

and immigrants and the other two were members of the migrant expert forum, a small consulting group of nine members with personal insights on migration challenges, with the task of sharing policy recommendations (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2023). During the analysis, it is interesting for the researcher of this thesis to see to what extent advice by representatives' voices is included in the new policy development strategy.

“We don't just talk about people but that we have a conversation with the people that we do integration policies on” (Speaker 1, ll. 44-46) “this is also why we decided to set up a Nordic migrant expert Forum.” (ll. 43)

Speaker 3, from the immigration office of the Faroe Islands is one of the people participating in the migrant expert forum. He states gratitude for having the opportunity to raise issues on the topic as a person with migration experience. However, simultaneously expressing awareness of not being able to represent every immigrant and that it needs more representatives in these conversations. (Speaker 3, ll. 89-90) He includes one essential question when it comes to policies that have immediate effects on people that are not included in the process of creating them: “how do we talk with people?” (Speaker 3, ll.87-88).

This is one aspect that Speaker 2 is advocating for a lot within this panel discussion. It is expressed that the societal participation of the people is vital for their social inclusion. She advocates, in order to feel connected with the society they do immigrate into, the people need to get opportunities to give back to the community they live in: “I think it's a two-way path” (Speaker 2, ll. 275); “We don't see that they have capacities to give back.” She is stating the belief backed by experiences of her NGO's work, saying integration programs create a sense of being part of the community they live in, so that they can become active creators: “... now you receive, move to the next step, give back; give back to your community; give back to your neighborhood; give back to your wherever you're coming from; participate in the process of making new knowledge. We are not there.” (Speaker 2, ll.144-146)

Interpreting these quotes by considering the goals of Vision 2030, it could be seen as a necessity to create more opportunities for societal participation as a step toward social integration. The aim to do this is anchored in the socially sustainable area of Vision 2030. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020, pp. 15 & 23) Speaker 3 takes a similar position. Even though he doesn't work in a civil society organisation but at the Faroese Immigration Office, he does reflect on civil engagement similarly to Speaker 2.

“From what I heard [...] it's about interpersonal relationships and I believe that if we find, [...] a way for people to come together and have a related genuine relationship with each other, could we define that as success and integration? Because whether we can't speak in the same language or not; but

if we can get along and I feel a sense of belonging and sense of unity I think we have achieved integration that way.” (Speaker 3, ll.281-286)

One observation in the analysis is that while the two representatives of the migration expert forum express the further need of including more representatives voices than it currently does, the representative of NCM repeats the presence of the migrant expert forum and that it’s members “are invited to meet with the reference group and discuss matters that are relevant in terms of integration [...] we have built we have built a bridge between migrants and the Ministries on developing our Nordic operation and integration.” (Speaker 1, ll.115-116)

### Civil Society’s role as mediator

It could be discussed if the migrant expert forum can be seen as an arrangement of civil society because all representatives are people with experience of migration into the Nordic countries (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2023). This setting could then indeed be called a bridge, or a cross-sectional action created by the NCM as it was an initiative by the program for cooperation on integration of refugees and immigration. Speaker 2 is one of the representatives within the migration expert forum and her dedicated interests in this subject become very clear through the panel discussion as she shares personal examples of relating to the issue of being in a constant loop. She expresses the emotions of having to prove worthy of being in a country as a person, where place of birth and place of living doesn't align with their family's geographic history. (Speaker 1, Appendix A, ll.264-272)

Under the category of the reflection on institutional limitations, Speaker 2 clarifies her evaluation of experiences as an NGO founder, emphasizing a significant need for more educational programs. These educational programs do not only mediate societal norms or navigation support through society's structure, but also how to get engaged in knowledge and educational development. This has the intention to involve people as human beings and not as people reduced to their migration experience.

“In my NGO Oma Hai we work on the education perspective. To help a person to grow and they need to have knowledge but what kind of knowledge? This is what we are working on to give this kind of knowledge that makes a person feel he or she is part of the whole world, not part of this group [referring to refugee]. [...] we heard from the Ukrainian group [...] that they don't like the word refugee. So, when we work with a person we just give them the knowledge that you are a human being. So as a human being what we can do all together to build the capacity and serve the community that we are in.” (Speaker 2, ll.64-72)

Speaker 2 is likely referring to the experience of being othered and experience of judgment based on residential status and being alienated from the people

in the community the one immigrates into. This situation has also something to do with external social categorization. They might experience a non-identification with the community someone is set into. Further, this quote can also open the awareness of opportunities to create open spaces for people moving, either forced or not forced, from one place to another and getting the chance to define themselves within the new community. Looking at Paul Ricoeur's narrative identity creation they could experience being passed into a community by being differentiated from another regardless of their own preference. The contrary would be experiencing the narrative of inclusion into a community where they can become creators instead of just recipients.

Speaker 3, the representative of the Faroe Islands governance and immigration affairs shares that even though the autonomous region is quite small, they received refugees from Ukraine and the Red Cross has been very active in engaging with the newcomers. He expresses that the encounters between the arriving community and the local community happened on a very interpersonal level. With that being said, he does emphasize the fact that the Faroe Islands are a small community that might use other resources than the bigger fellow countries in the Nordic corporation.

“They [Red Cross] played a very very important role in trying to bring and creating a sense of familiarity and sense of belonging for newcomers.” (Speaker 3, ll.191-192) “we really see a civil society organization like the Red Cross play a critical role in enforcing those relationships between locals and the newcomers.” (Speaker 3, ll. 197-199).

“In the Faroe Islands you know we operate with a high sense of familiarity and a closed social network.” (Speaker 3, ll.192)

This is another example of social identity creation as Turner and Tajfel say the 'sense of belonging' is essential for people to feel included in a community (Hogg, 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). With a reflection of the Faroe Islands being a quite small society, Speaker 2 hits a very accurate point. As one can reflect on the number of inhabitants in the Nordic regions, the Faroe Islands have the second least of citizens after Åland. Civil society engagement gets a new definition in a society where resources are narrowed to the humans living in that area; this might activate civil engagement even more. The representative of the immigration office in the Faroe Islands, Speaker 3, speaks further about receiving refugees from Ukraine. Due to geographical conditions, the Faroe Islands have limited infrastructure for refugees to arrive there autonomously, which suggests that there has been organized transportation of people, possibly from Denmark. In the context of structuration, it has to be said that the organizational structure between Denmark and the autonomous region of the Faroe Islands likely had a clearer organizational execution than countries with a less regulated immigration process of refugees from Ukraine. This, in consequence, means that civil

society organizations like the local Red Cross had time to prepare their humanitarian support. This aspect will be viewed in comparison with the second panel discussion, a conversation of civil society organization representatives from the Nordics and the Baltic state of Lithuania.

When the representative of the NCM is asked what the civil society's role is in the process of finding new integration policies, she reflects on the fact that there are multiple reasons to become an immigrant and that not every immigrant is a refugee, as well as there's not just one way of being in a refugee. (Speaker 1, ll.122-123) “we encourage diversity of thought and also understanding that each individual brings their own story, and this is what we need to understand as well we when we develop policies on integration.” (Speaker 1, ll.123-125). After this reflection, it doesn't further explain what that means in structural strategies for redesigning policy on integration including this awareness.

“To be honest with you, I think we're still in the beginning of engaging with civil society. [...] we are still discovering.” (Speaker 1, ll.212-213)

“With regards to what kind of what which role does Civil Society play in terms of especially informal language learning.” “We could hear from many of the presenters today that language is a key in terms of integration so that's also what we want to know more about.” (Speaker 1, ll. 219-221)

It is common that the NCM mostly argue from the point of improving labour market integration and education through language especially (Árnason, 2018; Nordic Council of Ministers & Ramboll Management and Consulting, 2021; Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat, 2023). The NCM has been discussing aspects of labour market integration with civil society for many years. However, it needs to include layers beyond fast labour market inclusion, which isn't the result of both sectors' perspectives. Summing up, the first panel discussion focused on spreading awareness by addressing the importance of working cross-sectionally and approaching the issue of interregional integration. That conversation issued mid- and long-term solutions for sustainable development within becoming the most integrated region.

## Panel discussion 2

Both panel discussions are interesting sources for comparison because they are happening in two different spheres while talking about very related topics under the umbrella of Nordic cooperation. In the first panel discussion, the panellists and speakers discussed policy development while involving voices from civil society and people who are affected in an immediate way by integration policies.

The second panel discussion is set in 2022 during a Lithuanian festival, addressing societal topics and challenges. This festival was inspired by "democracy festivals in all Scandinavian countries" (Diskusijų festivalyje, 2024) as the Baltics aim to contribute a development towards a welfare model. The Baltic states have worked with the Nordic region actively in the NB8 (Nordic-Baltic 8) since 1992 (Kukk, 1993; Kuusik & Raik, 2018). However, they are also involved in initiatives by the NCM in several for example, in digital integration and knowledge exchange (Rissanen et al., 2023), which is why the NCM offices are in all of the Baltic capitals. Festivals like "Būten!" are spaces for Nordic-Baltic exchange in social questions nurturing a closer cooperation between the two regions on a civil society level. The topic of the discussion was *If not me then who? How civil societies mobilise during crisis in Lithuania and the Nordics* (Diskusijų festivalis „Būtent!“, 2022). The engaged people in this discussion were exclusively representatives of different civil society organisations. One representative was of an initiative called "Strong Together" in Lithuania (Anonymization: Adamas). The second panellist was a Lithuanian-born student living and studying in Norway who represented the student voluntary organisation called "Norsk Start Oslo" (Anonymization: Justina). The third participant was a member of the Red Cross Sweden, and in his own words, he was somehow representing the Swedish civil society as a whole, as the Red Cross is one of the biggest civil society organisations in the country (Anonymization: Nils). The presetting goes beyond the countries of the current Nordic cooperation; however, it fits the NCM' aim for close relationships with the Baltics. The inclusion of the Baltics in the Nordic cooperation in their educational and cultural exchange programs (as Nordplus) holds a certain political statement which provides analysts with a potential future perspective on the cooperation beyond the current Nordic borders. With that being said, looking at an exchange of civil society representatives on mobilization in crisis, the outcomes of those exchanges withhold potential for critical new perspectives, as the representatives reflect on challenges within civil society, communication with public institutions, and best practices exchange in exceptional situations. The following quotes can be found in Appendix B, (Appendix B, pp. XII–XXII)

### **Mobilization through shared narratives- Responsibility and Identification**

The Lithuanian representative of the local organisation 'Strong Together' shares his experiences in the COVID-19 crisis and the beginning of the Ukrainian war, which resulted in migration flows to Lithuania and other countries. He describes in detail how the civil society mobilized very quickly when the first lockdowns during the pandemic started. Within a few days, the organization managed to create call-ups in media and create web platforms

for volunteers to sign up so they could help providing food and goods to those not able to leave their houses.

"People just registered because they wanted to deliver something, they want to bring something to society, they want to share". (Adamas 'P1', ll 86-88)

"I think that we live in a period of very big changes in our society and [...] in the future, if something happens, we will already know that we have tens or even hundreds of thousand people in Lithuania who are thinking about the others" (Adamas, ll. 88-91)

The speaker with the anonymous name 'Adamas' speaks very enthusiastically about voluntary action within society. This invested participation of citizens in a time of crisis was repeated when the Ukrainian war started, and more than 50,000 refugees arrived in the small country Lithuania which has about 2.6 million inhabitants. He explains that this reaction is caused by the close relationship between the Lithuanians and the Ukrainians.

"And of course in Lithuania, we feel very close to Ukrainians because we share the history, we used to live in one country I mean not in the Soviet occupation but in the medieval times [...]we still feel a very big sympathy to them and that's why it's easier to find the way to hearts of people in Lithuania, in Poland or somewhere around in the region." (Adams, ll.229-233)

"We addressed the society just to share their homes with the brothers and sisters from Ukraine and to invite them to stay in their homes as long as they need" (Adamas, ll.199-200)

Having a dimension of relatability is very present in this example and by looking at the language used in these quotes like "we share a history", and "brothers and sisters", there is a connection of social and narrative identification with the people experiencing the obstacles. Words such as "brothers and sisters" implement a strong sense of familiarity. It could be interpreted as a sense of responsibility based on a historically shared narrative, even though it didn't happen in the speaker's lifetime.

Within the question of who mobilizes voluntarily and under which premise, the young representative from the student organization 'Norsk start Oslo' shares the organization's struggle to recruit new volunteers and motivate people to get involved in societal actions. As the organization was established as a response to the migration flow 2015, the main task was to create spaces of social interactions for local Norwegians and newcomers. "And to learn from each other to learn from each other's cultures; to learn the Norwegian language which is a really important key to a lot of doors in society, both [to] education and work and of course the social sphere." (Justina'P2', ll.111-113)

Two groups of people appear to be consistent in that organizations work in "everyday integration" (Appendix B, ll.93). "Lot of volunteers are, have parents who were migrants or refugees and we also do have refugees who

previously came to us to learn Norwegian, who are now fluent, who come back to be help for new refugees.” (Justina, ll.260-262)

When it comes to motivation this is again an example of the cohesion between identification and responsibility. Comparable with the cycle of receiving and giving that was addressed by Speaker 2 in the first panel discussion, this dynamic corresponds with social identification and identity creation through shared narratives. Responsibility is an emotion that seems to motivate and drive civil society to "give back" to others after receiving yourself or being in a position of well-being.

### “Trust is the gold of the Nordics” - Public sector and Civil Society dynamics

In the exchange between the panellists, a reoccurring aspect was 'social trust' and cooperation between government and civil organizations in times of crisis. The host brings in the aspect of the happiness index which the Nordic countries are ranking quite high in (Helliwell et al., 2022) . With the curiosity of learning from a best practice that Lithuania could get inspired by, he said, “Trust is the gold of the Nordics” (Host, Appendix B, ll.283). The discussion circulated a comparison of Sweden and Norway representing the Nordic way and the Lithuanian strategy, 'Nils' the Red Cross representative explains the historical position of civil society in welfare development of social trust.

“If you look back [...] the Nordic way of building a society, basically many of the things that are now in the welfare systems were started by people movement [...] that's and what we today call the welfare system, which is today principally run by authorities, was formed in civil society organisations “(Nils, ll. 289-294)

The role of civil society being initiators of a socially secure system changed over time, as well as being mediators between the individual and the government. This also changed and developed their agency within institutional policies. The panelists discover throughout the conversation that Sweden or the Nordics, in general, appear to have a more bureaucratic approach. The Swedish Red Cross representative 'Nils', for instance, gives the example of not being able to place bunk beds for refugees in halls because the organisers would be stopped by fire safety regulations.

“I'm not being sarcastic against my country, I just say that here you are more creative, I think, a little bit more forward leaning and more inspirational in that. “ (Nils, ll.183-185). “In Lithuania, I think you are inspiring in the fact that you are much more easy going. It's quicker, it's faster” (Nils, ll.173-174)

“Sweden is a much more bureaucratic society. We basically, the Swede, expect the public authorities to handle the situation” (Nils, ll.169-170)

Sweden's government is built on the Nordic welfare system. Therefore, the assumption of the public authorities handling social issues is founded in the organizational norms of the societal structure. 'Nils' defends the fact that civil society engagement exists especially in questions of immediate humanitarian needs, but that voluntary actions are sometimes not lasting. He believes that citizens of the Nordic welfare state model are taught by socialization how social challenges, such as integration, fall under the responsibility of the public authorities. "In the long run that's what we expect" (Nils, ll.173)

The data shows that there are different dynamics between civil society and governments, in the Baltics and Nordic, according to the given information in this panel discussion. The Lithuanian civil society appears to have more liberty in choosing their actions towards the goal of providing humanitarian aid. This less bureaucratic system however is built on the responsibility to utilize its own resources and mobilize multiple actors within the civil society. Nevertheless, communication between local governments and the civil society does exist. In the case of Lithuania, in the beginning of the Ukrainian war, led to many people fleeing to the country. 'Adamas' from the Lithuanian initiative 'Strong Together' tells the story of how the prime minister of Lithuania called, asking him if 'Strong Together' has planned actions, based on the experience during the pandemic.

"Well, I think we think doing this and that and well. [...]She listened and she said: Well if you are a Mister Refugee, I'm feeling more comfortable now. [...] I'm not saying that the government didn't do anything, they did a lot. They opened the centres; they mobilized all the institutions; they delivered food; [...]Civil Society did much more and we opened the refugee centre on Ukrainian-Polish border which was the only Lithuanian Refugee Center and it was opened by a civil organization [...] we organized the transportation to Lithuania from Ukrainian border [...] all done with the, with only by civil organizations. So, in a crisis like this, I mean we can feel that there is much more bigger power in a society than in the institution. (Adamas, ll.210-220)

This Lithuanian summary of actions from the public and the third sector in times of immediate migration crisis constitutes a dynamic that is different from the Swedish perspective within this conversation. The two sectors appear to work in a power dynamic where the civil society withholds more realization resources than the government has. One explanation for this could lie in the different economic circumstances that the Baltic states and Nordic states are in. In the case of Lithuania, the challenges do not lie in a scarcity of voluntary action. In the case of the Ukrainian migration crisis, a part of the civil society activation lies in shared identification based on geographical historical circumstances.

## Future challenges of Civil society

Civil society organizations collect years of experience working close to the crisis of humanitarian needs; their potential lies in consistent growth with every crisis they approach. This gives them data and know-how on which practices function the best and which organizational steps can be optimized to react efficiently or be of higher quality. Though the exchanges of all panellists give the impression of successful fast operations, there is the question of sustainability within their actions.

"Often, I think Civil Society is fast; We mobilize people who want to do things quickly and have the energy of doing that. [At] the same time our challenge is to be sustainable, to keep that enthusiasm going" (Nils, ll.161-163)

"Trust is going down in the Nordics and we see in the younger generations that that people do think more [...] individualistically and not [...] collectively. And we also see that involvement in Civil Society is a bit lower in younger people than older generations, so I think it's important" (Justina, ll.315-317)

These quotes express self-reflection, which is crucial for the vision 2030 to become sustainable and integrated in Nordic cooperation, which civil society is a part of. Further, this point combines the first and second panel discussion in their attempt to have a lasting effect and find midterm and long-term solutions. Having this reflection already within civil society creates the opportunity for productive analysis of the ambiguity of action and structure. That critical review could be integrated into future strategies. The story of the Lithuanian participant talking about the interaction with the Lithuanian Prime Minister shows the present awareness of reliance between the two sectors. This reliance, however, is expressed in different ways. On one hand, there are top-down initiatives where the NCM and their sub-programs initiate cooperation based on an outcome that might benefit future policy making and outsource tasks on the meso-sociological level.

On the other hand, civil society organizations in a small country with resources different from those in the Nordic region have established a social network and humanitarian response in crises. The analysis within the field of future challenges for civil society is that communication with the public sector is necessary. This involves a power dynamic review between the structure given by institutions and the crisis-responding actions so that those get supported by the structure rather than slowing their ability. Empowering civil society also means enabling them to move according to the circumstances and not according to bureaucratic steps. This is substantial, especially for civil society organizations that work on a nonprofit level and, therefore, rely on public funding.

"My organization is volunteer driven and we still apply for money from the state from the government [...] the process slows down and you get locked

into one way of seeing the problem but my piece of advice would be to always see the [...] situation as it is right now and try to see what the solution is. The best for it right now and not get lost in ways of how it usually is done” (Justina, ll.422-426)

## Categories relations with Policies documents & theories



*Figure 2 Analysis' categories*

The analysis of the panel discussions brought forward six categories based on the symbiosis of open and thematic coding. These categories are summarizing elements in answering the question of what role civil society actions play in questions of integration and social cohesion within the Vision 2030 and how the Nordic Council of Ministers aspire to encourages civil society's engagement?

The next graphic visualizes an understanding of the categories' relations, the core categories, as they are connected to statements and goals in the latest existing policy documents on the Vision 2030: The Mid-point evaluation report and the program of the Swedish presidency 2024.



*Figure 3 Core categories' relations*

### Mobilization through responsibility and shared values - Creating trust and reliability.

The NCM Presidency rotates yearly and is held by Sweden in 2024. The aims and foci were presented in the "Programme for the Swedish Presidency 2024". As in the original policy documents of Vision 2030, the program of the Swedish Presidency is linguistically precise in placing shared normality by using words like "our" and "we" in naming the lived-by values. The program is introduced by outlining the tense situation in Europe due to the war in Ukraine. Clear words were chosen regarding the "illegal aggression" by Russia, which put the Nordic position on the political reality into words (Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat, 2023, p. 3). The Nordic express their position by referring to strained rights and freedom. This seems to take a toll on the Nordic values: "This also makes our cooperation, and defense of democracy and the right of all people to live in peace and freedom more important than ever." (Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat, 2023, p. 3) The first paragraph on the Swedish Presidency programme manifests a connection between shared values and the appointed goals.

“Our nations share a history, basic values and a strong democratic tradition of democracy. Based on those pillars, we have devised ways of working together [... ]” (Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat, 2023, p. 3)

Addressing the length of time of the cooperation as "our nations share a history" creates the effect of a shared narrative of an experienced time with created "values" and "tradition," which unites the nations. The focus of the Swedish presidency on cross-border mobility and integration emphasizes the "fact that the joint Nordic labour market has served our nations well for 70 years and contributed to our prosperity" (Nordic Council of Ministers

Secretariat, 2023, pp. 3–4) Including the historical developments as a positive amplifier is recurring as a thematic and linguistic pattern. Next to the reflection of past narratives that have shaped collective commonality, the Swedish presidential representatives finalize their programs' introduction by reflecting on the political status quo in Ukraine and drawing responsibility from it for the Nordic region. "As free democracies, it is our obligation and duty to support those who fight for the same rights and, by extension, defend our own." (Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat, 2023, p. 4)

Mobilization is addressed, like civil society, through a sense of responsibility based on historical connections on a macro-sociological level. The Lithuanian panelist 'Adamas' stated solidarity with the Ukrainians through historical geographic similarities. This leads to high sympathy and support through the citizen collective. Further, this motivation trait is to be found on the meso-sociological level as shaped by the student representative of "Norsk start Oslo", where the motivation of volunteers was driven by the fact that people in their families or themselves had similar experiences to the social group receives the humanitarian support.

This quote pictures a bridge of social identity being created through shared experiences and narratives, as Paul Ricoeur describes. It also plays into the question of identity activation, which Hans Andersson opens as a relevant question of activation of actors (like civil society). By combining the attributes of the identity, meaning values such as freedom, democracy, and equal rights, a sense of "duty" and obligation appears. The activated sense of responsibility might create a unified action through identification with previously mentioned values and norms. The mobilization through responsibility is strongly connected to the points made on a circular support system and societal participation, which are created when a sphere of trust exists.

"Because you give and you think that you will get back because you give to society and you trust that Society will give back to you." (Justina, ll.313-314)

Within the same realm is the question: Why do people struggle with social participation within a system that doesn't nurture or reproduce trust between the individuals and the system? The NGO founder from Iceland speaks about her experience working with people fleeing distressing circumstances within their home countries and addresses how those psychological layers influence the ability to engage openly with other social groups.

"they're fleeing civil war so [...] they cannot come on the table and have voices because their voices are not with love for each other and this is why [...] they are not giving back," (Speaker 2, ll.159-161)

The NGO founder emphasizes the importance of informal education programs that are not just focusing on educating people in cultural assimilation. It is rather engaging with the interpersonal needs that have less to do with formal integration policy process but building trust between human beings. The (re-)creation of interpersonal trust is emphasized by representatives of civil society in the two panel discussions. “Creating a sense of familiarity” (Speaker 3. 192); “creating a social room [...] where young refugees can meet students [...] who can inspire them to choose an education, like different education paths to just make it less scary,” (Speaker 2, ll. 118-121); “We can get friends with some Ukrainian family and spend some time with them, that's it.” (Adams, ll.429-430); “if we find a way for people to come together and have a [...] genuine relationship with each other” (Speaker 3, ll. 282-283)

The social identity suggests that groups are part of how we see ourselves and how this influences our self-esteem (Hogg, 2015; Turner, 1975). When the panellists talk about creating social spaces for people to encounter it is simultaneously an encounter of an in-group and an out-group. With the theory of othering in mind, the dynamics of in-group and out-group would be reproduced when people don't identify with one another. However, if social rooms do not reproduce hierarchies based on residential status, civil society organizations provide spaces for redefinitions. The NGO founder from Iceland who experienced a life of multiple migration processes herself emphasizes the need to disconnect from migration status instead interact as individuals with individual needs, visions and inspirations. In Tajfel and Turner's theory an individual goals through a mental process of social categorization, social identification and social comparison. Overcoming the step of judgmental social categorization is important in order to overcome prejudice. In the example of the former participants of the informal language courses in Norwegian student organizations, they can be seen as an example of evaluated group identification. They have compassion for those not able to speak the local language because they used to be part of that group, however, these former participants might have developed language abilities that made them identify closer to the local community. As one individual is mostly participant of more than one social group (Tajfel, 1978b; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) these former participants might experience social identification with the group providing support and those receiving it. Identifying with either of both social groups isn't necessary, as the panelist express. “We can get friends” “have a genuine relationship with each other” (Adamas, ll.429f) These two quotes express a very essential point of creating new social groups independently from the previous in- and out-group. The statements of the panellist confirm the importance of shared values in the mobilization of social action. According to the statements of the panellists, individual and

interpersonal traits are mainly important, like empathy, compassion and emotional participation by listening.

The approachability of civil society organizations is based on the people present and that they engage proactively with the people being new in the community. Part of this proactive engagement is an exchange process where the people receiving support also get the chance to influence the support arrangement. When the panelists speak about listening to them, it opens the opportunity between two or more social groups to recreate the social dynamics of a “we” and “them” structure. Justina from the Norwegian organisation describes how former participants in their language exchange education return as mentors for the people being new in the process. This shows an example of how to listen to the group that policies are made on and providing them the platform to engage in redesigning those policies.

As a big gap exists between the meso-sociological social group and macro institutions such as the NCM, the civil society organizations fill the bridge like the NCM representative mentioned in Panel Discussion 1, when talking about the migrant expert forum. Civil societies have close links to the local community and build social spaces themselves. When new arrivals have access to these social spaces, civil society organisations find the position of being a mediator.

### **Institutional limitations and future challenges of the civil society**

In the panel discussion 2, the speakers reflect transparently on their experience with volunteers, other civil organizations and institutional structures. While the Lithuanian experience was a high dependence of the public sector on civil society, the speaker of 'Strong Together' assumes that Lithuanian citizens believe they have no other choice than to be active themselves. Nils from the Swedish Red Cross appreciates this comment by saying “we all have our geography, we have our history” (Nils, Appendix A line 334). Sweden has established the Nordic welfare model which allows financial and material resources provided by public institutions. However, as the representative of the Red Cross and the student from “Norsk start Oslo” evaluate, the Nordics seem to experience a decrease in voluntary action in the younger generation besides climate activity (Appendix A, ll.343-344). The following quotes will be marked as A and B, according to the originating Appendix.

Justina from Norsk start Oslo includes the observation that the younger generation is adapting more of an individualistic life approach than a collectivistic thinking (Justina, A, ll.315-317). This is an aspect that might be justified in the experienced comfort of the public sector approaching social issues. Civil society's power lies in their workforce, and the ability to mobilize

people. They have their realistic reflection on demographical changes, which influences, the forces of each sector. "The third sector [civil society] depends on the younger generation mobilizing civil society action." (Nils, A, 1.344) Because they are creating the civil society innovation for the next 10s of years. (Appendix A, 1.344)

Looking into Panel Discussion 1, where the NCM representative expresses the council's wish to include more voices from civil society and experts in various fields such as integration, the realization of a mutual reliance emerges. The civil society organization is also reliant on the public sector's engagement in addressing people's social participation. The Swedish Red Cross representative criticizes that in times of parliamentary elections, the local government didn't include raising awareness for civil society engagement in their agendas. (Appendix A, 1.346)

Looking into the objectives made in the action plan for Vision 2030, the analysis confirms that there is awareness of civil society's abilities to reach people in questions of language exchanges, cultural encounters and equal rights (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020, p. 20). What it doesn't include are ways of execution or how the public sector engages actively with civil society organizations. On page 25 it's explained how civil society organizations can apply for project funds that support them financially in realizing their project visions (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020, p. 25). The awareness of civil society involvement increased in the mid point evaluation. The NCM arranged platforms for civil society to engage with one another across regional borders like in Nordic Civ, a conference for Nordic civil society. The midpoint evaluation report also includes a statement by members of the civil society network on the cooperation with the NCM in the vision 2030. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2022, p. 57)

The dynamic between the public sector and civil society can be very well contextualized with the structuration theory by Anthony Giddens. Civil society contains the opportunities to mobilize people and create a large amount of energy and human capital to follow their social actions. However, the ability of civil society lies within a dynamic of constraints and empowerment. Within the theory of Anthony Giddens's structuration, the social action and the structure have a mutual conditioning relation. On one side, action happens within the frame of societal structure, for instance with rules of applying for project funds or the legal settings of being involved in policy-making processes. The other side is that structure is created by social action and therefore is the result of members of society creating society itself (Giddens, 1979; Rebughini, 2022). When the Swedish Red Cross member spoke about the Nordic welfare system being built by people movements, this is what the structuration theory means (Askeland & Strauss; Wijkström & Zimmer, 2011). Structure is conditioned by individuals in society and their actions towards and against societal determinations. Agency happens in a

realm of liberty and empowerment but also pushes the boundaries of society giving limitations. This dynamic between civil society and governmental structure creates what people understand with their norms, rules and cultural habits. (Giddens, 1982)

Anthony Giddens characterized the duality of structure as one core element of the structuration creation. When the civil society is acting and working within the set structure, for instance, applying for project funds and realizing their project goals this might be seen as a “reproduction of the structure through agency”. Nevertheless, it is possible to redesign the structure through agency, one interpretation of this development would be if civil voices and civil society representatives were the core of policy-making. The panel discussions provide a perspective of mutual dependence where the structure finds itself in the need to develop new strategies to succeed in the visions and goals. Including the civil society and the process of policy work, might provide the opportunities to include bottom-up experiences that lead to best practices in the interregional comparison. The civil society could also benefit from mutual influence beyond financial resources. The public sector has a radiance beyond social borders especially when public relations work is done in international institutions. Here they could promote common goals and those who work with a common goal in mind, speaking of civil society. Demographical change influences the public sector on multiple levels, social security system, healthcare system, labour market development and workforce training. And as the analysis suggests it has possibly also an influence on the people working voluntarily. Both sectors need to consider, that age is only one aspect of demographical change. Variables like migration or health crises can influence the predictability of demography drastically.

Giddens's theory of structuration rotates around the assumption of duality. This duality is the reason why Anthony Giddens's structuration theory has been criticized in the academic world (Dallmayr, 1982). One example could be the question of influencing acute events like crises. In a time of exceptional crisis, the focus of the public and the civil society shifted. This situation required emergency reactions, which discovered an inconsistency in the cooperation between institutions and the citizens of the region. As mentioned before, the Nordic region has its history of individual countries following through national strategies when they got into the realm of national sovereignty. The past nine years brought three exceptional events that had their influence even beyond the Nordic region. 2015 and 2016 with the refugee movement from the Middle East, 2020 and following years with the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2022 till this day the Ukrainian war. These events have shown for the Nordic region to be the most integrated and sustainable region, cooperation consistency is equally vital in exceptional situations and lasting development.

## Discussion & Conclusion

Recalling the research questions

*What role does civil society action play in questions of integration and social cohesion within the “Vision 2030”? How is the Nordic Council of Ministers encouraging civil society's engagement? And How can perspectives of social and narrative identity theories be used to understand civic mobilization?*

Civil society takes responsibility for working close to people and engaging with them interpersonally. Through their actions, civil society organizations collect first-line experiences with high value for reality-based policy design. Interaction on the meso-sociological level creates access to support and experiences of the needed initiatives. Approachability is a dimension which the public sector does not always have. However, based on the examples in the analysis, this approachability and proximity are relevant for the integration process of humans and the gain of best practice knowledge. An active and inclusive civil society is vital for responding to social challenges. The NCM, and the public sector in general, should be interested in the sustainability of civil society's actions and workforce. Addressing shared values as a core of Vision 2030 and the general development in Nordic society is one attempt to draw civil society closer to the NCM/public sector's interests. However, as the panelists share, civil society observes a change in gaining new volunteers sustainably. 'Nils' from the Swedish Red Cross criticized the missing inclusion in national governments' political agendas. Though financial resources are given to civil society, empowerment is missing in positions where they can sustainably influence best practice policies and gain more visibility for new volunteers. This step would encourage civil society as their work is acknowledged in its importance and estimated with influence. But it would also increase the likeliness of more young people's societal participation, which is a precise goal of the objectives 11 and 12 of Vision 2030. When objective 11 says the vision 2030 includes the empowerment of young people's voices, it is to be considered that demographical changes are not only based on age but also on emigration and immigration. Therefore, the objectives of Vision 2030 should reflect on the diversity of demographic voices when they intend to encourage societal participation of individuals.

Civil society is motivated by the possibility of living and acting according to its values. The NCM's decision to address the shared values in the welfare system as a "Nordic identity" could have been a strategic step in several ways. Civil Society organizations are collectives of people with the ambition to act based on their common goal, for instance, the societal participation of multiple social groups. By picking up on those motivators and including them in political steps presented as an identity, civil society individuals (and beyond) are invited to elaborate if the statement and goals fit their own. This

is where the dynamic of Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity comes into play. The individuals and collectives evaluate the formulated identity in comparison to their personal identity set.

In the case of NCM's Vision 2030, several of the goals in the area of social sustainability overlap with those of civil society, at least in this study. One strategy of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Vision 2030 is to create a sense of united identity, which might attract society towards the objectives and goals of Vision 2030. Based on the findings of the analysis, it could be speculated that one intention was to share the community so that social trust could increase in Nordic society. Whether this is a political step inspired by social psychology can neither be proved nor refuted within this thesis. Similar applies to the narrative identity by Paul Ricoeur. The analysis of the panel discussion confirms narrative identification as a motivator for civil engagement. Both panel discussions report anecdotes from engagement due to personal experiences. The Icelandic NGO Founder (Speaker 2) shared her personal journey openly and explained how this is the source of her compassion and her sense of giving back, as she encourages others to do as well. The story experiences in "Norsk start Oslo" were very similar, with former students returning to the language courses to teach or those who show social engagement because own family members experienced migration. 'Adamas' spoke directly about the historical-geographical connection between the Lithuanians and Ukrainians based on the narratives the countries shared. Also, the policy paper referred to the shared history of the Nordic societies "that guided the cooperation" and used expression of unity (We, our). These examples of this study's analysis support the qualitative assumption of mobilization based on narrative identification.

Sustainability means also to look further beyond a specific date. Crises management is part of sustainable development, which will continue beyond the date set for Vision 2030. As the panellist has discussed, mobilization isn't enough if it isn't lasting, which is why their empirical knowledge is suitable for best practice recommendations. But even if the NCM aims to do that, their own agency is limited. The NCM set in 1973 the rule that cooperation should 'never [go] further than the interests of each country permit' (Etzold, 2020; Nordisk Rådet, 1973, p. 27), meaning it goes as far as it doesn't collide with national policy strategies. Perhaps Vision 2030 is just a mediator for the idea of an interregional goal, which still has to be implemented at the national level as long as the NCM has no authoritative power. Intergovernmental communication and the dedication to act as an integrated region are needed when addressing a topic of fundamental welfare system concerns. Therefore, one suggestion is to reevaluate the legislative and executive power of the Nordic Council or Nordic Council of Ministers, enabling them to act from the perspective of representing the Nordic region's unity. When the Swedish presidency wrote its plan to promote cross-border mobility to enhance the

skill exchange for a united labour market, the question of integration couldn't be excluded from policy work concerning all Nordic states.

### Potential for further studies

This thesis conducted limited data on the cooperation between public authorities and civil society beyond the time of crises and concrete social challenges. Future studies could evaluate the collaboration areas for preventative work. One example could be the interregional and international project work for youth encounters between the Nordic and Baltics. The NCM exchange program "Nordplus" is one frame for cultural, social, and political awareness for the Nordic-Baltic region in cooperation with local non-governmental organizations. The methodological approach could be cross-cultural and participatory qualitative research inspired by the researcher Pranee Liamputtong. This approach could be used to analyze how interpersonal experiences shape inter-group understanding and acceptance for preventative sustainable social development.

One further aspect that has yet to be explored in this study is the limited decision power of the NCM when it comes to specific policy changes with validation in all Nordic countries. The researcher's impression was that the Nordic cooperation worked mostly with pull factors, providing funds and platforms for conversation, or it could be an amplifier of the national governmental voices. However, the NCM doesn't have an executive power comparable to an institution like the EU parliament. Policy decisions are still made within the nation's sovereignty but can be implemented in all Nordic countries. So far, they agree that this has yet to happen in the area of integration. It would be interesting to investigate further the observed dynamic of mutual reliance between the public sector and civil society. The relation of shifting responsibility in the structure and agency is simultaneously a relation of power, which could be analysed based on Michel Foucault's theories of power and governmentality. The spectrum of stakeholders in the field of social sustainability and cohesion in the Nordic region is suitable for comprehensive discourse analysis.

Another focus that could follow this study is the analysis of the role of the private sector in the questions of integration and crisis reaction within the Nordic region. Going beyond Giddens' duality of structure, the private sector could be discovered as another influential party. Nowadays, the private sector participates in questions about social value. Leaning into the example of the integration of immigrants and labour market integration, the private sector gets involved in promoting and educating within the fields of vocational education and training, as well as advocating for the recognition of skilled migrants who can work in their industry. One example could be the big Swedish corporation Axel Johans Group, which is engaged in societal

challenges with its Axfoundation. The Axfoundation, for instance, cultivated a platform of vocational exchange between people coming from the same industry but different countries (Axfoundation, 2020). With this project, the Axfoundation spread awareness for the integration of immigrants and labour market integration and set an example of how the private sector can get engaged in questions of social concern.

The study concluded that both parties are stakeholders in cohesive Nordic cooperation, which works cross sectionally. With "Our Vision 2030", the interregional cooperation aims for a united alliance that faces international challenges and political developments together. Becoming the most integrated and sustainable region of the world is a statement with political leverage, positioning themselves in the global landscape of politics. In times of a fast-paced reality where globalization causes societal awareness and knowledge of happenings around the globe, it is crucial to sustain reliability and social trust within the regions cooperating. The Nordic welfare model created a frame for reliability, freedom, opportunities, and social cohesion. This image, however, freckles when the inner regional resilience wavers in times of social and humanitarian crisis. The policy papers and panel discussions supported the engaged presence of civil society in social issues and their recognition in policy work steps. Simultaneously, the analysis discovered that both sectors rely on each other's support in order to work. Civil society's strength lies in fast-acting response and collectively energized workforce. The public sector needs this voluntary mobilization to conquer challenges, as experienced through the COVID-19 pandemic and people seeking refuge. Having this reflection within the civil society and the Nordic cooperation creates the opportunity for productive analysis of the ambiguity of action and structure. When reliable institutional structures promote shared values connected to societal participation, they are one way to empower civil society's resources for their agency. With that, they are able to work in favour of Vision 2030.

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## Appendix A

1 Transcript: Audio-visual recording of “Nordic Conference on Integration -2022”,  
2 Introduction and Panel discussion on Integration through civil society in the Nordics  
3 Original Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nliXtcvbmIc> , publ. by Oma hai  
4 [17.03.2023], Transcribed by Eliza Wieske  
5 Original audio length: 00:31:53; panel discussion ends 00:23:14

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7 Abbreviations: Host, Speaker 1 (S1), Speaker 2 (S2), Speaker 3 (S3)

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9 Host: [Brief Introduction in a Nordic Language].. We are turning back to English. We are  
10 coming back to the Nordic aspects and the Nordic, cross national comparison in this  
11 field of the integration through civil society. And then we have some exciting guests and  
12 contributors who will be on stage and help us discuss this from an Icelandic, from a  
13 Nordic perspective but there're representatives from Iceland, the Faroe Islands and  
14 Denmark. So please welcome to the stage [Speaker 1] from Denmark there you are  
15 [Speaker 1] please come to stage and sit in this chair here please. [Speaker 2] from Iceland  
16 you're here and finally [Speaker 3] from the Faroe Islands. Applause please. So I mean I  
17 didn't give you a detailed introduction because it's quite a complicated setup for you I  
18 think and you have very interesting backgrounds from each of your countries. But I would  
19 start with you [Speaker 1], you are the responsible for the Nordic cooperation, the  
20 program for cooperation on integration of refugees and immigrants in the Nordisk  
21 Ministerråd so that's Nordic Council of ministers and you also you work in at the Nordic  
22 level and work with developing new knowledge and new methods and also sharing  
23 experience across the Nordic region. I would like you to just say a few words first about  
24 this program if you if that's okay, just to tell us a little bit about what the program is like  
25 and I will come to you [gesture to other guests] afterwards please if you want to start

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27 S1: Yes thank you very much. The program was initiated in 2015 as we had a large arrival  
28 of refugees to the Nordic countries and it was decided to set up a cooperation program at  
29 the Nordic level because you have quite similar states but at the same time you also have  
30 different outcomes in terms of integration policies. So we wanted to have something to  
31 compare and identify best practices that we could learn from each other. So I would like  
32 to just share a PowerPoint on our vision, I think the technicians they should have it ready?

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34 Host: Yeah it'll put it up now...Here you go.

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36 S1: Okay so this is the vision for 2030. [The main graphic on the Vision 2030, presenting  
37 the three major aspects: green, competitive, social sustainable]. Our main aim is the  
38 Nordic region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world and in  
39 terms of integration we have two strategic priorities: One is the competitive Nordic region  
40 and there are there's a socially sustainable Nordic region. And in terms of developing a  
41 competitive Nordic region we have a strong focus on labour market integration. Then in  
42 terms of a socially sustainable Nordic region we have a strong focus on gender equality,  
43 social cohesion etc and this is also why we decided to set up a Nordic migrant expert  
44 Forum. As the State Secretary said before, it is really important that we don't just talk  
45 about people but that we have a conversation with the people that we do integration  
46 policies on. And this is very briefly what we're doing.

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Host: So this was new to me and that it is actually new this Nordic migrant expert forum and hold out you are a part of this, a member of this [Speaker 2]. So please tell us two words about that but also I need to mention that you are a consultant at the international Department of Welfare in the city of Reykjavik and also a founder and chairperson all of an NGO uh with the abbreviation o m a h i a i so that's o-m-a...

S2: oma hai

Host: and you can tell us what that means because we're kind of this is what we use yeah, so please tell us what the abbreviation what that organization is about a little bit about your role in the expert Forum.

S2: I will speak about my role and experts forum. it's a pleasure to be here and have a voice. As [Speaker 1] mentioned there are so many policies that are made in the Nordic countries or in Europe or all around the world about specific category of people without taking into consideration to listen to them. But I don't say I represent every single immigrant in Iceland or in the world. In my NGO Oma hai we work on the education perspective in order to help a person to grow and they need to have knowledge but what kind of knowledge? This is what we are working on to give this kind of knowledge that makes a person feel he or she is part of the whole world, not part of this group or that group. And here comes the name like we say refugees but we heard from the Ukrainian group that was the only part of this whole conference that understood, they spoke English, that they don't like the word Refugee. So when we work with a person we just give them the knowledge that you are a human being so as a human being what we can do all together to build the capacity and serve the community that we are in.

Host: Okay yeah so we'll come back to that in detail. And please [Speaker 3] please say two words about I mean you're part of this expert forum as well but you're also, you have a role in the immigration authorities in Faroe Islands. Please say two words about the immigration authorities first and then maybe about the role in the expert forum.

S3: Puh two words

Host: Okay give us a little bit because this is something I do know nothing about.

S3: Yeah the Faroe immigration office is also responsible for the integration area and we coordinate with other public authorities and municipalities, organizations about on labor market and language learning and integration and related activities. It's very broad we are working on trying to be more specific and in terms of my role on the Migrant Expert Forum, that's actually you know just like [Speaker 1] said earlier to how do we talk with people? And that's been one of my observations having this job since seven years ago where I would attend these Nordic conferences and I've observed that we're lacking a lot of immigrant representatives within these conversations and that's been a feedback from my perspective of you know we need to include more voices. And I feel like this is a role where I could really contribute in trying to, of course I can not represent everyone but I try to raise issues and challenges that people face in the Faroe Islands.

Host: So how does this what was the vision behind this expert forum and the Nordic dimension of that could you please explain?

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S1: Well when the vision was developed there was an integral part that there should be inclusion of Civil Society because when you have complex problems you need to have also diversity of thought. And we have to have a cross-sectoral approach as well to understand how should we develop proper solutions or the best solutions. So at the strategic level it was already decided to cooperate with civil society and then I think also what we heard as well from different events was that migrants themselves wanted to be more represented in as you also said [Speaker 3] in conferences etc. And we could see that there was a need to develop a forum where we could include and have a conversation at a more strategic level as well. So...

Host: What does that mean? What do you mean on the strategic level?

S1: Well, the cooperation program is managed at the secretary in Copenhagen and to develop the program we have a reference group which consists of representatives from the Ministries with responsibility for integration in the Nordic countries. We have our Norwegian colleague she's sitting here [points to audience] And the expert forum are invited to meet with the reference group and discuss matters that are relevant in terms of integration so we actually we have built we have built a bridge between migrants and the Ministries on developing our Nordic cooperation and integration.

Host: And the role of Civil Society in this, are they represented in what way are they represented? Civil Society, are they part of this as well?

S1: Yes well we now we have [Speaker 2] for example; we also have researchers; we have many different competences and also we have profiles from across the globe as we know and an immigrant is not just one kind of refugee. So we again, we encourage diversity of thought and also understanding that each individual brings their own story and this is what we need to understand as well we when we develop policies on integration.

Host: Could you say two words about the role in the city of Reykjavik. How is how is integration work done by the city and as you experience it? [gesture to Speaker 2]

S2: I would like to say that first this is wonderful step here hopefully it will really lead to bringing peace in the world. I'm coming to you answer your question but I have to say this positive. When I was coming here to Oslo, still I'm answering your question, I thought about the role of having airports it's a tool for people to go from one place to another and then I remember the movie Tom Hanks "The Terminal" when he just stayed in the airport and here it comes the answer to a question: Unfortunately the programs that we have for immigrants and refugees, under the umbrella of integration and we keep giving, giving, giving the materialistic things that they need; giving the bus card; giving the housing; giving this and they we don't see that they have capacities to give back. So all the programs that we have in Reykjavik or Iceland, I talk about my area, is about addressing the materialistic needs of a refugee or immigrant and we are turning people into passive passive people they receive and they receive and they receive and they stay in the terminal forever instead of under the umbrella of integration instead of looking at their capacities and say okay now you receive move to the next step, give back; give back to your community; give back to your neighborhood; give back to your wherever you're coming from; participate in the process of making new knowledge and we are not there.

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Host: Why and why is that? Why is this the function of government because this I think this is quite similar or this is a discussion that's been held in the in the Nordic countries in other places as well. So why is that the role of government and why do they not encourage this these initiatives and action from the Immigrant groups themselves?

S2: I will not talk about governments, I will talk about my NGO because where I try to bring the voices of refugees and immigrants into the programs that we are doing. The one big issue was there that everyone has a package when they move from one place to another or in the same place. And with the integration programs that we have the governments make they concentrate on one or two elements which is related to become part of the country that they are in, without taking into consideration that people when they fled from one region to another, they're fleeing Civil War so when they sit they cannot come on the table and have voices because their voices are not with love for each other and this is why we can they are not giving back, because we are not having enough educational programs to address people. The change comes from within it doesn't come from outside. We need to create safe environments for people to be able to learn new ways of living in this big world.

Host: I'm sorry for interrupting, now what's the role of the NGOs in this? With that your NGO we mentioned, are there other NGOs that can have can help this empowerment process than a giving agency and voice?

S2: Unfortunately no, I would like to say that because we don't take this next element so I give sport to Refugee children or immigrant children, why? Why for that person? Not just to enjoy or learn to become an excellent athlete for himself or herself. It's also to give back to his community for or to the community to the new country that. We are not working on this element that we developed this capacity that people have in themselves to give beyond their own achievement. Unfortunately no we need to create education. Currently my NGO we received the second highest grant for this for this next for the second time also from [inaudible word], a project called "Rewriting stories of War into stories of Peace" but basically how we write stories? We write stories into stories of Peace by for people to put aside their differences and they learn how to live together we don't have those kind of programs.

Host: Okay [Speaker 3] what's it like in the Faroe Islands? Do the interaction between NGOs, government, local government and the Immigrant groups. Do they encourage agency and initiative or do they have this pacifying role of just giving packages and not kind of having this reciprocity?

S3: Yeah I mean a lot of the NGOs player, well we don't have that many but for example the Faroe Red Cross plays a critical role in the welcoming, integrating refugees. For example we have received Ukrainians into the Faroe Islands and they played a very very important role in trying to bring and creating a sense of familiarity and sense of belonging for newcomers. I think it's important to say that in the Faroe Islands I mean we are a small society. For example Oslo a city of 700 000 it's you can say that feeling like a stranger or feeling anonymous is something that you accept, you know, it's a it's a modern day life attribute. But in the Faroe Islands you know we operate with a high sense of familiarity

197 and a closed social network. So we really see a civil society organizations like the Red  
198 Cross play a critical role in enforcing those relationships between locals and the  
199 newcomers.

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201 Host: So they actually play a role as an intermediate and also ..

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203 S3: Yes

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205 Host: kind of and what's what's the similarities and dissimilarities between the Nordic  
206 countries in this area? What's your impression looking at the Nordic region? We've had  
207 some researchers discuss this but still what does it look like; is it easy to organize; is it do  
208 people kind of speak, not the same language necessarily, but they understand, have the  
209 same understanding of the relationship between or what integration means and what civil  
210 society's role is?

211  
212 S1: Well to be honest with you, I think we're still in the beginning of engaging with civil  
213 society. So it's we are still discovering. We have traditionally focused previously on  
214 identifying similarities and differences for example in terms of Labor Market inclusion  
215 so we just launched a report together with OsloMet on integration programs and labor  
216 market outcome and we could see that there was a difference. And we're also doing a  
217 study now on differences and similarities in terms of language, we could hear from many  
218 of the presenters today that language is a key in terms of integration so that's also what  
219 we want to know more about. And also in with regards to what kind of what which role  
220 does Civil Society play in terms of especially informal language learning. So hopefully  
221 this report is going to be launched later this year at a conference in Oslo we will see and  
222 then we will know more about how what are the differences in similarities incorporating  
223 with civil society organizations.

224  
225 Host: And how about the governments? Do they agree to cooperate in this field or do, I  
226 mean, they  
227 have maybe not so much in the field of integration but in the field of immigration policy  
228 certainly the countries do not agree about everything.

229  
230 S1: Hmm, so the Nordic cooperation on integration is an informal cooperation program.  
231 So this means that we don't have regular ministerial meetings but we had one last year  
232 when Finland had the presidency on labor market integration and digitalization. And we  
233 are planning as well for informal ministerial meeting as well as Norway has the  
234 presidency this year. So hopefully we'll be able to convene the ministers as well in in later  
235 this year.

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237 Host: And why do you think it's important to have this this Nordic dimension this Nordic  
238 Corporation in this field? What's kind of the benefit of looking at what the other countries  
239 do and cooperating?

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241 S1: I think that the benefit is definitely that it can, we can clearly see where, when one  
242 country does one investment, what is the outcome? So for example in the OsloMet report  
243 that was published a month ago they discovered that the integration programs were more  
244 successful in Norway and Sweden than in Denmark and one of the conclusions was that  
245 Norway and Sweden are investing more in immigrants competences when they arrive.

246 Either the existing ones or they build on existing competences or they keep they will  
247 develop them before immigrants are send out in the labor  
248 Market. Whereas in Denmark there's a focus on quick access to the labor market and then  
249 in the long term that has not as good as an effect as in Norway and Sweden. So I think it  
250 can give us some quite different interesting perspectives on what actually works in terms  
251 of integration.

252

253 Host: And [Speaker 3] and [Speaker 2], what are your thoughts on this? I mean there has  
254 been a focus traditionally on integration with regard to labor market participation and  
255 education, but there are different aspects. I sense that you have different different  
256 understanding of what uh integration actually means for the immigrants coming and both  
257 refugees and other immigrants I don't know if you want to comment on that. What are the  
258 other dimensions that are...

259

260 S2: I would like to comment on that, from a personal perspective. We need to change the  
261 meaning what we mean by integration. I come from a background that I cannot integrate  
262 anywhere by the way because I'm not accepted anywhere. I am the third generation that I  
263 was born in India from Persian origins. I was never accepted in India as Indian although  
264 I was born there and my mother and my grandmother because I'm not Indian and Persian  
265 origins but I was never accepted in Iran because I'm not Muslim I'm a Baha'i and also I  
266 was born in India so not Persian although I I eat the Persian food Ghormeh Sabzi [laughs]  
267 and I lived all my life since childhood in Oman which is an arabic islamic country but I  
268 was never accepted as Arab or Omani. I'm not Muslim, I'm not Arab and it doesn't matter  
269 I got the language, I got PhD in comparative literature in Arabic language literature and  
270 I wear this [gesture with hands over head] when I'm there. Not never accepted. I go to  
271 their homes, I eat the food: I speak the language; I love the people there; my heart is there.  
272 Still not good enough, still not and now I'm in Iceland 16 years. It doesn't matter how  
273 much you do, still you are an immigrant. The question is what is integration? What does  
274 it take for me to integrate, why is it me always that need to do some something? Always  
275 I'm missing something, always I'm missing something. So I think it's a two-way path  
276 today one of our colleagues from Sweden said that. It's a two-way.

277

278 Host: A common please on this [Speaker 3]

279

280 S3: Yeah I mean as policy makers and we have metrics and indicators that we have to use  
281 to define what is integration but also today I mean from what I heard is, it's about  
282 interpersonal relationships and I believe that if we find, if we find a way for people to  
283 come together and have a related genuine  
284 relationship with each other, could we define that as success and integration? Because  
285 whether we can't speak in the same language or not; but if we can get along and I feel a  
286 sense of belonging and sense of unity I think we have achieved integration that way.

287

288 Host: I think that was a very nice finish to the conversation. Thank you so much for  
289 coming here today for traveling to Norway and participating in this conference and  
290 helping us understand the perspectives both the nordic perspective but also your  
291 perspectives from Iceland and Faroe Islands thank you so much.

292

293 End of Panel discussion 00:23:44

## Appendix B

- 1 Transcript: Audio-visual recording of “If not me, then who? How civil societies mobilize  
2 during crises in Lithuania and the Nordics (ENG)” by Diskusijų festivalis „Būtent!”.  
3 Publ.2022  
4 Original source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQjW-Jfrr4A>  
5
- 6 Anonymous: Host “Tomas”, Panellists: P1 “Adamas”, P2 “Justina”, P3 “Nils”, Audience  
7 member: A1  
8
- 9 Host: It is my pleasure to welcome you all here to this discussion Festival Būten and it is  
10 also a double pleasure that you have chosen this discussion today. A lot of discussions  
11 are taken place at the same time and discussing arts and gender equality, refugees, civil  
12 unions and other very important topics. But our topic is nevertheless also very important.  
13 It is about the role of the civil society in times of crisis. There is a such a Jewish proverb  
14 if you have enemies wish them to live in interesting times. So we are living in interesting  
15 times. We had the Coivd pandemic, and when it looked like that all the bad things are  
16 behind us Russian invasion and intensification of the war in Ukraine started on February.  
17 Ans in these situations not only the role of the state is needed, it's also the role of the civic  
18 society which is important so we will speak about this topic “If not me then who?”. How  
19 civil societies mobilize during crisis in Lithuania and the Nordics. So we will compare  
20 two perspectives the Lithuanian perspective and the Nordic perspective. My name is  
21 [Tomas] I'm representing Vilnius Institute for policy analysis and next to me we have  
22 three wonderful speakers who will share their experiences, and as we are partnering with  
23 the podcast Nordic talks so I'm not allowed to introduce them so I will give a floor to  
24 them to introduce themselves in a couple of sentences so maybe [Adamas-P1] as you can  
25 start.
- 26 P1-Adamas: Hello pleasure to be here my name is [Adamas] I'm a TV journalist and  
27 television producer, I work in this area for more than 25 years and I'm also a member of  
28 civil organization, civil paramilitary organization Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union and I'm a  
29 leader of the platoon in this organization. Today we're going to speak about our initiative  
30 called “Strong together” or [lithuainian title] in Lithuanian language, which is initiative  
31 of our platoon, which we started together with our partners uh different organizations  
32 Lithuanian Scouts and other partners so I will be glad to share my Views and experiences  
33 thank you.
- 34 P2: Hello, nice to see you all here my name is [Justina] and I'm Lithuanian born but living  
35 in Norway I'm a master's student there and I'm here to represent an organization called  
36 “Norsk start Oslo” or Norwegian start Oslo we work with integrating refugees and other  
37 migrants. So I will be speaking on their behalf and what we do. Yes.
- 38 P3:Thank you, My name is [Nils], I'm the Secretary General of the Swedish Red Cross  
39 being that I assume I somehow represent the 191 Red Cross, Red Crescent Association  
40 that we have worldwide. I will not speak on behalf of Lithuania Red Cross they could do  
41 that very much for themselves. But I also think I represent to some extent that Swedish  
42 civil society and the different role that civil society and similar role that Civil Society has

43 in Sweden compared to Lithuania and the role we have in Nordic. Also involved in in the  
44 international activities around migration in in the Red Cross movement, thank you.

45 Host: Thank you. So maybe we could start with [Adamas] sharing your experience about  
46 the start of the initiative “Stronger Together” because of the question “If not me then  
47 who?”. When I was looking who will do something you did it together with your friends  
48 and colleagues. Please tell us more about it.

49 P1: Yeah, when the, the Covid pandemic was a huge shock for every society around the  
50 world of course and a lot of people felt lost and they they didn't know how to react to to  
51 to the situation when everything changed in the moment, because there was a total  
52 lockdown in Lithuania and as in other countries. So what we did then: We just met in  
53 semi-legal way in the middle of park standing in the round big circle, like 25 men, making  
54 a big big circle and discussing what we should do. So we started a big information  
55 campaign which we made without any government or any other resources we just did it  
56 by ourselves. We just did a lot of Internet banners, radio, television clips and social  
57 commercials just delivered it to all the broadcasters for free just to share and to  
58 communicate with the audience. So that was the one thing that we started and then we  
59 created the platform the web platform where everyone who just wanted to share his time  
60 to deliver something for elder people or for people who have some diseases, who were  
61 absolutely locked at their houses, just to bring them food or any other goods they need.  
62 So in the in the evening of the so we met on Monday and we started the campaign on  
63 Wednesday. In one day we created the video clips, internet platform. We made a contracts  
64 with all the media etc. and in the evening, Wednesday evening we already had 2 000  
65 volunteers work working for us. They, we opened the call center which was in one of  
66 our, in my office actually in my production company office. Everyone just volunteered  
67 who were working in in my company and the others came and that's how we created the  
68 system which was active during all the lockdown. So we managed to invite eight thousand  
69 five hundred volunteers who who visited like 10 000 houses in Lithuania and a lot of  
70 people were visited by volunteers like tens of times so no one could count how many  
71 visits we made but I think it's like hundred thousand or something like this

72 Host: And before moving to [Justina] so I would like to ask one another question and the  
73 latest Civic empowerment index which is published yearly. Lithuania indicates that in the  
74 year 2020 which were marked by this Covid pandemic 61.1 percent of Lithuanians  
75 donated many things or in any other way supported charity organizations. And it is a  
76 remarkable increase by 22.3 percentage points compared to the year of 2019. And I  
77 wonder how do you see the situation. Is this just a temporary mobilization in the face of  
78 the big crisis that we never witnessed before or do we already see also the long-term  
79 changes which will stay after this crisis and like, we are of course waiting for the Ukraine  
80 war to finish and to end as soon as possible but, will the strength continue?

81 P1: I don't feel that the trend like this will continue like forever but when something  
82 shocking like Covid or war against Ukraine happens, society mobilizes and then this  
83 curve shoots up and I think it will never it will never go down to the very same point that  
84 it was before. Because this let's say voluntarization of the society, it's it's happening. I

85 mean when the war started all the organizations they managed to invite, they managed to  
86 have like tens of thousands volunteers. They didn't even needed that numbers but people  
87 just registered because they wanted to deliver something, they wanna bring something to  
88 society, they want to share. So once it happens it never goes back and I think that we live  
89 in a period of very big changes in our society and we, in the future if something happens  
90 we will already know that we have tens or even hundreds of thousand people in Lithuania  
91 who are thinking about the others first than the self that's the most important thing in those  
92 two years which will stay for tens of years.

93 Host: Great and I think also the kind of social pressures are changing. Before it used to  
94 be as if you do not have the newest iPhones or you're not do that it belong you are way  
95 behind. Now it's different nobody cares about your iPhone. Do you participate in “Strong  
96 together” or somewhere else, No,you don't know, so you don't belong here. [laughs]. So  
97 it's much better social pressure than it used to be you're right.

98 P1: We do not say that but if someone's saying that's okay.

99 Host: I'm saying that[laughs]. [Talking to P2- Justina] You're right you were in a good  
100 position to compare Lithuanian and Norwegian civil societies. So what kind of  
101 differences and similarities maybe you see? But at the beginning I actually would like to  
102 also you to share the story of your organization that you represent “Norsk start Oslo” and  
103 what kind of goals do you try to achieve in your activities and the second part of the  
104 question would be what kind of obstacles from the operational point of view do you face  
105 in your activities.

106 P2: So our mission is everyday integration of refugees. We started or our sister  
107 organization Norwegian Start Trondheim started as a reaction of the big migrant flows of  
108 2015. We saw that countries panicked and there was this political voice saying: oh no  
109 what will, this is a crisis. So we wanted to be a voice back saying: this is what we can do.  
110 And by providing social spaces for Norwegian citizens and the refugees to meet and to  
111 learn from each other to learn from each other's cultures; to learn the Norwegian language  
112 which is a really important key to a lot of doors in society, both [to] education and work  
113 and of course the social sphere. We wanted to be a helping hand in a way for integration  
114 into different spheres. And that's actually why the idea of it being a student organization  
115 came to be because we saw that a lot of refugees came and they had educations that were  
116 not accepted by the Norwegian state so they had to start from scratch. And refugees  
117 coming there, coming to Norway often think about building a life there because the crisis  
118 they're running from is a permanent type of crisis. So by making, creating a social room  
119 where you can, where young refugees can meet students who can teach them about their  
120 organizations, who can Inspire them to choose an education, like different education paths  
121 to just make it less scary, to think okay for the next three or five years I'm gonna have to  
122 go to university again, even though I maybe have worked as a lawyer or something before  
123 in my home country. Yeah so we saw a problem and we thought we can we can help solve  
124 it. And organizationally with what, with the challenges we face; It is the recruitment of  
125 participants but also the people..Civil Society..what is it called? The volunteers, yeah.  
126 Because we do need to constantly recruit volunteers and we also need to constantly work

127 with making it, making our platform known for our participants, so that there's actually  
128 someone who comes and uses the resources that we provide. So we work a lot with that  
129 and also with seeing how the refugees, the groups of refugees that come to Norway they  
130 are different and they have different needs. Then we also have to change our, what we  
131 provide to a better help or yeah.

132 Host: Thank you. Dear [Nils], Red Cross is one of the organizations that works actively  
133 in helping refugees so you [several inaudible word] here experience about this we can  
134 even say previous Refugee crisis that mostly people from the Middle East or east  
135 countries came to Europe. Now we are facing another challenge; Ukrainian War refugees  
136 are coming to Europe, to different countries and we spoke before this discussion: You  
137 traveled in March this region and you had an opportunity to witness how different  
138 countries are approaching this crisis, how they are helping how they are working with the  
139 integrational strategies. So what are your observations about the situation and maybe  
140 comparison of Nordics and Baltics, if we can divide it like this.

141 P3: Yeah that's a big question. Let me just start but basically, I mean since we're talking  
142 about the radiance of the organizations. I mean the one I'm representing is of course  
143 significantly older, but still I mean the Red Cross was formed on the battlefield of  
144 Northern Italy where a Swiss banker, politician witnessed the consequences of a horrific  
145 war between France, Italy and Austria; where dying soldiers, wounded soldiers were  
146 living lying down on the battlefield and they just said that that regardless of the reason  
147 why these people were fighting against each other somebody need to care for the human  
148 beings. And that's basically the course, the root cause for our organization 160 years ago  
149 and still today, to prevent and reduce human suffering wherever it occurs. And that's of  
150 course a gigantic task and we cannot do that, authorities could not do that and challenges,  
151 we are talking about challenges in the situations; we have the challenges so of course  
152 mostly for the people affected, right? I mean there are millions of people now deeply  
153 affected by the conflict in Ukraine. Some, most of them in the country to various degrees  
154 and we all know that from media and from personal contacts; Some leaving the country  
155 quite a few ending up in Lithuania, some also in the other countries also. But even more  
156 significantly in Poland and Romania, Hungarian, Moldova; countries that do not have the  
157 kind of infrastructure people authorities financial resources that we have in the Nordic  
158 *And* the Baltics. So it's a big difference in how that is done, right? And then I mean the  
159 question, I mean the theme for this this conference talk is what's the role of Civil Society  
160 in that; and that I think is interesting when we hear the examples that often I think Civil  
161 Society is fast; We mobilize people who want to do things quickly and have the energy  
162 of doing that. And on, the same time our challenge is to be sustainable, to keep that  
163 enthusiasm going; Because if we keep to the topic of the conflict in Ukraine, the  
164 consequence is lots of people came in the first weeks of March even more in April and  
165 then the level I think in Lithuania and also in Sweden, Norway and Denmark has been  
166 more or less stable, but the people's needs in our countries and Ukraine are still there. So  
167 we also need to think that into the picture, I think. What kind of role does Civil Society  
168 have? What should it have? And how does it differ? If I compare Sweden to Lithuania;  
169 Sweden is a much more bureaucratic society. We basically, the Swede, expect the public

170 authorities to handle the situation, right? So that and that's the going in position. Then we  
171 could, as individuals, add different things which also the Swedes are doing; We have huge  
172 mobilization of financial resources and also of people helping out getting beds and the  
173 food and stuff in place, but in the long run that's what we expect. In Lithuania, I think you  
174 are inspiring in the fact that you are much more easy going. It's quicker, it's faster and  
175 things that are done here. When I came here to Vilnius in March, end of March this spring,  
176 I mean, I stayed a day with the, within the reception center in downtown Vilnius, which  
177 had a beautiful flow centered around the refugee situation, where people could get food;  
178 they could get registration; they could get help to get transports to families, who offered  
179 by "Stroner Together" I.T platform I think even and if you needed to stay there was like  
180 135 or 150 bunk beds on the second floor. Well in Sweden I mean don't even think of  
181 putting bunk beds in a place, if you don't have pre-installed sprinkler systems it's against  
182 the regulations, right? So fire brigade would stop you from doing that. And that's I mean  
183 I'm not being sarcastic against my country, I just say that here you are more creative I  
184 think a little bit more forward leaning and more inspirational in that. In the long run I  
185 mean both things must work; also authority rules must work and people need to get to  
186 schools and get sustainability systems. So I think somewhere in that area I think you have  
187 the comparisons.

188 Host: [Adamas]?

189 P1: Yeah I just I just thought that Lithuania is still on its way to understanding that the  
190 government is in charge of everything or the our expectations are mostly on our self not  
191 on the government. So that makes things easier and more complicated at the same time  
192 because the when we go to Russia's war in Ukraine and the migrants crisis War migrants  
193 crisis and as you all know more than 50 000 people came to Lithuania. It's a huge number  
194 for the nation which has a bit more than 2.5 million inhabitants here. So when those  
195 thousands of people came the whole idea was that no Refugee from Ukraine will live in  
196 any public building. I mean in a school, in a sport hall, in any public building; they will  
197 live as regular normal people in the people's apartments. So no government would ever  
198 be able to deliver such number of apartments except the society itself. So that's why we  
199 addressed the society just to share their homes with the brothers and sisters from Ukraine  
200 and to invite them to stay in their homes as long as they need. So that was the main idea  
201 I mean that no Refugee will live in public camp only in the private houses. So and the  
202 biggest achievement is that we did it. I mean no one is living in in a railway station or in  
203 a spot wall or in any school or wherever. Every Ukrainian in Lithuania lives in an  
204 apartment. That's that was a big challenge and we prepared for that like two or three  
205 weeks before but when you were saying about the expectations, I will tell you the story  
206 which I never tell anyone. There was like a week before the war and the Prime Minister  
207 called me and she invited me saying what you gonna do about the refugees? Do you  
208 imagine the situation like this in Sweden? You wouldn't ever imagine anything like this.  
209 And I was saying that: Well, I think we think doing this and that and well. And she listened  
210 and she says she said: "Well if you are a Mister Refugee I'm feeling more comfortable  
211 now". So that was the, that was the I mean I'm not saying that the government didn't do  
212 anything. They did a lot. They opened they opened the centers; they mobilized the all the

213 institutions; they delivered food; they made a lot. But the Civil Society, I think, in  
214 especially in the very beginning of crisis in the first month. Civil Society did much more  
215 and we opened the refugee center on Ukrainian-Polish border which was the only  
216 Lithuanian Refugee Center and it was opened by a civil organization I mean. And a lot of  
217 different things, I mean we're we organized the transportation to Lithuania from  
218 Ukrainian border we delivered like 10 000 people to Lithuania and it was all done, all  
219 done with the, with only by civil organizations. So in the crisis like this, I mean we can  
220 we can feel that there is much more bigger power in a society than in the institution. And  
221 there was a Lithuanian Olympic Committee president, former Olympian Champion  
222 passing by and she was the one to call like the third or second day of war and she called  
223 me saying that "I want to give my gold, the Olympic medal, to the one who will benefit  
224 the biggest amounts amount of money to refugees" And there was a company which  
225 benefited with the 100 000 Euros to our foundation let's say to our organization and we  
226 called the man, the owner, we never spoke them before saying that: Now you are benefited  
227 to have the Olympic gold and he said I'll could you send the gold back and I will derive  
228 on another thousand. So that's a big story about the atmosphere in the society when the  
229 when the war started. And of course in Lithuania we feel very close to Ukrainians because  
230 we share the history we used to live in one country I mean not in the Soviet occupation  
231 but in the medieval times, when we used to be a uh one country Grand duchy of Lithuania  
232 so we still feel a very big sympathy to them and that's why it's easier to find the way to  
233 Hearts of uh of people in Lithuania in Poland or somewhere around in the region.

234 Host: Thanks, in a few minutes I will turn to you [turning to audienc] because I have no  
235 doubt that you also have some questions regarding our topic. But now I would like to ask  
236 maybe all the participants but especially "Nils" first of all because we spoke about the  
237 relationship between NGOs and the government and that Civic organizations sometimes  
238 are much quicker to react and to adapt to a different changing circumstances, but I would  
239 like to speak also about the relationship between NGOs and the private sector and you  
240 "Nils" I read your CV and before moving into Red Cross you accumulated a huge  
241 experience working for the multinational companies. And I wonder like what kind of  
242 skills are the most important and for the sustainability of the NGOs, is it necessary for  
243 them also to attract people who before moving into NGO sector have experience in the  
244 private sector and especially running bigger companies and Etc.? Is that kay is this the  
245 one of the keys to solve the sustainability problem of the different NGOs?

246 P3: No, I don't know that. I think, I mean what you need in in all kind of organizations. I  
247 think 's [Tomas] example about entrepreneurship and how you start organizations out of  
248 something which I think is the key factor basically that is that you found find in business  
249 sector, as well as in student life or activist life and so and different aspects are important.  
250 I think also Civil Society organizations now find that that business people or people will  
251 all from a private background, are more value driven today than 15 years ago. I don't  
252 know what your picture is on that [Justina] but I think I mean people.. If you are below  
253 above the level where you simply need to fight for survival and fight to put food on the  
254 table that is, right? I mean then the people I think today, if I go 20 years back I think in  
255 my experience I meet a lot of people who want to come to work for the Red Cross; where

256 competition in salaries and bonuses is not the thing basically, I mean, they want to spend  
257 their life on Earth in a good way. I think we see the same thing in the climate organizations  
258 in various initiatives. So what's your take? [gesture towards Justina]

259 P2: When we recruit people we do try to rekindle the motivation from within and we do  
260 see that in our organization a lot of volunteers are, have parents who were migrants or  
261 refugees and we also do have refugees who previously came to us to learn Norwegian,  
262 who are now fluent, who come back to be help for new refugees. So we do see the inner  
263 motivation and I mean that's what it has to be motivated by. Not the status but that's the  
264 center of the Civil Society, I think.

265 Host: Okay now I will ask the question which is very important for me personally because  
266 I'm trying to puzzle that out and after reading uh Richard Layard's book "Can We Be  
267 Happier?" the economy of happiness, I started to be really interested in the economy of  
268 Happiness when governments adopting policies do not simply look at will it increase or  
269 decrease GDP. But they will they are also looking at how different policies affect the way  
270 the people feel how they evaluate their quality of life and of course when we look at  
271 the happiness index Nordics are on the top. Now in the latest index I think Finland is  
272 leading Sweden's seventh if I do not mistake. But then what was very interesting for me  
273 I found out that a scholar John Helliwell, he actually found out that there are six variables  
274 that explain 70 percent of the variance in average happiness across the countries. So first  
275 is Trust; the proportion of people who think most people can be trusted. Then the second  
276 Generosity; the proportion who have donated money to a charity in the present month.  
277 Third social support; the proportion of people who have relatives or friends they can count  
278 on to help them whenever they need them. Afterwards Freedom; the proportion who are  
279 satisfied with their freedom to choose what they want to do with their life. And fifth and  
280 sixth Health and Income so I will not touch upon the last two. But first four clearly speak  
281 about the importance of the Civil Society and do you have the key, do you have the answer  
282 so how did the Nordics manage to achieve this, when they call Trust the North gold? Not  
283 oil, Not gold reserves, not something. Trust is the gold of the Nordics. So where is the  
284 key of Nordic's success?

285 P3: Is that for me or for everybody or...?

286 Host: For everyone.. [Adamas] can answer..

287 P3: yeah I think...

288 P1: I mean I can only guess [laughs]

289 P3: No, I, If you look back in in the Nordic way of building a society basically many of  
290 the things that are now in the welfare systems were started by people movement, right? I  
291 mean we were relatively early we're giving voting rights to women; we were relatively  
292 early developing basic health services on a broader scale; unions were strong early in the  
293 Nordic countries and that's and what we today call the welfare system which is today is  
294 principally run by authorities, was formed in Civil Society organizations and that I think  
295 you built the fundament of trust in a way between people. But also I mean trust is today  
296 challenged right, in the Nordic and the Baltics. Because I mean we talked about and today

297 everybody's very recipient for good reasons about the people being affected by the war in  
298 Ukraine but that doesn't mean that we are recipient of people who are in in humanitarian  
299 need because of refugee situation in general. That's also not true in Lithuania, right? I  
300 mean we have the different complex Refugee situations also affecting Lithuania with  
301 completely different political consequences. The same thing in Sweden where we took  
302 relatively many people coming here in 2015 and 2016 where of course the sustainability  
303 of the support for those people coming then could not be put on civil society organizations  
304 only. And that is changing the political landscape, that is changing societies and that we  
305 see also across all over Europe. We can add different opinions on that whether that's good  
306 or better where we stand politically but it's a fact that is happening. So I mean the trust  
307 factor is not there forever, right? Like in all good relations, all good things you need to  
308 maintain and do a little bit of Maintenance and make sure that state is alive. There are  
309 things civil society and our various organizations have a responsibility in doing that,  
310 right?

311 P2: I think that the trust motivates cooperation in civil society that makes it possible to  
312 start up organizations or start up a group that works towards a goal; because you give and  
313 you think that you will get back because you give to society and you trust that Society  
314 will give back to you. But if I'm not wrong then a trust is going down in the Nordics and  
315 we see in the younger generations that that people do think more in the individualistically  
316 and not the collectively. And we also see that involvement in Civil Society is a bit lower  
317 in younger people than older generations so I think it's important. But yeah, it's not a stone  
318 a rock that will be there forever if we don't um take care of it.

319 Host: Yeah. [Adamas]?

320 P1: Well as [Nils] said, I mean the the whole structure of the society in Sweden could be  
321 the major goal or the structure of society in in Scandinavia the major goal for Lithuania  
322 to have the such a model. But if we go back to history I mean in in the beginning of 20th  
323 century we we were the nation which passed the law allowing women in 1922 vote in the  
324 Parliament and we actually almost elected the first president female in in in Europe. I  
325 mean she was one of the two main candidates and she refused to do that. We had like we  
326 had society which has five six hundred people as members in civil organizations and then  
327 the Soviet occupation came and all all had, all this was erased there was a culture of  
328 stealing from the your government from the from your state. It was a culture of hiding  
329 information from your neighbor because anyone could be KGB agent or someone who  
330 will who will deliver any information to officials and that is the situation which we left  
331 only 30 years ago. So we are in a total totally different circumstances and we still need a  
332 long long way to go to reach those standards as were as were mentioned.

333 P3: I think, I think this is an extremely important comment; because we all have our  
334 geography we will have our history and that is there. I mean Sweden developed an early  
335 welfare state because of the fact that we were one of the few countries in post-world War  
336 II that was not bombed and we happen to have companies that were good at doing the  
337 things that were needed because the rest of Europe was bombed. And we had the U.S  
338 paying money into Europe in the Marshall Plan. And that that formed basically the basis

339 of where we are today. Now we have a completely different structure again with the  
340 situation that we all need to take extremely seriously and that is also changing the politics  
341 within the Nations, right? And so I think that comment is extremely valid but also  
342 [Justina's] comment; I mean it's not so that Civil Society organizations have stopped  
343 developing. I mean, if we should get climate activity going we are dependent on the  
344 younger generation mobilizing Civil Society action. I mean we are in Sweden now in the  
345 middle of a the run-up phase of a parliamentary election and climate is not on top of the  
346 agenda; I mean nuclear power and electricity and and criminal gangs and harder measures  
347 or are the all dominant, right? So we need also inspiring new Civil Society organization  
348 to affect also the coming 10, 20, 30, 40 years so that cannot stop. I had to say that.

349 Host: Yeah thanks...I know that Nordics like to walk so it's time for me also to walk a  
350 bit. So I look at you if you have any questions. Yeah? Okay..all right [microphone gets  
351 past to audience] Okay no opportunity for me to walk, but thanks for the question.

352 A1: Before I ask my question quite provocative, I would like to say appreciation and one  
353 comment. One of course I wanted to say that I do really appreciate “Stronger Together”  
354 and other organizations that had put many efforts to help let's say and mobilize in crisis.  
355 The other comment to Mister [Nils], that you said and you compared our system with  
356 Sweden that we are more flexible but in the long run probably is the state and Civil  
357 Society organization should go hand in hand because it can guarantee a long-term  
358 sustainability. And my question is about the third crisis that we had in Lithuania and we  
359 didn't have a mobilization of Civil Society because it was let's say political issue it was  
360 migrant crisis on our Belarusian and Lithuanian border, it's called Hybrid Warfare and  
361 we don't know the answer. My question is: Don't you think that public discourse or media  
362 role how and why Civil Society mobilizes it also depends on them? And we also have  
363 legal migrant definition in all our Medias, right? And it's it was strongly strongly  
364 supported that it's illegal immigration but when we look at those people, those families in  
365 detention centers we saw, quite the [inaudible word] of human lifes. So my question is  
366 about public discourse or even a public narrative from our government institution because  
367 we see differences. And would it help to mobilize our civil societies to help not let's say  
368 quite difficult situations media and the...

369 Host: So who is who is taking the lead?

370 P3: I should probably not volunteer, but I think I think the question and the point is  
371 extremely valid and I think that we need as grown-up adults need to realize that a lot of  
372 things are happening simultaneously, right? Today I mean I spent a couple of hours also  
373 with my colleagues in Lithuania Red Cross. The activities that they are doing in making  
374 sure that also the all aspects of migrant situations are cared for and are extremely  
375 important; we are doing the same in Sweden or the Red Cross societies now when it  
376 comes to European Union it's extremely active on this. And I think the challenge is that  
377 we as human beings are reacting the way we are. I mean it's easy in the first round to feel  
378 sympathy for people who you feel are more or less as yourself and it could be yourself  
379 that comes instinctively to us all it doesn't matter if it's a traffic accident, a migrant  
380 situation or a big other thing. But people are more distant we are more distant and in

381 politics and in media that immediately hits. I mean if I speak in Sweden now the Ukrainian  
382 refugees could go on all public transportations showing their passports they don't even  
383 need the tickets and the ticket check-up people you know they bow when they see the  
384 passport. Now the guys from Afghanistan now being 22-23 they get fined right although  
385 that their migrant status is exactly the same. Is that fair? No. Is it the political fact? Yes.  
386 And in that area we do need Civil Society to be able to act and to say and to change but  
387 the politics the rules of society that is what we did decide upon in democracy situations  
388 that's where we vote about that and there we are complex as societies. I don't know if that  
389 goes too far but basically I from my point of view, that's where your questions are  
390 basically. We have similar situations being handled in different ways because we are  
391 complex as people and because politics picks up that immediately and then put it into  
392 black and white.

393 Host: [Adamas]?

394 P1: Yeah, going back to the very specific question which was asked about the migrant  
395 crisis which was the highest in its level year before. So I would call everyone not to be  
396 naïve and to understand what was really happening; that was human trafficking operation  
397 made by the government of Belarussia seeking to destabilize the political and social  
398 situation and in Lithuania and Poland before.. which are the most pro-ukrainian countries  
399 in the region just to destabilize situation in those countries before attacking Ukraine. So  
400 that was a matter of National Security, the first thing. It wasn't any situation which  
401 happened accidentally when the people, when the people decided to go to welfare  
402 countries because they decided it. It was the human trafficking operation, organized and  
403 financed by the government of Belarussia and it was organized by the plane who belonged  
404 to the state company, the Belarusian air or whatever what's the name of the organization.  
405 So it was the operation which had a target the destabilization of political and social  
406 situation and Lithuania and Poland before attacking Ukraine. So it is not about the human  
407 rights it's about the National Security of Lithuania and Poland first and only after this it  
408 goes to the human rights.

409 Host: okay any more questions yeah

410 [Censored: It follows a comment by another audience member off topic. Addressing the  
411 political power of money focusing on the USA and United Kingdom. The Host cuts the  
412 comment off. The original is to be found on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQjW-  
413 Jfrr4A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQjW-Jfrr4A) in the timestamps [00:48:14 – 00:49:43]]

414 Host: ...Okay thank you, thank you for this piece of advice. And actually, we will also  
415 finish with this one, because Nordic talks have a tradition of finishing each podcast with  
416 the recommendations personal recommendations of what each of us can do in our sphere  
417 so, when we were speaking today about Civic sector about the different NGOs. So what  
418 can be done to strengthen the Civic resilient, Civic societies and actually maybe you have  
419 some kind of a personal experiences or some success stories that could be repeated. Okay,  
420 [Justina]?

421 P2: I think for the Nordic countries a piece of advice maybe would be too since it's so  
422 bureaucratized and even even though my organization is volunteer driven and we still  
423 apply for money from the state from the government so we..the process slows down and  
424 you get locked into one way of seeing the problem but my piece of advice would be to  
425 always see the situations that is, the situation as it is right now and try to see what the  
426 solution is the best for it right now and not get lost in ways of how it usually is done.

427 Host: [Adamas]?

428 P1: Well what could we do? I mean not spending our money or not creating bigger  
429 organizations or whatever. We can get friends with some Ukrainian family and spend  
430 some time with them that's it. It will take like a couple of hours per week but it will it  
431 would will come back with a brilliant emotions and it will help people to uh to relax and  
432 to understand better the culture and the and the Society of the country just. It's very easy  
433 just get friends with some Ukrainian family.

434 Host: [Nils]?

435 P3: Advice? I would say to Nordic and Baltic people stay engaged. Spend if you have  
436 five hours spend those; if you have five euros to spend those; if you have some time to  
437 go to the Būtan festival and talk about things which are important do that. Because I mean  
438 we cannot fall back we need to be active in our societies and not take things for granted  
439 so stay engaged that would be my simple advice.

440 Host: Thank you and applauses are already coming so thanks [Nils], thanks [Justina],  
441 thanks [Adamas]. And thanks for Nordic Council of Ministers office in Lithuania for  
442 organizing this discussion. Būtan is just starting so I hope you will be back to this tent in  
443 the coming discussions and we will find also many other interesting events going on so  
444 see you all and enjoy this beautiful, no I wanted to say summer evening unfortunately it's  
445 an Autumn evening all the best

446 P1: Thank you

447 P3: Thank you