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ABSTRACT

Firewalls separate rights provision for undocumented migrants from the border policing of migration authorities. In this article, we compare how firewalls have been negotiated during recent years in Sweden and the UK. Firewalls have been partly strengthened in the UK as a result of the 'Windrush scandal'. Simultaneously, firewalls have been increasingly contested in Sweden after the 2015 'long summer of migration' as a result of continuously more repressive migration policies. On the basis of this detailed comparison, we argue that firewalls are a useful conceptual lens to understand migrant struggles and the development of migration policies. Moreover, we suggest that firewalls can be a useful resource for social service providers using their discretion to resist repressive migration governing at different levels and scales and for organizing political work by and for people at risk of deportation.

KEYWORDS
Firewalls; undocumented migration; border policing; human rights; social work

Introduction

Firewalls are not an answer to the question of what rights undocumented migrants – who lack the legal right to reside in a state's territory – should be entitled to. Rather, they are an answer to the question of how these rights can be protected and how access to them can be sustained. Simply put, firewalls separate rights provision for undocumented migrants from the border policing of migration authorities. They have two dimensions: *Firstly*, they limit data-sharing between rights providers and migration authorities; *secondly*, they protect places where rights provision to undocumented migrants is carried out from border police work (Hermansson et al. 2020). The aim of this paper is to compare the presence and absence of firewalls and how they are negotiated in practice in the context of social service provision in Sweden and the UK. Building on our (Hermansson et al. 2020) theorization of – and normative argument for – the use of firewalls in social work, we further develop the argument that firewalls are erected and demolished through continuous struggles at different scales. We do this through a detailed engagement with how firewalls have been negotiated in recent years in Sweden and the UK overall, with a special focus on social service provision, using examples drawn from our respective fieldwork in the two countries. Different practices of protecting the rights of undocumented migrants are mainly discussed in the literature on Sanctuary Cities, but these practices are seldom conceptualized as 'firewalls'. Building on our comparison, we argue that firewalls is a concept that can both help researchers better understand migrant struggles, as well as be a useful tool in such struggles in the current contexts of hostile migration policies.

Human rights are put forward as a central principle of social work which, according to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), is a human rights-based profession (Healy 2008). Both the Swedish Union for Professionals' (*Akademikerförbundet SSR*) code of conduct and ethical behaviour for social workers[1] and the British Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics[2] draw on this definition and affirm the human rights basis of social work within their national boundary. Based on our earlier research (Jolly 2018a; Lind 2019a), we understand current social service provision for undocumented migrants as primarily a result of local interpretations of human rights instruments which are embedded in national welfare regimes and political contexts. 'Social service provisions' in relation to undocumented migrants can thus in a broader sense be understood as different forms of 'rights provision' in the field of social work. We understand social service provision as an inclusive concept that extends social work issues beyond city or state bureaucracies or the specific role of social workers, and which can be performed by many different actors and institutions in society, including but not limited to local government social workers, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), activist groups and individuals.

In this article, we also employ the term 'public service provision' to describe a wider scope of services than social service provision, which includes public services such as health care, education as well as social services etc. Access to certain public services for undocumented migrants are also inscribed into national law in both Sweden and the UK (most extensively in relation to children), but these laws are all framed as direct responses to the international human (and more specifically children's) rights obligations of Sweden and the UK.[3] The two countries provide an instructive comparison because of their differing histories of cooperation between border control and social work. In Sweden, municipal social services only provide information on direct and specific requests from the border police, whereas in the UK, the border police and various social service providers (including certain CSOs, see Taylor 2019) collaborate in setting up (more or less) automatic information sharing schemes. In all, firewalls provide a conceptual framework that makes visible the complicated relationship between the differing objectives and responsibilities of public service providers and the border police.

In the following sections, we expand on the tensions and contradictions inherent in the interplay between policing of national borders and the provision of social services and discuss why firewalls are necessary to allow human rights for undocumented migrants to be exercised. Our methodology is discussed before firewall practices in the two countries are analysed and in our conclusion, we discuss the implications of our comparison both for future research and social struggles for migrant justice.

Border policing and social service provision – tensions and contradictions

Earlier research on the relationship between social work and migration control shows a tension between the social work commitment to rights provision and bordering practices (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2017; Misje 2019) derived from immigration legislation (Farmer 2017; Jolly 2018a). In the context of irregular migration, rights become paradoxical and contradictory as the state's interest in controlling migration is balanced against its commitments to migrants' rights (see Honig 2009; Lind 2020b). Previous research has shown how the social relations that are produced in relation to illegality are characterized by contradictory processes of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, which then enable specific kinds of exploitations of people with precarious migration status (Balibar 2014; De Genova 2013). Allowing certain categories of undocumented migrants some access to rights (such as health care and education for children) makes it possible for the state to motivate an exclusion from other kinds of rights (see Lind and Persdotter 2017). In this article, we suggest that negotiations around firewalls are an expression of the struggles that emerge in this paradoxical context, where firewalls to some extent provide protection from the effects of these paradoxes.

Tensions in relation to the inclusion or exclusion of undocumented migrants can occur between the local and national levels, where city- and municipal-level authorities see undocumented migrants as regular participants in everyday life. In contrast, border policing is seen as the task of national police authorities rather than a municipal responsibility (Kaufmann 2019; Varsanyi 2006). Municipal social workers, or other state actors, practicing rights provisions for undocumented migrants are influenced by the policies they are asked to implement, the habits they develop themselves in relation to this task and the public response to their work (Fassin 2015). Policy and discourse affect their work and are expressed through the discretion they have to interpret their work tasks (Lipsky 1980, Mayora Synnes, this issue). Social workers may practice in national contexts where migrant children's rights are flouted, and where social workers struggle to avoid collusion with repressive policies (Cemlyn and Briskman 2003; Humphries 2004), and well-meaning attempts to work with migrant service users may reinforce 'othering' of those with an irregular status (Jönsson 2013), or a colonialist approach to practice (Ranta-Tyrkkö 2011). Nonetheless, there is also a critical social work tradition which is based on anti-racist (Dominelli 2017; Gupta and Featherstone 2016) and anti-oppressive principles (Dominelli and Campling 2002).

Rights provision is often enacted in response to perceived and identified vulnerabilities, and protracted vulnerability is characteristic of the state of deportability (De Genova 2002; Lind 2019a). Immigration enforcement is frequently promoted as a form of care (Anderson 2012) in response to the 'vulnerability and exploitability' undocumented migrants are constructed as having caused themselves (Luibhéid 2013, 2) and such 'care' is often rationalized by human rights arguments through which more or less 'deserving' groups can be pitted against each other to strengthen one group (e.g. children) at the expense of other groups (e.g. parents) (Lind 2019b). We argue that firewalls have potential to disrupt such logics of 'vulnerabilisation' (Lind 2019a) through an identification of, and protection against, practices that aim to mobilize rights provisions for border policing.

The significance of firewalls for social service provision

Joseph H. Carens (2008) advocates firewalls as a practical solution to the problem of how the human rights of undocumented migrants can be maintained in democratic states. Building on Carens' work, François Crépeau and Bethany Hastie define firewalls as: 'the separation of immigration enforcement activities from public service provision' (Crépeau and Hastie 2015, 158). They argue that firewalls are necessary to both uphold the fundamental rights of migrants in International and European law and for broader public benefit, such as ensuring cooperation of undocumented migrants in preventing crime and in ensuring public health. In Europe, firewalls are advocated by a number of inter-governmental organizations. For example, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance argues for firewalls on the basis of non-discrimination in the provision of social assistance (ECRI 2016). Similarly, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency emphasizes the need for firewalls (without naming them such) on the basis of proportionality (EU FRA 2013). Internationally, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants has highlighted the role of firewalls in allowing undocumented migrants 'access to justice, housing, health care, education, police, social and labour services' (UN General Assembly 2017, para. 67).

Together with several colleagues, we have developed the conceptualization of firewalls further by unfolding the different scales where negotiations around firewalls play out, highlighting the professional-ethical character of firewall practices (Hermansson et al. 2020). The scales on which firewalls are practiced range from personal attitudes and practice of individual rights providers on one end of the scale, via informal and formal policies at institutional levels, to national and international law at the other end. Firewalls are potentially upheld across all these scales both by social service providers and by immigration authorities. At the level of personal practice, a social worker might find that their professional ethics of human rights, expressed in IFSW's statement of

ethical principles (IFSW 2018), might conflict with their other obligations to follow agency procedures. Their attitude to this tension might construe an informal firewall practice. Similarly, institutional policies, whether in the form of informal practices which have developed at a workplace or across institutions over time, or formal written rules expressed in institutional guidelines or similar documents can also operate as firewalls. Finally, firewalls can operate at the level of legislation, either national, or in the form of international treaties (Hermansson et al. 2020).

Firewalls operate and are constructed differently in different political contexts, as they are rooted in the political structures and discourses of the contexts in which they exist. The comparatively strict bureaucratic systems in Sweden, including the everyday importance of the civic registration number ('personnummer', see Sigvardsdotter 2012), makes it arguably more difficult for local-level actors to construct informal firewalls in Sweden than in the UK where a more loosely knitted social fabric of bureaucratic control enables informal systems to develop more easily. However, in Sweden, there are examples of how local and regional authorities have added formal firewall policies in decisions to grant undocumented migrants the right to healthcare and education that preceded national laws enabling these rights (Hermansson et al. 2020), whereas there are (to our knowledge) fewer examples of this in the UK.

In a sense, firewalls enable the initial *right* to have rights (Arendt 1951), as they protect undocumented migrants' right to claim rights safely. Legal support is necessary for migrants who try to regularize their stay in the host country, and much of the legal support to undocumented migrants is provided by NGOs and pro bono lawyers. If the physical spaces where this kind of legal support takes place are not protected from immigration raids, people run a greater risk of getting stuck in a state of deportability as they are hindered from accessing support in their regularization processes (Hermansson et al., 2019). Also, many of the activities that make up the organized political work of undocumented migrants takes place in these spaces. Therefore, firewalls can provide the necessary protection that makes rights-claims, regularization and political struggles possible. In this way, constructing, defending and practicing firewalls is a crucial part of politically aware human rights work for undocumented migrants.

Firewalls as a concept could productively be incorporated into debates on Sanctuary Cities (see Bauder 2017; Darling 2010; Ibrahim and Howarth 2018; Lundberg and Strange 2017; Mancina 2016) to conceptualize many of the different formal and informal policies and practices protecting undocumented migrants that are already discussed in this literature (Hermansson et al. 2020). The sanctuary literature has also highlighted the political character of negotiations in relation to sanctuary that can both resist and collaborate with state actors and we suggest that firewalls can be understood as a form of 'sanctuary practices' (Lundberg and Strange 2017). However, we want to point out that a Sanctuary City cannot exist without some forms of firewalls, but firewalls can exist without Sanctuary Cities. In this way, social service providers who attempt to strengthen undocumented migrants' access to rights in their institution, workplace or local community etc. can employ firewalls even though they might not be part of a network of Sanctuary Cities.

Methodology

This paper uses a comparative case study design to explore firewall policies and practices in Sweden and the UK. It builds on two discrete research projects conducted by the authors using ethnographic fieldwork among undocumented migrant families, and the authors' experiences of participation in the work of CSOs in Malmö, Sweden and Birmingham, England. This participation in the work of CSOs took different forms at different times, primarily as visiting researchers but also through unpaid volunteer work (with the two roles not always easily differentiated). Jolly also performed some of his research as a paid employee of a CSO at different stages of his research. Fieldwork took place between 2014 and 2017 and utilized a range of methods including: participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups with undocumented migrant families, policy makers and members of CSOs. Fieldwork notes from observations were separately written up

by each author, and interviews were recorded and transcribed. Fieldnotes and transcriptions were searched for data relating to firewall practices separately by the authors, these were then written up and discussed and compared. In order to contextualize the fieldwork findings, and to situate rights provision and social work practice within the political and societal contexts in which they are embedded, we engage with different examples reported in the media about how firewalls have been negotiated in each country. These are not intended to be exhaustive, but are indicative of the national contexts and debates in Sweden and the UK at the time of the fieldwork and the following years. We also refer to the underlying arguments of government policies and regulations to show how firewalls are framed and then interpreted by different actors.

These multiple data sources are then integrated into a comparative case study. Arguably, this triangulation approach of both projects, and the possibility for comparison between them, allows for the cross checking of findings (Denzin 2006). This paper is a response to a call for more comparative studies 'on the effects of different manifestations of illegality within and between countries' (Ruszczyk and Yrizar Barbosa 2016; see also FitzGerald 2012). The comparison of two different national contexts allows the similarities and differences between different welfare and immigration regimes to be highlighted and discussed, and the comparison between Sweden and the UK is particularly fruitful because of the sharply contrasting political, immigration and welfare contexts in which firewalls are constructed in each country. In the following sections we analyse key policy developments in Sweden and the UK, respectively, and recent examples of negotiations around firewalls to enable a comparative discussion where we highlight the political character and possibilities of firewalls in relation to social service provision and migrant struggles.

Firewalls in Sweden

Policies that have affected recent negotiations around firewalls in Sweden were to a large extent responses to the rapid increase in asylum seekers to Sweden in 2015. In 2016, a temporary immigration law introduced a number of repressive reforms (see FARR 2018), which led the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden to call it 'hostile to children' (Barnombudsmannen 2016). The most important elements of the reform are the following: Humanitarian reasons for leave to remain (see Lundberg 2016) have been more or less scrapped, permanent leave to remain is no longer possible for asylum seekers (they get either 3 years or 13 months depending on their status) and family reunification rules have been severely restricted. After the initial changes in Sweden that were a result of the temporary law, a number of policies have been rolled out continuously. In 2016, the government presented measures aimed to increase the number of returns of people rejected for asylum (Regeringen 2016). These included extended possibilities for the police to conduct work-place raids, to collect fingerprints, to check ID-documents and passports at internal border controls and to collaborate with the Migration Agency amongst other things. Additionally, the government has completely cut economic and housing support to adult asylum seekers without children who has been refused asylum but who have not yet been deported to their assigned country of return (Lundberg & Kjellbom, this issue; Regeringen 2016).

In recent years, Swedish local municipalities have to a wider extent started to support undocumented migrants financially. According to a survey conducted by a national news outlet, approximately one in ten municipalities in Sweden give such support (Mattsson 2018). Malmö was amongst the first to formulate guidelines locally for how social services should interpret the Social Services Act in relation to undocumented migrants. The Act states that municipalities have a duty to supply *all* people living 'within its domain' with emergency social support, and Malmö stated explicitly in their guidelines to social workers that undocumented children should receive similar support to all other children living in the municipality (see Nordling 2017). After the guidelines were implemented in 2013, undocumented migrants were, for a few years, increasingly receiving support as a result. However, recently these guidelines have been updated in a more restrictive direction (Nordling & Persdotter, this issue).

In Sweden, there are no comprehensive firewalls between immigration authorities and the Social Services in law. However, up until recently the possibilities of data sharing permitted by law had not been utilized by the border police. As a result of the hardened immigration policies in Sweden the border police received direct orders from the government to increase their numbers of deportations (Mikkelsen 2016b). This led them to apply § 17 in the Alien's Act for (what is publicly known to be) the first time in Malmö in November 2016, a paragraph that allows the immigration authorities to request address information about undocumented migrants from the Social Services. The border police in Southern Sweden produced a list with hundreds of names of people who were absconding from a deportation order, which the Social Services then matched with their registers. This created panic amongst undocumented migrants in Malmö and many had to find new housing. Unfortunately, secure long-term housing is extremely difficult to find for this group so this was a devastating blow to many of the families, and especially to the children as they are particularly in need of stability (Lind 2020a). According to the border police, 13 families on the police's list matched the records of the Social Services and a month later four families had been deported as a result (Mikkelsen 2016a). The border police in Southern Sweden has continued to submit new lists with more names to the Social Services and their practices have spread to other parts of the country (Hermansson, Lind, and Scott 2019). However, according to CSO representatives in contact with the police, not all border police regions have chosen to apply this law like the border police in Southern Sweden did.

This variation in how different regional border police authorities chose to apply the law is a case in point for how firewalls are contingent upon the practices of the actors involved. The border police in Southern Sweden were legally not hindered from requesting information from the Social Services before November 2016, but chose not to do so, until the political landscape around them changed. Before November 2016, activists and migrant support workers were aware of the existence of §17 in the Aliens Act and in many cases assumed that the police would not make use of it since such a practice undermines the ability of the Social Services to carry out their work. In this way, one can say that there were never any firewalls in place legally, but in practice there were informal firewalls in place before November 2016, and in some regions, this remains the case.

The border police in Southern Sweden have continued to test the limits of firewalls. In August 2017, 30 police officers entered a summer camp at a scenic hostel in a national park, organized by the Church of Sweden, and arrested five families (Lind 2020b). This stirred up a debate about whether the church should be considered a sanctuary for undocumented migrants and if there are any 'free-zones' where undocumented migrants are protected from the border police. A border police officer argued in the media after the raid that 'there are no exceptions if you are in a church, mosque, school or preschool. Perhaps I would hesitate to enter a hospital and arrest someone laying on the operation table' (Magnusson 2017, our translation). This statement was a clear challenge against anyone arguing that firewalls exist that would spatially limit the border police's ability to perform their work. It also highlights the fact that the legal foundations for firewalls in Swedish law build on principles of proportionality that leaves a lot of discretion in the hands of the police.

In regards to health care and education, two laws providing access to these public rights provisions for undocumented migrants came into force in 2013. In the preparatory works to these laws, it was concluded that no additional protections were needed for undocumented migrants against the sharing of their information between hospitals, schools and the immigration authorities. The laws protecting the integrity of patients and students were already strong enough (SOU 2007:34 2007; SOU 2011:48 2011). However, the police can, and regularly do request information about patients at hospitals but the law only permits them to ask for specific persons they believe are in a specific ward or clinic. The regional body responsible for health services in the Skåne Region that Malmö belongs to have put in place specific instructions[4] for how health care personnel can respond to requests by the police, which represent a kind of formal policy

strengthening the firewalls as they are expressed in law. Similarly, the Swedish National Agency for Education (2015) has published guidelines for how schools can handle the information of undocumented students. Both of these guidelines can be understood as different forms of firewalls reproduced and enacted at different scales (Hermansson, Lind, and Scott 2019).

Developments in Sweden point towards how, in the current political climate, the demolishing of firewalls has been made more likely through more repressive interpretations by the police of firewall guidelines and policies since 2015. In February 2018, the (conservative) Moderate party, suggested in an article in a major Swedish newspaper that the law providing access to education and healthcare for undocumented migrants should be withdrawn, arguing that these rights add to the growth of a 'shadow society' (Moderaterna 2018). This can be understood as a contestation both of the right to education and health care in themselves as well as the firewalls embedded into these rights as they are expressed in national law. The border police have also continued and extended its claims in the media recently, saying that 'the border police should be a natural part of today's society', yet again suggesting that there are no 'free-zones' in Sweden (Landelius, 2019, our translation). All in all, the developments in Sweden point at an overall trend that before 'the long summer of migration' in 2015 firewalls were erected and protected but they have since rather been demolished or contested.

Firewalls in the UK

A number of key policy developments form the backdrop to how firewalls have been negotiated in recent years in the UK. In 2012, then UK Home Secretary Theresa May, announced the UK government's intent to create a 'hostile environment' for undocumented migrants, which has been interpreted to imply that 'denying basic rights and services to irregular migrants is supposed to force the issue of return' (Price 2014). This hostile environment has been expressed through policies limiting the right to housing, education, health care and banking amongst many other things (Jones et al. 2017), expressed in law primarily through the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts. Although the policy has been particularly associated with Theresa May and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, in many ways the policy represents a continuation of earlier policy developments under new Labour. Notably, the phrase 'hostile environment' was first used in 2007 by the then Immigration Minister, Liam Byrne (Travis 2007).

Responsibility for the welfare needs of destitute migrants has been increasingly transferred from the national UK government through the mainstream social security system, towards local responsibility through local authority social services. The resulting patchwork of services that have grown up in the absence of central government guidance have been in some cases punitive, and it is common for undocumented families in the UK to be turned away from support multiple times before being granted support (Jolly 2019). However, they have also provided scope for activists[5] to challenge local authority decisions through the courts and through advocacy in a way which has been more effective than national efforts.

Most recently the policies and assumptions of the hostile environment have been challenged by the so-called Windrush scandal. This related to the treatment of the children of British citizens from the Caribbean who arrived in the UK in the immediate post Second World War period. The children of the Windrush generation in many cases were unable to prove that they were in the UK legally because the government did not keep records of who had been granted leave to remain in the UK. The scandal led to the resignation of the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, and the reframing of the 'hostile environment' as the 'compliant environment' (Crerar 2018). Further studies are needed to see what, if any, effects this shift in discourse actually have had and will have, but we primarily understand it as an attempt to shift focus away from the state and towards migrants as responsible for their own difficulties (Luibhéid 2013).

No official firewalls exist between different state actors providing social services and immigration enforcement in the UK, and even civil society organizations have been discovered to be sharing

information with the Home Office for purposes of immigration control (Corporate Watch 2017; Taylor 2019). As a result of the fact that there is no firewall between children's services and the Home Office, social workers routinely conduct a 'pre-assessment screening' of families, which includes checking a family's immigration status with the Home Office before completing an assessment of need (Birmingham Children's Trust 2018). This practice follows unofficial guidance from the NRPF Network of local authorities (NRPF Network 2017).

The fear of having personal information passed on to the Home Office, and the status of 'not having papers' was mentioned by families during fieldwork in the UK as a reason for not approaching both health and social work services. However, the lack of firewalls between the Home Office and social work services was two-way. Social workers passed on information about families to the Home Office, but social workers were also seen to be reinforcing Home Office 'hostile environment' policies to encourage families to return 'home' by making life in the UK difficult. Fieldwork participants recalled examples of social workers echoing Government narratives about protecting public finances from undeserving outsiders. For instance, one parent had approached social services for help after she and her child became homeless, and recalled a social worker refusing to help by explaining that: 'everything is coming from the government and it would be the government resources that would help me, so they can't help' (Jolly 2020).

In some cases, personal data can be shared between authorities without consent. For instance, Nottinghamshire County Council argues, using a children's rights argument, that if a family is in the process of being removed from the UK, consent from the family is not needed:

> Given […] the fact that this data is being obtained principally for the child's benefit, the sharing of data for the purposes of protecting children's welfare during the returns process will be lawful. (Nottinghamshire County Council 2018)

To make the process of information sharing simpler, the 'NRPF Connect' database of families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)[6] who are supported by children's services was created. The NRPF Connect scheme is presented to local authorities as a money saving tool, an 'innovative technical solution' which is 'efficient and effective' (NRPF Network nd), and which will enable 'cases' to be resolved faster, reducing cost to the local authority – an appealing prospect for local authorities who have experienced years of central government cuts to budgets (Levitas 2012; Lowndes and Gardner 2016). However, it is clear that, from the Home Office perspective, information sharing is a means of immigration control. The Home Office NRPF Connect Team is 'part of Immigration Enforcement and is based within the Interventions & Sanctions Unit' (NRPF Network 2013). Undocumented families have been identified by the Home Office through this scheme, with some removed from the UK, and the remainder sent to case working teams to 'establish what actions can be taken to resolve outstanding barriers to return' (NRPF Network 2013). Other local authority children's services directorates share information with the Home Office in a more direct way. One local authority manager in the West Midlands noted in an interview with one of the authors that her local authority had not joined NRPF connect because an immigration officer was already embedded within their social work team. This enabled information to be shared more quickly and cheaply by interacting directly with families requesting support without an additional referral.

The lack of formal firewalls extends beyond social service provision to other areas of the UK welfare state, such as health, education and homelessness services. The 2012 Health and Social Care Act allows for data requests to the National Health Service (NHS) by immigration enforcement, and subsequently, a partnership agreement between immigration enforcement, and NHS bodies (Home Office, Department of Health & NHS Digital 2017). By 2016, the numbers of data requests from the Home Office had risen to 8,127 (Travis 2017). As a result of concerns about being reported to the Home Office by healthcare workers, there are examples of undocumented migrants avoiding the NHS completely (Jolly 2018b; Doctors of the World 2017).

In 2016–17 the Department for Education started including questions on children's nationality and place of birth in the school census (Department for Education 2017). The Against Borders for

Children (ABC) coalition campaigned for a boycott of the immigration question, arguing that the information could be shared with immigration enforcement to target individual pupils with an irregular immigration status. Despite the question on nationality being voluntary, there were examples of schools requesting to see children's passports, and of minority ethnic pupils being asked for proof that they were not asylum seekers (Whittaker and Camden 2016). Subsequently, a freedom of information request to the Department of Education confirmed that information from the National Pupil Database had been shared with the Home Office (King 2016).

However, despite this context, there are some recent examples of firewalls being negotiated and constructed at a local level in the UK. In 2019, the Guardian newspaper reported that after pressure from party members and elected members of the local council, the Labour Party led boroughs of Southwark and Lewisham had removed the embedded immigration officer from their social work teams. A Labour spokesman was quoted as saying:

> Their job is to enforce government-made laws, not to help people. It is not the responsibility of Labour councils to be informing on vulnerable migrants when they come to us seeking shelter and support. (Busby 2019)

Civil society groups have also attempted to challenge procedures which rely on ascertaining immigration status before providing support, citing government guidance which states that: 'Any provision identified as being necessary through the assessment process should, if the local authority decides to provide such services, be provided without delay' (HM Government 2018). While not a firewall as such, the provision of support for children before an assessment has been completed provides what could be called a limited firebreak by delaying sharing of information about immigration status until after a family have been given support. In Birmingham, the decisions of children's services to refuse support for families until an assessment has been completed (which includes an investigation into a family's immigration status), has been successfully contested by advocates through legal action in individual cases.

In November 2018, following a campaign by the Migrants Rights Network (MRN), the Department of Health and NHS Digital withdrew from their data sharing memorandum of understanding with the Home Office. Similarly, in March 2019, the High Court ruled that the 'Right to Rent' policy which obliged landlords to check the immigration status of prospective renters was discriminatory, after a court case brought by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI 2019). Finally, in April 2018, the Department of Education announced that it was ending the practice of asking for nationality and country of origin details in the school census, following legal action by campaigners (Whittaker 2018).

Following the Windrush scandal, then Home Secretary Sajid Javid explained the move away from a language of the 'hostile environment' towards a 'compliant environment' – saying that the former phrase 'doesn't represent our values as a country' (Crerar 2018), an argument which was closely mirrored in the arguments for the (re)construction of firewalls later in the same year. Campaigns against data sharing for immigration purposes focused on the way that the practice undermined democratic norms, and 'fair play', echoing governmental discourses about 'British Values' (see Department for Education 2014). For example, the Interim Director of MRN was quoted in The Guardian newspaper as saying:

> On the 70th anniversary of the NHS it is absolutely vital that our great British institutions uphold the best British values [...] The right to privacy and access to healthcare is a right that many of us take for granted; sadly this has not been the case of health services for migrants. (Bowcott 2018)

The changes in firewall policies thus seemingly interplayed with the development of the 'Windrush scandal' and the resulting debate about British values and migration policies. All in all, the developments in the UK point to an overall trend that limited firewalls are being erected and protected rather than dismantled or contested, although this progress is small compared to the hostile policies and regulations that remain.

Conclusion: comparing firewalls in Sweden and the UK

Sweden and the UK are sharply contrasting political environments, with different welfare regimes and histories of immigration control. Although firewall policies and practices in each country do not at first appear to offer many points of continuity, the comparison can be instructive. For academics, the comparison of firewall policies and practices at different scales subverts a narrow methodological nationalism which views the nation state as the primary unit of social analysis, and for practitioners in public and social services it can provide an insight into a different context which facilitates building networks of solidarity beyond welfare state borders.

In Sweden, legal firewalls to a certain extent exist, with specific important exceptions, and these exceptions are increasingly being exploited by the border police since 2015. Also, the rights of undocumented migrants have recently been contested by politicians in Sweden who argue that giving the right to social support, education and healthcare etc. adds to the growth of the 'shadow society'. The Social Services Act give municipalities a possibility to provide emergency support for all people 'within its domain' but § 17 in the Alien's Act has been used in Malmö to request information about addresses from social services – however not to the same extent in other parts of Sweden (from what is publicly known).

In the UK, overall there are few legally produced firewalls but activists and CSOs are pushing policy makers to create new firewalls, especially in relation to the 'Windrush' scandal. Recent strengthening of firewalls has been motivated through a language of 'British values' and 'fair play'. Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 gives local authorities a duty to provide services to children in need in their area, irrespective of immigration status, but schedule 3 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 places some restrictions on local authority support for undocumented migrants. Many UK local authorities automatically share information with immigration enforcement teams through the NRPF connect database and embedded immigration officers have been used within social services teams in London and the West Midlands.

The above comparison highlights how contestations as well as the protection of firewalls are fundamentally political processes. We suggest that firewalls can be a productive tool for migrant struggles as a concrete issue to push for at various scales, both locally, regionally as well as in relation to national and international policy and law. Individuals can urge their local schools to put in place extensive protective practices, health workers can prompt their workplaces to do the same, and national campaigns can push firewalls onto the agenda as a practical issue. Formal firewalls which are embedded in law may appear to be more durable, but they are vulnerable to contestation following shifts in public opinion, such as in Sweden following the 'long summer of migration' of 2015. Conversely, informal firewalls may be more efficient in everyday work, but rely on constant reinforcement and rebuilding by practitioners and organizations providing social services.

Firewalls are also potentially productive in broader critical research on migrant, borders, human rights and social service provision. They are a concrete practice that changes people's experiences of borders and have a tangible effect in people's everyday lives since they are a profoundly spatial experience. Even though they are constantly negotiated and fluid we do not see the same potential problems with firewalls as is the case with human rights narratives that more easily can be co-opted by actors who mobilize human rights logics and practices for border control (Lind 2020b). However, we welcome future research to consider what risks could be involved in promoting firewalls. More generally, we suggest that our analysis also contributes theoretically to the literature on bordering practices by expanding the lens through which we understand resistance to bordering practices beyond sanctuary cities as firewalls can be proposed and practiced at any scale by any actor who aims to protect the rights of undocumented migrants.

We suggest that despite very different starting points in each country, the example of firewalls is indicative of discourses and policy developments in both countries becoming more similar in recent years. Sweden has seen a weakening of firewalls and a hardening of language and policy around migration, while the UK has seen some evidence of the strengthening of firewalls and a softening in

language around undocumented migration following the Windrush scandal. Further research is necessary to better understand the effect these changing discourses have had on migration policy. However, we argue that such shifts in discourse are informative for a broader understanding of the processes influencing how firewalls are negotiated. Most importantly however, further discussions on firewalls should continue to remind social service providers that formal as well as informal firewalls continuously need to be defended and protected when supporting the human rights of undocumented migrants.

Notes

1. https://akademssr.se/yrkesfragor/socionom/etik-i-socialt-arbete
2. https://www.basw.co.uk/about-basw/code-ethics
3. See for example the preparatory work on the right to education in Sweden (SOU 2007:34 2007) and the obligation for the Home Office to safeguard and promote child welfare under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 in the UK.
4. https://vardgivare.skane.se/patientadministration/vard-av-personer-fran-andra-lander/migration-asyl/sekretesshantering/https://vardgivare.skane.se/patientadministration/vard-av-personer-fran-andra-lander/migration-asyl/sekretesshantering/
5. See for instance, the work of Project 17 in London: http://www.project17.org.uk
6. The no recourse to public funds (NRPF) rule is a provision in the UK immigration rules which prevents certain categories of migrants from accessing a list of social security benefits and public housing.

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