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Governing resettlement beyond safety: Multilevel governance as a model for sustainable resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children in rural Sweden?

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Abstract

This article explores the sustainability of the resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children from their perspective. Against the backdrop of a critical assessment of the multilevel governance of resettlement, it compares two rural municipalities. Unaccompanied refugee children in the municipality with a disempowering local governance model were hindered to engage with civil society, while in the municipality with an enabling model, their integration was enhanced. Achieving safety by legal residency does not by itself resolve the liminalities of belonging to unaccompanied refugee children. Beyond positive engagement by professionals, supporting encounters with civil society were found to enhance integration and belonging, while the lack of these strengthened marginalities. Unaccompanied refugee children resettlement is largely influenced by the benevolence of local actors when the state vacates its responsibility to co-ordinate efforts. While civil society has an important role to play, a helping civil society cannot be assumed. Tensions rose also due to the

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collision between institutional styles. The marketisation of refugee reception at the national level led to loss of ability to plan schooling in rural municipalities, reinforcing practices of physical and symbolic segregation of children in the refugee context education. These accounts shed also light on the resilience of unaccompanied refugee children encountering local resettlement efforts emerging in the context of increasingly securitised asylum policies.

KEYWORDS
belonging, civil society, ethnicity, gender, migration, multiple level governance of resettlement, municipalities, rural, sustainability, unaccompanied refugee children

INTRODUCTION

The resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children[1] occurs in local contexts. However, it assumes, according to the prevailing model of multilevel governance of migration, the participation and collaboration between public, market and civil society agents at a local, regional and national level. The objective of this article is to closely examine how the multilevel governance of migration could be perceived as a sustainable model for the resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children by comparing two Swedish rural municipalities.

International research separates issues of 'safety' (access to citizenship and legal rights) and 'belonging' (being part of the social net of the receiving community) and 'success' (mature state of integration) (Kohli, 2011). This article considers sustainable resettlement as one that enables 'success' also seen as 'human flourishing' (Wright, 2010) and 'belonging' to communities, beyond the provision of 'safety'. Sustainable resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children is entangled with rural spaces and the agency of local actors. While unaccompanied refugee children from one of the studied municipalities, Solträsk express satisfaction: 'it feels good here', most children from Kallvik use excuses, such as 'there are no jobs', 'it is boring here', 'one does not get the same support' as elsewhere, to motivate why they want to leave. The narratives of 'belonging' and 'longing to leave' of children open for reflection on two different local implementations of resettlement. These differences can contribute to a critical assessment of multilevel governance as a model for the sustainable resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children.

Sweden has received a relatively high proportion of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children due to the comparatively child-oriented asylum process (Freedman, 2016), also referred to as 'Swedish exceptionalism' (Borevi, 2014), that prevailed against the backdrop of increasing asylum governance within the EU (Cantat, 2015; Schierup & Ålund, 2011). Half of all asylum seekers who arrived in 2015 were children and half of all asylum-seeking children (35,369) were unaccompanied (Barnombudsmannen, 2017). After the sharp turn in asylum regulations in November 2015 (Löfven & Romson, 2015), Swedish policies adjusted to the EU minimum standard, introducing increased suspicion directed at unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's self-declared

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age in the asylum process, combined with a medicalisation of age determination and restrictions on family reunions (Asztalos Morell, 2018). Local responses in Sweden varied from pro-refugee support for children facing deportation (Asztalos Morell, 2018), to anti-refugee protests manifesting in burning down care homes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (Horning et al., 2020). The approach to resettlement has been criticised for delegating important functions to civil society and doing so without necessarily involving them in decision-making. Furthermore, the lack of a central coordinating authority has contributed to uncertainties among asylum seekers about whom to turn to for help (Arora Jonsson & Larsson, 2021). This has in turn increased insecurities and liminalities of belonging among refugees in local communities, even after obtaining residency.

Similarly, the situation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, those without a permanent residency permit, is encapsulated in a state of 'temporary stasis' (Kohli & Kaukko, 2017, p. 491) connected to legal uncertainties related to their status and safety (McAreavey & Krivokapic-Skoko, 2019). Their formal status is uncertain until they obtain permanent residency status. However, unaccompanied refugee children, those in legal safety, continue to share the same institutional boundaries in the school system or in accommodation as asylum-seekers. They experience liminalities and face boundaries in social encounters even after receiving permanent residency status (Wernersjö, 2014).

Despite rising research interest in the connections between sustainability and rural development (Marsden, 2013; McAreavey & Krivokapic-Skoko, 2019; Scoones et al., 2020) sustainability is, with important exceptions (Morén-Alegret et al., 2018), seldom addressed in the rural migration context. This is also true for the case of the resettlement of children in the refugee context in rural areas (Jørgensen & Martiny Bruun, 2020), despite increased interest internationally for theorising sustainability in relation to these children (Binazzi, 2019; El Ghamari & Bartoszewicz, 2020).

The few studies addressing this issue make important contributions to the understanding of the complexity of the situation of children in the refugee context, such as, being in various stages of the asylum-seeking process or being unaccompanied or residing with their families. They primarily focus on the role of distinct institutions in reception (Jørgensen & Martiny Bruun, 2020; Öhrn & Beach, 2019), not on the interplay between the institutions (Darvishpour et al., 2019b). Additionally, they focus on questions of youth identities and belonging to rural spaces across a broad spectrum of local contexts (Thunborg et al., 2021; Wernersjö, 2014). With few exceptions (Darvishpour et al., 2019a; Wernersjö, 2014), the spotlight has not been on unaccompanied refugee children, but either on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (Kohli & Kaukko, 2017; Öhrn & Beach, 2019; Thunborg et al., 2021) or on refugee children who reside with their families (Mathisen, 2020). Therefore despite important contributions, research to date has not comprehensively addressed the sustainability of governance for the resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children.

DETERRENTS AND ENABLERS OF SUSTAINABLE RESETTLEMENT

Sustainability has been often described as a 'fuzzy' concept with roots in environmental movements and international policy declarations aiming to achieve desired outcomes and hinder threats for future generations (Morén-Alegret et al., 2018). Critical perspectives on sustainability emphasise its transformative focus (Scoones et al., 2020). As Wright postulates in his work Real Utopias: 'transforming existing institutions and social structures in the right way has the

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potential to substantially reduce human suffering and expand the possibilities for 'human flourishing' (Wright, 2010, 2012). From the perspective of unaccompanied refugee children 'human flourishing' or a state of 'success' (Kohli, 2011) implies an ideal state to be reached. On the one hand, at the state of 'success' former refugees are to achieve certain freedoms, such as the ability to choose residence; to be free from visibility as refugees – and from being defined by the institutional and informal constraints of being a refugee. On the other hand, in this state their ability to reciprocate to the community is enhanced (Kohli, 2011). This status can be seen as the goal of sustainable resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children, a status that can also contribute to sustainable communities. Thus, resettlement should strive to create conditions favourable to achieve this status.

'Belonging', a stage characterised by recognition by and participation in communities (Freire, 2000) could be seen as being crucial to achieve 'human flourishing'. Thereof, a feeling of 'belonging' of unaccompanied refugee children is contingent on the forms of entanglement with the receiving society and its institutions governing resettlement. Previous research with rural children in the refugee context emphasised the 'liminalities of belonging' (Kaukko & Wernersjö, 2017, p. 11; Yuval-Davis, 2011) denying recognition for them as a member of society on equal terms (May, 2011). Resettlement has been associated with physical and symbolic boundary drawings. Welfare services engaging unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children in Ireland were seen to 'produce ghettoized welfare subjects' (Christie, 2002, p. 196). Other research has found that spatial separation through special residences for refugees and segregated introductory school classes for children in the refugee context (Thunborg et al., 2021) implied social and symbolic boundary drawings (Anthias, 2001) between residents and these children. This perpetuated the perception of refugee children as in need of 'catching up', having uncertain claims for belonging (Hubbard, 2005; Panelli et al., 2009) and their knowledge, just as knowledge of refugees in more general terms (Arora-Jonsson, 2017a), being discarded as being irrelevant to the Swedish context. Such institutional practices imply racialised hierarchies of worthiness, (Lentin, 2008) symbolic boundary drawing between 'we' and 'them' (McAreavey & Krivokapic-Skoko, 2019).

The politics of belonging is thus contingent on local institutional practices responding to the national dehumanising placement regime of refugees (Lundberg & Lind, 2017). This also opens the space for local action. Stretmo and Melander's (2013) study on care homes – sites for institutional care for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children, identified two types of approaches that social workers used: one that considers unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children as the 'other', which focuses on boundaries and rules. The other approach considers them as children in general and focuses on care and support. It should, however, be noted that although unaccompanied refugee children do not adjust as well to working life compared to those born in Sweden, they do so better than other refugee children, which may be explained by a better integration process compared to those arriving with their families (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2018). The ability of professionals to gain the trust of unaccompanied refugee children has been shown to be a key factor in the promotion of their resettlement (Eide et al., 2020).

However, beyond professional support, the provision of meaningful activities, social contacts and relations resembling family bonds were found to reduce the children's vulnerabilities (Thommessen et al., 2017) and build trust (Raghallaigh, 2014). While Wessendorf and Philimore (2019) argue that only strong social ties evoke a sense of belonging, Glorius et al. (2020) observed that even weak ties can contribute and intensify with time. This also connects to the dynamics between civil society and the state, rooted in diverse institutional styles and accountabilities, and to the question of to what degree civil society is or is not entangled with symbolic boundary drawings and how the state is coordinating such efforts (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021).

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The securitisation of refugee policies in Sweden (Asztalos Morell, 2018) and globally (Asztalos Morell & Darvishpour, 2018) has formed hostile discourses differentiating between deserving 'genuine', 'good refugees' and undeserving 'bogus' refugees (Hetz, 2021), distinctions influencing every-day perceptions. Such constructions of 'otherness' prompt the need to explore the importance of 'everyday practice and lived experience of diversity' for such boundary drawings (Wise & Velayutham, 2009, p. 3).

Meanwhile, beyond those studies engaged with 'boundary-maintenance', research has also elevated the role of intercultural or 'transversal enablers', in other words, those 'who are able to reach out to, engage with, and overcome potential differences within, and between, communities' (Radford, 2016, p. 2135). Such may be 'structural transversal enablers' being able to facilitate exchange due to their positions in communities and institutions, while 'everyday transversal enablers' are enhancing exchange in everyday encounters (Radford, 2016). Thus, it is important to explore how enablers are configured within resettlement governance. Looking at reciprocal aspects of exclusion and inclusion assumes to perceive unaccompanied refugee children as agents, instead of victims and to set the focus on their agencies and resilience (Mathisen & Cele, 2020). Rather than looking at them as research objects and defining a priori what suitable goals should be for them and which challenges to focus on, this analysis takes as its point of departure the perceptions and perspectives of children themselves.

GOVERNANCE AND THE SETTLEMENT OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

As a response to the neoliberal critique of the inefficiency of the state to regulate processes of globalisation, multilevel governance emerged, reflecting an overall shift from government to governance. The function of the state has been re-identified as 'coordinator, manager or facilitator, rather than as provider and director' (Shucksmith, 2010, p. 4). Neoliberal governance implies that independent actors operate on different vertical and territorial levels and that different types of actors, such as state, civil society, and business collaborate in the process of developing, coordinating, and delivering policy across these different levels. Multilevel governance prevails both for the reception of asylum seekers and the integration of refugees with residence permits (Bache & Flinders, 2004) and for rural policies more widely (Arora-Jonsson, 2017b). This article takes its departure from these two interconnected research fields: one critical of multilevel governance in the context of rural development at large, while the other of refugee resettlement from a local and refugee perspective.

First, locally anchored social practices constructing difference and belonging (Hoekstra, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2007) increasingly mitigate securitising state policies and national sentiments. Thus, municipal responses vary (Haselbacher & Segarra, 2021), reflecting the interplay within local welfare state assemblages between diverse municipal, market and civil society stakeholders. Some divert from restrictive national policies introducing more inclusionary practices (Cohen, 2018; Feischmidt et al., 2019), while others, reinforce exclusionary practices and xenophobic attitudes (Ambrosini, 2013; Castelli Gattinara, 2018). An underlying question for this study has been to unpack the local space of action to form sustainable resettlement for unaccompanied refugee children and to examine how the two municipalities in this study exemplify divergent trends.

Second, critical perspectives on multilevel governance of rural development highlight how it relies on the interplay between different economic coordination forms (Nemes et al., 2014) which imply different institutional styles: hierarchical (government), economic (market) and network

(civil society) (Thompson, 2003). There is an inbuilt tension between these different modes of coordination, the local heuristic versus the central administrative agents. Among the points of criticisms concerning this form of governance are its operationalisation and coordination. It leads to diverse assemblages of multiple actors reflecting 'differences in values, approaches, obligations and objectives of individuals and communities active at different levels' (Nemes et al., 2014, p. 229). Therefore, tensions may arise when different institutional styles (government and market) with different coordination forms (hierarchical and economic) embedded into power asymmetries between these actors acting on different levels clash. These general critical concerns also serve as points of departure to reflect on the critique of refugee resettlement, specifically where state functions were outsourced to market providers (Humphris & Sigona, 2019) that impacted services for unaccompanied refugee children especially adversely (Bhabha & Schmidt, 2008).

Third, multilevel governance opens the door for civil society mobilisation, which has its own dynamics. The assemblage of different actors may modify or strengthen the state's intentions. Civil society engagement is a strong force that can open the local space of action (Asztalos Morell, 2018; Feischmidt et al., 2019) and form local civil resistance models for accommodating refugees, filling places left vacant by the state. However, critical research has raised doubts about how multilevel governance can take on board the interests of refugee (Arora-Jonsson, 2017). In the local arena, institutions and civil society negotiate the belonging (legally as well as socially) of asylum-seeking children (Thunborg et al., 2021), where civil society is not necessarily receptive to refugees. Integration is typically predicated on majority norms about what kind of knowledge is considered relevant, rendering migrant perspectives (Arora-Jonsson & Ågren, 2019) including that of children in the refugee context irrelevant (Svensson & Eastmond, 2013). Even more, local arenas may open for refugee-opposing sentiments, which strengthen the liminalities of belonging of refugees by 'differentialist understanding' of race, through depoliticising suffering and differentiating between 'good refugees' and 'bogus refugees' implying a crisis of solidarity (Mavelli, 2017, p. 5).

A fourth trend focuses on the deficiencies of governance and co-ordination between actors. Neo-liberal multilevel governance of refugee reception incorporates complex and poorly coordinated practices of the national (Migration Agency) and municipal level state institutions, the private sector (outsourced service providers) and civil society actors (who are assumed to benevolently fill in vacated responsibilities of care and compassion) (Larsson, 2020). The shift to governance promoting 'development from below' (Arora-Jonsson, 2017a) provoked concerns about how it implicates changes in the realms of freedom of civil society (Arora-Jonsson, 2017b), to the uncertainties of 'who is to do what' and leaving integration to the "'charity for the 'other'" (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021). The state is seen abandoning its role to 'coordinate' the collaboration between state, market and civil actors in municipal practices of resettlement of refugees. However, without state coordination, there is no guarantee that civil organisations can or will take on the vacated functions (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021). The study explores how experiences of unaccompanied refugee children reflect upon the role of the state in coordinating their resettlement.

To find sustainable forms of resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children in rural areas is a special concern, since rural municipalities have taken a disproportionately high share of refugees compared to urban municipalities. Resettlement in remote areas, which struggle to maintain social services, has special challenges. The lack of ethnic civil organisations can contribute to 'double isolation' of refugees (Arora Jonsson & Larsson, 2021).

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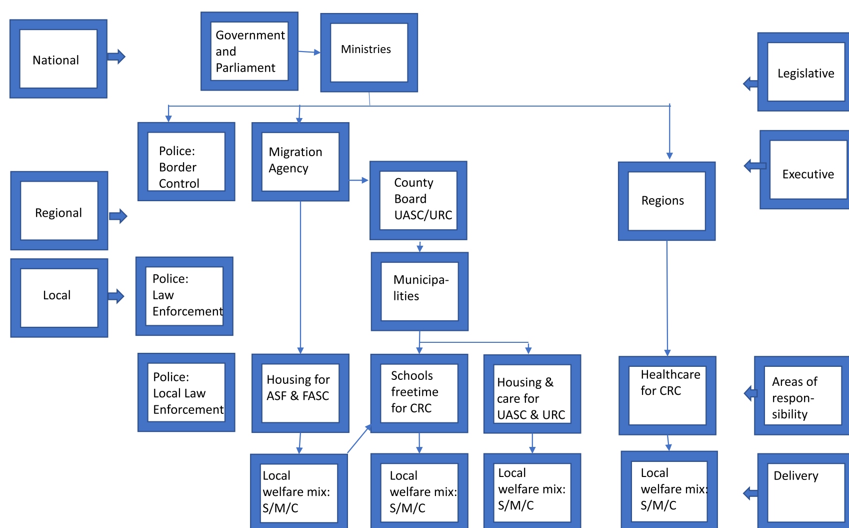

FIGURE 1 Multilevel governance of resetlement of children in the refugee context. ASF, asylum-seeking families; FASC, asylum-seeking children in families; S/M/C, delivery by state/market/civil society actors; UASC, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children; URC, unaccompanied refugee children.

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE OF THE RECEPTION AND RESETTLEMENT OF CHILDREN IN SWEDEN

Governing for unaccompanied refugee children in Sweden is complex (Forte, 2016). It is composed of different types of actors functioning on different levels, such as national, regional, local with varying tasks and operational modes (see Figure 1). The national Migration Agency decides on asylum claims and is responsible for securing residence for adult asylum seekers and for children arriving with families. The accommodation of families and adults is often outsourced to market actors seeking profitable sites for establishing housing units.

Concerning the placement of refugees, a principle of joint responsibility was adopted in Sweden in 2016 (Regeringen, 2016). According to this, the number of asylum seekers, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, that are placed to a municipality (kommuntal) is decided by the County Board, based on the number assigned to each county (Länstal) decided by the Migration Agency (SFS, 2016:38-40) in co-ordination with the County Boards. The number to be assigned to each municipality (kommuntal) is based on the size of the municipality, number of unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children already accommodated and conditions of the municipality. The allocation is often contested by municipalities. The responsibility for the provision of the children's accommodation, care, and education is delegated to the Social Committee (Socialnämnd) in the municipality during the inquiry and after having received residency. Meanwhile, the county authorities where these children reside have the responsibility to provide health care.

These state institutions function on three levels, national, regional and municipal, and function within their own independent hierarchical (government) institutional logics (Thompson, 2003). While these authorities have distinct responsibilities, the de facto delivery of services is realised by the actors of the local welfare mix. Since municipalities enjoy autonomy, the delivery form is decided by the politically elected Municipal Council[2] that must follow the directives of public

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TABLE 1 Composition of unaccompanied refugee children in the sample (all names are fictive).

Name	Gender	Status	Country of origin	Residence
Solträsk				
N1 Said	Male	Permanent	Syria	HVB
N2 Roshaan	Male	Temporary	Afghanistan	HVB
N3 Mustafa	Male	Permanent	Syria	HVB
N4 Amir	Male	Permanent	Syria	HVB
N5 Yusef	Male	Permanent	Eritrea	HVB
Kallvik				
K1 Atash	Male		Afghanistan	HVB
K2 Gawhar	Male	Temporary	Afghanistan	SB
K3 Gulzar	Male	Permanent	Afghanistan	SB
K4 Dawit	Male	Permanent	Eritrea	HVB
K5 Fatemah	Female	Permanent	Eritrea	SB
K6 Winta	Female	Permanent	Eritrea	SB

Abbreviation: HVB, home for care and housing; SB, special housing for unaccompanied refugee children close to adulthood.

procurement (Law of Public Procurement SFS, 2007:1091; SFS, 2016:570). They can decide to deliver services either within their own regime or outsource them to private actors operating along a market logic (such as refugee accommodation businesses or private schools and health units) or to civil society actors (such as family homes for accommodating unaccompanied children, or legal custodians). The new so-called Law of Freedom of Choice (SFS nr, 2008:962) gave municipalities the option to choose providers of public services. Services not formally rendered by authorities are 'vacated' for benevolent and by this not accountable agency by civil society agents, both formal, such as churches and associations, and informal, such as individual citizens. Some of the latter may obtain certain limited support from the authorities in the form of economic transfers or access to space and logistics. Similarly, local businesses may contribute towards mobilisation in a self-organising fashion.

DATA, ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND ANALYSIS

This study is based on interviews with a subset of 11 unaccompanied refugee children from a larger study (see Table 1). The sample constituted approximately 10% of these children. The youth were contacted through their care homes. They were between 16 and 18 years old from two rural municipalities (five Solträsk and six Kallvik; two girls; nine boys). Seven of them resided in special group residence for youths in state care, 'home for care and housing' (HVB)[3] and four in semi-autonomous support housing, both are referred to as care homes. Several of them had previous experience with family home placements. In addition, five interviews were conducted in Solträsk with social service, school, library and care home staff.

The research was approved by the Ethical Research Council with special attention to the needs of minors. Participation was voluntary, written consent was provided, and participants were offered anonymity and protection that information conveyed would not be handed over for use by third party. Interviews were transcribed and anonymised through the use of pseudonyms. Municipal place names are fictitious.

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This study is based on life-story interviews with open-ended questions inviting the children to reflect on key aspects of their situation. A narrative approach was especially suitable since narratives 'perform a critical social and political function and participate in the discursive construction of a sense of identity – of who is "us" and who is "them"' (Andrews, 2014, p. 37). According to Yuval-Davis (2006, pp. 201–202), the 'stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)' constitute the identity and ways in which the narrators reflect on their lives and their ability to realise themselves through 'doings' and as 'beings' (Sen, 1985). Memories are embedded in social and cultural institutions and practices: it is 'individuals as group members who remember' (Weltsch, 2002).

Therefore, this study views the intentions of the children to stay or leave, not as a pure reflection on rurality as an imaginary place of tranquillity or boredom defined against the reference point of the urban (Rye, 2014). Instead, these narratives are seen to unfold in a social context (Andrews, 2007) along 'entanglements' with the local (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012). They are outcomes of material and non-material aspects of resettlement processes (Flynn & Kay, 2017) embedded in the fibre of local communities forming municipal practices of governing unaccompanied refugee children's resettlement.

The narratives have been categorised into several cycles (Saldana, 2013). The first cycle examined how unaccompanied refugee children identified concerns and solutions for their struggles to realise goals of importance for them. A value coding comparing narratives of challenges and those identifying positive answers to the same problem was conducted in the second cycle. In the third cycle the problem areas and solutions defined by children were analysed in the light of current research. Since the analysis is based on a limited sample, Solträsk and Kallvik stand as assemblages of practices identified by children.

LOCAL CHALLENGES IN THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN STATE AND MARKET COORDINATION FORMS

This study was initiated in 2016, when, following the refugee wave of 2015, an exceptionally high number of refugees, including unaccompanied children, applied for asylum in Sweden. Rural municipalities, much like the two municipalities of Solträsk and Kallvik in this study, with populations of about 5800 and 8500, respectively, have been forced into a situation that requires them to take a disproportionately high share of refugees. The proportion of refugees that officially were placed to the municipalities in 2015 constituted 1.1% and 0.8%, respectively, of the total number of municipal residents compared to 0.3% in an average Swedish municipality (Migrationsverket, 2021). The real challenge, however, has been that in 2015–2016, these municipalities received around 10 times the officially designated levels of refugees. In 2016 Solträsk became the residence of 930 asylum seekers, 250 of whom already had permanent permits and 60 unaccompanied refugee children. Around one third of the total refugee population were minors. Overnight, 130 new pupils without Swedish language skills had to be accommodated in a school planned for 600. This is corroborated by experiences documented for other rural municipalities (Öhrn & Beach, 2019).

Municipalities in Sweden rely partly on their own taxes and partly on specific transfers from the government to cover extra expenses that arise from the duties assigned to them by the state for the reception of refugees. There are often grievances between rural municipalities and the national state, where municipalities feel the compensation by the government is unfairly low and

the burden unequally high. Both Kallvik and Solträsk have appealed in different fora against the uneven burdens on their municipalities.

As municipal leaders from Solträsk recounted, a placement of three outsourced asylum seeker housing units to their municipality by the Migration Agency happened without consultation. Rural municipalities became attractive for business resettlements accommodating asylum seekers, due to availability of cheap housing. This unforeseeable influx of refugees, with large number of family member asylum-seeking children placed in the new outsourced housing units of the Migration Agency, located in the municipality, resulted in huge challenges for creating conditions for sustainable provision of schooling.

For one, this can be seen as an outcome of clashes between what Nemes et al. (2014) and Thompson (2003) refer to as institutional styles. When provision of services is outsourced by the Migration Agency, market actors engage along profit interests, targeting peripheral rural municipalities to accommodate asylum seekers, outside the hierarchical logic of government. It could also be related to the lack of co-ordination between the national authority and local government. In this case it concerned the municipal provision of schooling, a matter that fell outside of the responsibilities of the Migration Agency, yet it was an area where the placement of family member asylum-seeking children by the Migration Agency had a substantial impact.

PLACEMENT BY MUNICIPAL SOCIAL SERVICES AND LIVING CONDITIONS

Due to the unexpected increase in placements of unaccompanied asylum-seeking, following 2015 the two municipalities had to expand services speedily. Both improvised by expanding housing units in the municipal regimes and placing these children in family homes, sometimes located outside of the municipality.

Placement was also an important concern for unaccompanied refugee children. A common grievance articulated by them was how their wishes concerning placements were not taken into consideration by social services (see Table 2). These accounts raise issues relating to the recognition of their experiences as well as their ability to participate in decisions concerning their life conditions.

Accounts from Kallvik exemplify an authoritative attitude to unaccompanied refugee children that disempowered them. The accounts of Atash and Gawhar, two boys from Afghanistan, converge since both were moved from their primary placement against their will. Kallvik did not have capacity for their accommodation in 2015, so they were sourced out to family homes in Stockholm and Bålsta (see Figure 2). Both boys were well accommodated by their family homes and were established in the community. After a year, Kallvik social services declared that Gawhar was not allowed to stay at his family home since: 'You are our child and should reside in our municipality'. He opposed this at first: 'I did not accept it. The staff from Kallvik came two-three times to fetch me … I said: "I do not want to move" and then they said, "We will come with the police to your family home".' Thus, social services removed the child from a well-functioning situation and denied recognition to the expressed wish of the child to stay, acting against social service principles based on UN's Child Convention to consider the 'best for the child' (Lundberg & Lind, 2017).

In contrast, Dawit, an Eritrean boy had asked to be shifted because he was unhappy with his situation at his care home. His wish to move was not recognised as a valid claim, and he was forced to stay in Kallvik. Dawit originates from Eritrea and was tortured in a refugee-camp in

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TABLE 2 Comparing the two municipal models of resettlement.

	Solträsk	Kallvik
Municipal institutions		
• Social services	Recognitional	Authoritative
• Care homes (HVB)	Empowering Care and support	Boundary setting 'We and them'
• School	Segregated	Segregated
Civil society		
• Formal associations (e.g., sport)	Inclusive	Inclusive/exclusive
• Ethnic organisations	Active for one ethnic group	None
• Custodians	Supportive	Supportive/none-engaging
• Informal contacts with majority society members	Positive	Positive/distant gaze
• Informal contacts with established ethnic group	Positive for some	Not present
Municipal co-ordination of civil society contacts	Enforcing	Vacated and inhibiting
Enhancement of belonging to local society	Positive	Negative with some exceptions

Abbreviation: HVB, home for care and housing.

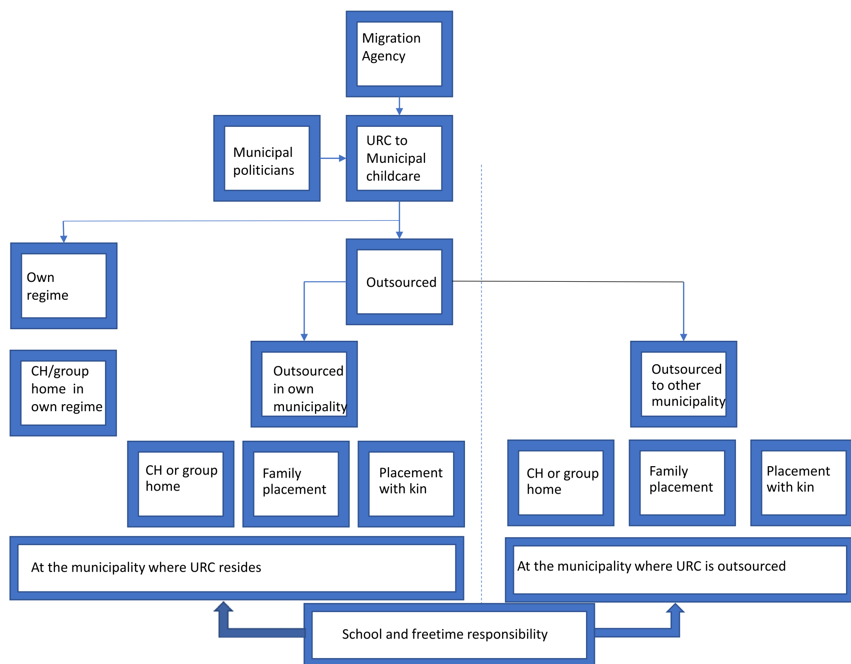

FIGURE 2 Municipal provision of housing for unaccompanied refugee children according to the local welfare mix. CH, care home; URC, unaccompanied refugee children.

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Libya for being Christian. He was struggling with posttraumatic problems, yet at the time of the data collection he had not received professional help. Dawit experienced difficulties bonding with boys at the residence, most of whom originated from Muslim countries. He described how he 'asked for help from everyone', including his custodian, social services, care home and migration services without response and had to stay in the care home where he felt insecure.

Dawit was careful not to blame the staff at the care home when he described his extreme loneliness:

> There are those who live there also. But I do not spend time with them. I am alone. I go out alone, and I feel myself alone ... The staff is good there. They take good care of me. I only feel myself lonely there. I have no friends. I have no trouble. It is just the place. I do not like it. I would like to move away from here (Dawit)

Dawit had no local community anchorage. He did, however, have contact with an Eritrean Christian congregation in the neighbouring community, where he wanted to be placed.

These cases exemplify how legal definitions of belonging clash with personal emotional belonging felt by unaccompanied refugee children. Municipalities have a free hand to decide the form and location for accommodating these children. However, the reluctance of Kallvik municipality to adjust to the wishes of the three children cannot be explained by restrictive legislation. This stands in contrast to accounts of Solträsk's practices enabling unaccompanied refugee children.

Children's accounts about placement from Solträsk indicate a higher level of freedom of agency and empowering practice, which implies that their wishes are recognised, and they participate in decisions made concerning their lives. Amir, from Syria, had his first municipal placement in Stockholm at a family home. His wish to be placed in Solträsk, where his cousins were residing was approved. Similarly, Yusef from Eritrea was able to change to a care home from a family home which prevented him from attending late evening football training due to the evening curfew regulations of the family. Mustafa from Syria was first placed in a care home in the forest 7 km from the main settlement and with a bus connection only once a day: 'it was in the forest and if you needed to buy something you had to bike or walk 7 km'. With his agreement he was moved by social services to another care home and this eased his ability to attend school.

The comparison of the experiences of unaccompanied refugee children in the two municipalities indicates practices reflecting divergent 'politics of adjustment' (Haselbacher & Segarra, 2021) and regimes of belonging. The local governance of settlement of unaccompanied refugee children was enabling for these children in Solträsk in contrast to Kallvik where there was evidence of disempowering practices. Multilevel governance of the settlement of unaccompanied children leaves municipalities with the freedom to act. This effectively removes the state's responsibility to ensure an equal and empowering service for children. It does not suitably recognise their needs nor encourage their participation in decisions about their future and so fails to contribute to their sense of belonging.

NEGOTIATION OF GRIEVANCES WITHIN MUNICIPAL CARE HOMES

Children's accounts from the two municipalities on care home practices in handling grievances differed. Gulzar, who came from Afghanistan shared discontent with others in his care home in Kallvik. While others opted to be accommodating, he pursued an open conflict with care home

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staff, demanding access to Wi-Fi, arguing that Wi-Fi 'is kind of everybody's right … these days'. This led to conflict and he experienced what he perceived as racism from a staff member:

> She said: "Oh, where did you live before you came to Sweden?"; and I answered: "I lived in Iran". "Did you have Wi-Fi?". "Yes, one could say so, I had it in my mobile." "Did you have to pay for that?" "Yes, I had to". "Aha!" … and then she said: "You see, this is a big difference. You must be thankful that you receive everything free of charge… We pay taxes so that you can live free of charge." And I think this is very racist (Gulzar)

Staff members work under regulations which require them to set limits. However, limiting the provision of Wi-Fi could have been elucidated in an objective manner, rather than, packaged into a 'we' and 'them' construction of un-deservingness, all of which was perceived as racist by Gulzar. The staff viewed Gulzar as coming from an underprivileged situation, that he should not expect more than he had before and that he should be thankful and in debt to Swedish society. This constructs the provision of services not as a right, but as 'charity to the "other"' (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021).

The disempowering practice in Kallvik stands in contrast with Solträsk where unaccompanied refugee children were generally satisfied with social services, as Abdulla Hamid recounted: 'if I needed something, they have given it to me'. Accounts of good relations between the children from different ethnic backgrounds were also more pronounced. Interviews with staff indicated an engagement to create family-like relations among children and between staff and children, where the authority of staff was perceived in terms of a parental, caring custodian.

While practices from Kallvik corroborate practices that mediate 'belonging' along with accentuating 'we' and 'them' divisions (McAreavey & Krivokapic-Skoko, 2019) and (un)deservingness (Asztalos Morell, 2018), the narratives of children from Solträsk bring forward enabling practices of local welfare workers, enabling participation and recognition on equal terms (May, 2011).[4] These examples confirm that local municipal welfare workers in care units have a space of action to accentuate the liminalities of unaccompanied refugee children's belonging.

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND SEGREGATION

Children in the refugee context in both municipalities were placed into segregated introductory classes, which were to prepare them to qualify for entrance into the mainstream Swedish educational curriculum and to participate in classes with Swedish pupils. Pedagogic research is critical of the standard practice of placing asylum-seeking children into segregated introductory classes (Jepson Wigg, 2019; Svensson & Eastmond, 2013) due to the typically long stay in these classes (Skolverket, 2017). This creates a condition of 'permanent contingency', (Skowronski, 2013) which has been found to hinder children's desire to become part of society (Svensson & Eastmond, 2013). Research recommends that young people move on from introductory classes as soon as possible to improve study results and integration (Bunar, 2015).

The interviews highlighted that the schools have not made any attempt to create integrated moments of teaching in the two municipalities:

> We sit here, and they sit there. This is the way it is. I do not know why, but we do not dare to go and talk, and they do not dare to talk. It is the same. I feel that they are

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also afraid. And we are also afraid. And it is little also due to the language. We…are afraid to make a mistake. (Said from Solträsk)

Not only do unaccompanied refugee children not mix with Swedish pupils in the breaks, but, as Said explains, they often talk within their own ethnic groups, which prevents the practice of Swedish: 'While during lectures everybody is speaking Swedish, after the class, in the corridors, I speak Arabic, the others speak Persian, and the Eritreans speak Tigrinya'. Nonetheless, others also give accounts of friendships between refugee children across diverse ethnic groups. Thus, unaccompanied refugee children experience how their poor skills in Swedish inhibit interacting with Swedish youth, while a lack of such interaction limits their chances to improve their Swedish skills.

The experience of those who have managed to qualify for 'normal' education varies. Some, like Yusef, have contact with Swedish pupils. However, he concludes: 'I have no friends there, even if they are kind'. These voices echo the voices of other children in a refugee context (Mathisen, 2020; Svensson & Eastmond, 2013; Wernersjö, 2014). This indicates that the lack of social interaction between Swedish and unaccompanied refugee pupils prevails even after the latter has improved language skills. Gulzar, from Kallvik, explored later, is one exception among the interviewed children, who succeeded in finding Swedish school friends after moving to a mixed class. Gulzar is a good example of how individual cases can deviate from majority experiences due to differences in personal resilience and the help of enablers (Radford, 2016).

These immanent child perspectives contribute to further elucidate understandings of critical pedagogical research by seeing the school as part of local migration governance and a key institution for sustainable rural communities. Unaccompanied refugee children's experiences show how a one-sided focus of the school to transfer curriculum knowledge disregards the important role that the school has in contributing to wider social integration. This connects to other research showing that lack of participation has been counter-indicative to language and cultural learning (Allan & Catts, 2014; Osman et al., 2020; Thunborg et al., 2021) and building of social trust (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2010; Putnam, 2004). Accounts from this study also indicate that the segregation of children in the refugee context into catching up classes disqualified their prior knowledge and experiences as insignificant. Segregated classes reified symbolic borders between Swedish pupils as bearers of valuable knowledge in 'normal classes' and these children as being deficient of this knowledge, in introductory classes (Mathisen, 2020). Schools are meant to mediate the feeling of belonging and identity (Osman et al., 2020) and to contribute to the mental health of these children (Spaas et al., 2021). Rather, this study corroborates previous research (Wernersjö, 2014) showing that through physical and mental segregation, the schools in both municipalities became an institution for bordering. They make refugee children (including those seeking asylum and those with permanent residency) into 'strangers', (Mathisen, 2020; Wernersjö, 2015) and become a place for racialised exclusion (Kaukko & Wernersjö, 2017), all of which inhibit their social integration and sense of belonging. Although, some experts consider a lack of language skills as hindering curriculum progress, others emphasise the overall benefit of social integration to improve language skills of these children (Bunar, 2015).

THE ROLE OF INFORMAL NETWORKS AND CIVIL ORGANISATIONS

The accounts of unaccompanied refugee children demonstrate differing feelings of belonging at the two places. With one exception, children in Kallvik plan to leave as soon as they can, while

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children in Solträsk feel they belong to the place. These feelings correlate with the degree to which these children are connected with permanent inhabitants and local organisations.

Dawit, from Eritrea, residing in a Kallvik care home, who had severe posttraumatic syndrome and did not feel safe at his care home, did not engage in organised sports, or have any civil society contacts. There were several girls from Eritrea also placed at Kallvik. Both Eritrean girls we interviewed would have liked to have contacts with Swedish youths: 'Would like to meet both Swedes and immigrants' (Winta), yet they only had contact with other children in the refugee context. Strikingly, the interviewed children lacked contacts with formal civil society networks or sport clubs. Previously Winta had participated in an orienteering club, but she discontinued this activity (the reason for this is not known). Although Winta did not claim to have encountered racist comments, she recounts a certain discomfort while walking on the street: 'I have felt sometimes when I am outdoors that Swedes look at me little strange, with strange expression. But beyond that there has been nothing else'. This corroborates with accounts of refugee children being the object of a distancing, estranging gaze (Mathisen, 2020). Rather than be exposed to this gaze, Winta carried out leisure activities (walking and reading books) alone. Meanwhile, Fatemah, who also lacked contact with Swedish friends or organisations, attributed it to her poor language: 'We meet sometimes [with Swedish girls] on the road but we do not speak good Swedish'.

Those interviewed had no ethnic organisations in Kallvik to which to turn. Some of them, like the Eritreans, were connected to an Eritrean Christian congregation in another settlement. These accounts resonate with previous research findings on the liminalities of belonging for rural unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (Wernersjö, 2019) and the problems of double marginalisation, when neither Swedish or ethnic organisations can assist youth resettlement (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021).

The perspective of Gulzar elucidates another important aspect. Gulzar, unlike the other interviewed children in Kallvik wanted to stay, despite his confrontations with his care home. He explained: 'I became a part of Kallvik. I feel myself at home'. He is among those who had learned Swedish well, which he credits to his good contacts with Swedes:

> I have many Swedish friends. I spent time mainly with Swedes.... I play football and I go in the same class. It is the men's team in Kallvik ..., where I became acquainted with Swedes. (Gulzar)

Participation in football clubs was one of the key social arenas that provided a local anchorage for Gulzar. Meanwhile, Gulzar's life story is a testament to the way municipal institutions can countervail children's resilience and efforts to engage with local society. Gulzar, beyond the confrontation about Wi-Fi also protested that his care home refused to give him warm food after six, which was inhibiting his participation in football training which finished late. While he failed to change the rules, he enlisted the help of his custodian to find a solution that allowed him to continue with football. This indicates the potential of civil society to countervail authoritarian-like state institutions (Feischmidt et al., 2019).

In contrast to accounts from Kallvik, most interviewed children from Solträsk had positive feelings for their municipality and positioned themselves as being anchored within local networks. Yusef, from Eritrea, praises Solträsk for being a safe place to live in and has several important networks. Yusef, just as Gulzar, has friends through the two football clubs in which he plays. Both football clubs have predominantly Swedish youths and some refugee youths. Through this club he has acquired both Swedish and refugee friends. As discussed earlier, he has been successful in negotiating a replacement from a family home to central Solträsk to be able to attend football

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trainings. The flexible attitude of social services not only strengthened his ability to participate in important decisions concerning his life, but allowed him to find anchorage in the local community and improve his Swedish skills.

Engagement in a formal sport organisation was an important resource even for Said from Syria. Said became a member of a wrestling club in Solträsk with both immigrant and Swedish members. Although the Swedish members aged between 30 and 40 years of age, they offered an important contact with mainstream Swedish society: 'they talk with me.... If I do not understand something they explain it to me, they help me with the training'. Even if he feels Swedish society as distant compared to Syrian: 'In my village in Syria everybody knows everybody... but not here in Solträsk...It is not as in Syria, but it will come with time'. Yusef was also supported by a Swedish family who invited him home for dinner from time to time. This bond further deepened his anchorage with the local community.

Yusef has some young adult Eritrean friends who moved from the care home to the main community with whom he meets regularly. Additionally, he is in contact with Eritrean families through the local Eritrean Christian congregation who live in the municipality. People in this congregation often help each other when the need arises. The importance of co-ethic organisations for resettlement has been highlighted in the literature (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021).

In addition to engagement in formalised networks, interviewees from Solträsk highlight the importance of spontaneous, informal social contacts. Some children residing in the Solträsk care home noted the distance from the home to the bus station and the centre as a difficulty when living in a rural place: 'we need to walk 20 minutes'. Nonetheless, this has also become a reason for some positive encounters with local people from Solträsk. As Amir explained: 'There were many who, when they got to know that we lived there, they drove us time to time.... They know us, but we do not know them... There are many people who are helping. Solträsk is a small municipality' (Amir). This demonstrates the importance of everyday encounters for resettlement, intercultural integration and belonging (Radford, 2016; Wise & Velayutham, 2009).

From a multilevel governance perspective, this study found that entanglement with formal and informal civil society, facilitated by structural and informal enablers (Radford, 2016), was of crucial importance for the feelings of belonging of youth. This was apparent among youths from Solträsk, yet with one exception, it was absent in Kallvik. Sports clubs have been shown internationally to play an important role in the integration of refugee children (Ramon et al., 2019). This is manifested in the accounts of boys from Solträsk and from Gulzar in Kallvik. Nonetheless, the case of Dawit and the Eritrean girls indicate that the ability of sport clubs to fill an integrative function is not uniform. This corresponds to Lundkvist et al's (2020) observation that refugee girls are least represented in sport clubs, while refugee boys tend to engage more, as well as to research indicating that girls are more likely to engage with homebased free-time (Kohli & Kaukko, 2017) and have fewer contacts with strong ties (Mathisen, 2020).

Informal contacts, counting spontaneous encounters as well as engagement by custodians beyond the officially expected tasks also played an important role in boosting feelings of belonging in Solträsk and in one case even in Kallvik. Even if unaccompanied refugee children, except for Gulzar, have not identified local encounters as openly racist, border-setting practices have been accounted for in both places, yet more profoundly in Kallvik. This casts doubt on taking for granted the benevolence of civil society as agents of integration (McCluskey, 2019).

In Solträsk the local ethnic organisation has been a great support for Eritrean youths. Meanwhile, the lack of local ethnic organisations of one's own ethnic group in Kallvik left youths in a 'double marginalisation' characterising most rural places (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021) further diminishing the potential for integration.

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Exploring the nexus between local state institutions and civil society revealed important contributions to the understanding of sustainability aspects of multilevel governance of refugee children's resettlement. A key critique of multilevel governance has been how it puts the onus on the individual for its integration (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2017) and vacates the responsibility for social integration to a civil society not necessarily up to the task (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021). This study indicates how civil society responses can differ on this matter, depending on the local assemblage of actors.

Meanwhile, as the practices of Kallvik care home indicate, welfare state agents can not only vacate their responsibilities, but can also hinder unaccompanied refugee children from engaging with local civil society, and by this, inhibit civil society from having a role in integration. Such practices are counter-indicative to building sustainable local societies. However, as the case of Gulzar also prominently illustrates, civil society can constitute an antipole to authoritative state practices (Feischmidt et al., 2019). Yet, civil society engagement cannot be taken for granted and made accountable for integration the same way as state institutions can. In contrast, in Solträsk, local state agencies have been actively empowering unaccompanied refugee children. By enabling them to engage in civil society activities state institutions can scale up the effects of civil society agents for the benefit of integration and contribute to the development of sustainable communities.

Among civil society actors it is important to appreciate the role of custodians. All unaccompanied refugee children are assigned a custodian who is to take on those parental duties that concern interactions with the authorities, such as handling cash transfers to the children from the state and overseeing their development. Custodians are paid laypersons who receive a short introduction to their legally formalised duties, which do not include daily care responsibilities (Hedlund, 2019) and are civil society agents with a role entangled with the state. Children's experiences concerning the involvement of custodians varied extensively, from no proper engagement, like in the case of Dawit, to going way beyond duties, being a game-changer and support in challenging authorities, like in the case of Gulzar. Most youths from Solträsk spoke of warm and supportive contacts.

Custodians for unaccompanied refugee children have been central in pro-refugee mobilisation in support of asylum-seeking and refugee children's resilience in the aftermath of the securitistion of refugee reception (Feischmidt, et al, 2019). Thus, the custodian's role can facilitate the improvement of 'weak-links' to authorities as well as open possibilities for establishing strong, intimate relations (Mathisen, 2020). However, there have been just as many cases where custodians took a more back-seat administrative role. This indicates the importance of layperson engagement for the resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children and the fragility of relying on layperson agency in charity for the 'other' (McCluskey, 2019).

DISCUSSION

This article responds to the theme of this Special Issue which explores the relation between migration and sustainable rural livelihoods. It does so through a critical study of the sustainability of the resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children in a rural context, the starting point being the experiences of the children. It offers reflexive learning on how local practices shaped by the interaction between different levels and types of institutional capacities inherent in multilevel governance contribute or not to these children's feeling of belonging to the receiving society leading to their enablement and 'human flourishing'. Furthermore, based on the comparison between two rural municipalities, it provides examples of good and bad practices from a sustainability perspective across four critical areas.

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Firstly, the study highlighted, that tensions between the Migration Agency and municipal authorities arose due to the outsourcing of Migration Agency functions to market providers, such as the provision of refugee accommodation, including that of asylum-seeking children arriving with their families. This, despite of municipal policy not to outsource their own services to market actors, These entities, based on market logic, found depopulated rural areas as the most profitable site to locate asylum-seekers. Since the Migration Agency and the companies to whom services with outsourced, ignored prior consultation with municipalities, rural municipalities could not coordinate and plan institutional practices of resettlement of children in the refugee context. This jeopardised the potential of those municipalities to promote these children's 'human flourishing', enablement, and integration. This is indicative of how tensions between the logics of operation between diverse actors representing hierarchical (state); economic (market) and network (civil society) based institutional styles (Nemes et al., 2014; Thompson, 2003) entertain technocratic rather than communicative practices of resettlement (Ålund & Schierup, 2021). Hierarchical asymmetries between Migration Agency and municipalities meant that the focus was on solving administrative and economic puzzles, rather than on engaging with the best interest of achieving sustainable youth resettlement.

Secondly, the experiences of unaccompanied refugee children indicate that although both municipalities retained service provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children within their own regime, responses to increased securitisation from professional welfare workers and civil society differed. On the one hand, two different institutional practices were identified in the social services and care homes: an authoritative style, as of Kallvik, corresponding to what Stretmo and Melander (2013) described as 'othering'; and a 'caring' style, as of Solträsk. Based on children's narratives, these were considered as disenabling versus enabling the youth to have feelings of belonging and in so doing overcome the liminalities of their belonging within the receiving society. Enabling participation and recognition of children's preferences of placements by social services in Solträsk strengthened the experiences of belonging by these children, while denying such participation and recognition in Kallvik countervailed the experience. On the other hand, the case of both municipal schools in the study illustrates how insufficient social integration of unaccompanied refugee children thwarts their ability to achieve a feeling of belonging to the community. Seen from the perspective of unaccompanied refugee children, introductory classes produced physical segregation between them and Swedish pupils, as well as underscoring their symbolic inferiority. This excluded their experiences as valuable knowhow to share, positioning them as apprentices not yet ready to learn the normative curricula (Svensson & Eastmond, 2013). Thus, local assemblages of welfare services balance between caring and othering, communicative and technocratic responses (Ålund & Schierup, 2021), where the latter reinforces the liminalities of belonging of unaccompanied refugee children.

Thirdly, concerning the negotiations between the state and civil society, the study demonstrated the important role that formal and informal civil society can play as a counterforce to authoritative national state policies, as noted in critical research (Feischmidt et al., 2019; Haselbacher & Segarra, 2021). In Kallvik, the engagement of the custodian of Gulzar, and his enrolment in a sport club could exemplify how civil society's engagement can counterbalance authoritative municipal practices and enhance the belonging of unaccompanied refugee children. On the other hand, different factors contributed to the enforcement of liminalities of belonging for most of the interviewed children in Kallvik, such as the absence of engaged civil associations, including ethnic associations, the lack of engagement by unaccompanied refugee children with such, and the passivity of other custodians interacting with them. This finding corroborates what other critical migration research referred to as 'double marginalisation' (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021).

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In contrast, in Solträsk the interviewed children experienced genuine engagement from both civil organisations (sport and ethnic) and through informal contacts. These differences highlight that substantial citizenship is not the same as belonging to a place (Arora-Jonsson & Larsson, 2021). Belonging is dependent not only on policy but also on the attitudes of the majority community (Simonsen, 2017) and on interaction with the majority society (Mahieu & Caudenberg, 2020). Furthermore, the differences in local civil responses in the two municipalities highlight that the presence of an integrative civil society and its agency cannot be taken for granted.

This connects to the fourth important critique of multilevel governance. This study found that, to different degrees, the two municipalities not only vacated certain roles, such as the social integration of unaccompanied refugee children with the local community. They also failed to co-ordinate such efforts made by other actors, as previous research has highlighted (Larsson, 2021). Rather, institutional frameworks such as school segregation and authoritative care home practices in Kallvik actively hindered the possibilities of unaccompanied refugee children to engage with the majority society.

The most striking example has been how introductory classes create physical as well as symbolic segregation by placing a one-sided focus on curricula-based education in both municipalities (Mathisen, 2020). Such segregation is especially hard, given the small confines of rural communities and is difficult to transcend when, finally, after qualifying, unaccompanied refugee children can move up to mixed classes. Schools also missed opportunities to co-ordinate integration with actors outside the school system.

Unaccompanied refugee children found that social service and care home staff attitudes directly impacted on their possibilities to be entangled with civil society. The authoritative practice in Kallvik was disenabling for the children as it hindered or failed to promote their participation in civil society. In contrast, social worker practices in Solträsk contributed to the opposite and enhanced the children's opportunities to build local networks and become incorporated into local networks. Thus, such supportive state institutions can scale up integration efforts. This study showed how such caring, communicative approaches enhanced while othering and technocratic practices (Ålund & Schierup, 1991; Stretmo & Melander, 2013) hindered learning and did not enhance a sense of belonging among the children. However, positive synergies between state and civil society actors cannot be taken for granted and depend on the benevolence of welfare state workers rather than a concerted co-ordination of efforts by the local state that is rooted in the rights of unaccompanied refugee children.

SUMMARY

To sum up, in exploring experiences and feelings of (not) belonging of unaccompanied refugee children against the backdrop of a critical perspective on multilevel governance, this study elucidates how the multilevel governance logic creates uncertainties relating to resettlement. Technocratic, rather than caring and communicative service, provision increased unaccompanied refugee children's feeling of being caught in a liminal space. The prevailing authoritarian, technocratic and othering organisational style of social services in Kallvik correlate to the weak integration of these children with civil society. Meanwhile in Solträsk, children's feelings of belonging were enhanced by democratic, caring, and communicative institutions working in synergy between state and civil society actors.

Resettlement is not only about numbers and programmes, but it is about people's lives, human rights, and ethics of care. This reliance on a varying degree of agency by local enablers

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(Radford, 2016) warrants caution that principles of sustainable resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children need to rely upon human rights-based coordinated assurances by the state rather than the benevolent actions of state and civil society alone. Such assurances are of great importance, given the shift in the role of the state from the government to governance. Thus, there is a need for greater accountability and evaluation of participating actors and the collaboration between them for multilevel governance to achieve the sustainable resettlement of unaccompanied refugee children. This issue requires particular attention where services are outsourced.

Furthermore, the study elucidates how the rigid focus of the school system on transfer of curriculum knowledge dismissed the potential role of the schools as municipal institutions in coordinating social integration of unaccompanied refugee children. Rather than leading collaboration with civil society the schools at both locations vacated this responsibility. Neither have the municipalities taken on such role. The uncertainties around the number of children in the refugee context to attend school manufactured by Migration Agency placement practices have further weakened the potential of schools to plan for adequate educational strategies.

These uncertainties were the outcome of the marketisation of services on the national level through outsourcing accommodation of refugees to private actors causing insecurities of service provision of school placements at the local level. It also increases pressure on civil society risking fatigue and rising anti-migrant sentiments. The impact of such outsourced national services on local communities must be carefully monitored and preconditioned by prior consultation and consent by municipalities. It is important to emphasise that unaccompanied refugee children's experiences of resettlement are not only formed by these different governance models, but they themselves are active agents of resettlement. They are active agents contesting modes of reception. Nonetheless, their powers of resilience are formed by diverse personal trajectories and previous (dis)enabling events. That is one reason why interventions need to cater to individual children and their specific needs. Local agents need to incorporate non-material aspects of children's resettlement with special attention given to social integration, beyond the immediate material needs and work to enable unaccompanied refugee children's resilience and agency. This assumes that their voices are heard and are given recognition in local resettlement strategies.

Meanwhile, critical reflexivity could enhance endogenous development capacities, by improving local 'relational capacities' to reflect on institutional and collective practices from a sustainability perspective. This would imply an ongoing critical evaluation of how the interplay between different types of institutional frameworks and practices contribute (or not) to enable the 'human flourishing' of these children and to sustainable individual and community futures. This assumes, among others, the co-ordination of communicative efforts, a task that state institutions would be best suited to take in synergy with civil society. This could be enhanced by recognising the needs of unaccompanied refugee children within a locality and promoting their participation in decisions concerning them.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

According to the commitments to unaccompanied refugee children in the study we are not to release the interviews to third persons. The interviews are anonymised and stored in a safe deposit at Mälardalen University.

ENDNOTES

[1] The term children in the refugee context incorporates children in different stages of the refugee process: asylum seekers as well as refugee children per se (children with residency permit). The latter refers to both children with their families and those who are unaccompanied.

[2] The municipal council makes decisions in matters of principle and that affect the municipality's activities, such as the goals and guidelines for the operation, budget and municipal tax rates. It appoints the members for committees, the municipal audit, boards of directors for municipal associations and cooperative bodies.

[3] Housing and/or care unit for children and young adults. Those young people are placed into these types of units whose health or development has been endangered in different ways. Staff has the responsibility to give support, protection and help for positive development. Unaccompanied children are often placed in these units.

[4] See even the distinctions by Stretmo and Melander (2013) on othering and caring styles.

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