# Trust, Institutional Encounters and Forced Migrants- the Role of Third-Party Actors

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# Introduction

Street-level bureaucrats and institutional encounters essential for forced migrants' future aspirations and social justice → encounters tied to welfare services and benefits (Nordberg & Wrede, 2015; Schierenbeck & Spehar, 2021; Sundbäck, 2023)

Trust and distrust central features in institutional encounters, however, also puts the one trusting in a vulnerable position (Fersch, 2016; Sundbäck, 2023; Turtiainen, 2012)

This article looks beyond the bilateral trusting relations between street-level bureaucrat and service user, **foregrounding the role of third party actors**

# On trust and distrust



We embrace the nature of trust as relational, contextual and dynamic rather than static and linear (Essex et al., 2021; Lyytinen, 2017; Möllering, 2006)



Trust landscapes: illuminate the webs of both institutional and social relations impacting and shaping migrants‘ trust.



Intermediators transfering trust or distrust between people and institutions (Sztompka, 2000), edit, insert, distort content (O’Neill, 2020)

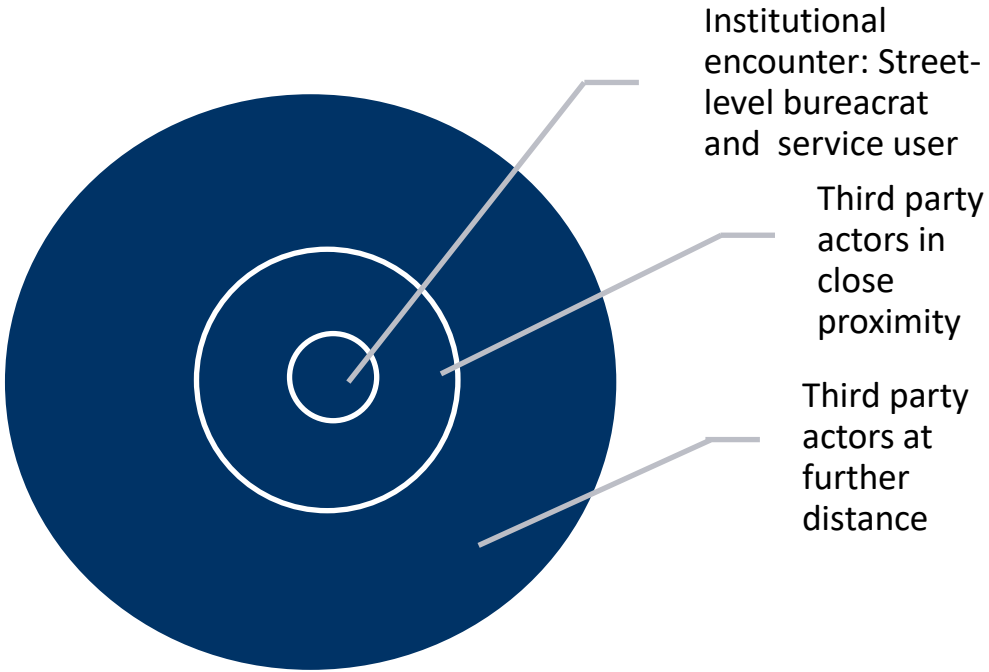
# Data and methods

Draws on fieldwork conducted in Finland and Sweden (2020-2022)

24 interviews with street-level bureaucrats in two key sectors of integration work → employment and social service institutions

27 interviews with forced migration background service users

# Findings: Trust landscapes in street-level bureaucratic processes



# Findings

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| *Actors in Close Proximity to Street-Level Bureaucratic Processes* | *Actors at Further Distance to Street-Level Bureaucratic Processes* |
| --- | --- |
| • public service interpreters<br>• street-level bureaucrats based in other institutions<br>• legal guardians | • non-governmental organizations (NGO) representatives<br>• friends or peers<br>• foster families |

"They have people from Iran interpreting for Afghan people, it's a bit challenging really, the thing is that Dari and Persi are like Norwegian and Swedish, you understand a bit, but not everything. You understand what they mean, but you do not understand all the words or sentences"

Service user, Sweden

”They learn quite fast from other young people that hey, also other young people use these services, and hence, the transition phase is faster, they understand why to use our service system and that hey, this is actually quite a good thing and it is worth using the professionals and their help, that it is ok”

SLB, employment services, Finland

# Conclusion

- Novel approach to examining trust landscapes in integration work and institutional encounters → underscores the significance of third party actors → simultaneously enhance, undermine or mediate trust.
- Amid current restrictions in migration policy → becomes crucial to explore when and why trusting street-level bureaucrats is still beneficial for migrants.
- Recognizing the broader trust landscape for encounters with structurally vulnerable groups of service users → aid the just inclusion and integration of forced migrants in Nordic welfare states.


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Questions&comments?
Thank you!