



'Where Others are not Able to Safeguard the Rights of Children': Legitimizing Transformation of Social Identity and Practice in Save the Children Sweden

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Abstract

The aim of my study is to describe how a change within Save the Children Sweden (SCS), formerly working only with advocacy, but lately working also with welfare services, was legitimized. Secondly, I investigate how van Leeuwen's (2008) framework for recontextualization may be used to highlight legitimation of social identity. I collected a one-million-word text corpus complemented by ethnographic field notes (240,000 words) and performed a legitimation analysis to investigate how social identity and practice were justified. For this purpose, intertextual and interdiscursive elements in the legitimation criteria were included. Results show that van Leeuwen's framework may indeed be used for legitimation of social identity if intertextual and interdiscursive elements are added. In the corpus for this study, only the strategies of authorization and rationalization were used to legitimize identity. I attribute this finding to the close links between authority (tradition, habit etc.) and identity, and to the fact that the new identity of SCS seems rational in terms of attracting more funds and of finding new solutions to old problems.

Keywords: *Discourse analysis, legitimation analysis, intertextuality, interdiscursivity, social identity*

1. Background, Purpose, and Motivation

This article treats discursive legitimation in a political welfare state. Drawing on empirical findings from a case study, I suggest a stronger tie between van Leeuwen's (2008) social identities and legitimation strategies in the recontextualization model, as I want to illuminate that discourses do not only legitimize social practice but also social identity. I argue that certain words and constructions containing intertextuality and interdiscursivity are understood to afford claims to legitimation. The need for an organization to legitimize its identity along with its practice would serve to justify its existence in a context in which there are many other organizations that perform the same or similar practices and compete for the same donors.

The case study concerns the relation between the third sector (also called voluntary or non-profit sector) and the public sector (municipality, region, and state). In the late 1900s, Sweden was internationally regarded to be a generous welfare nation with a strong public sector that drove nearly all welfare services (schools, youth recreation centres, elderly care, etc.). The role of the third sector

was mainly to demand accountability from the public sector, i.e., advocacy work, and ensure that the public sector provided the services that citizens were entitled to on the basis of legislation (Johansson, 2005, pp. 12–15). Advocacy work therefore has a strong connection to the provision of entitlement. Apart from advocacy work, some representatives of the third sector provided charity work, targeting groups that public welfare services had difficulty reaching, such as helping underprivileged families at Christmas.

After 2000, a change in Swedish society (resulting from marketization, the economic crisis in Sweden in the 1990s, and the public sector's adoption of New Public Management) meant that instead of the third sector holding the public sector accountable, the public sector started commissioning the third sector to provide services (Johansson, 2005, pp. 12–15). Volunteers no longer executed tasks; rather, a growing cadre of professionals was employed by the voluntary sector to deliver its services (cf. Ganesh & McAllum, 2012).

The aim of my study is to describe how this change was legitimized within an organization, and to investigate how van Leeuwen's (2008) framework for recontextualization may involve the legitimation of social identity. Applying van Leeuwen's model, I benefited from a previous study that analysed van Leeuwen's legitimation in relation to identity, but which called for more work in Critical Discourse Studies to investigate various illustrations of identity (Abdi & Basarati, 2018, p. 99). Their call motivates my study. There is also a need to explain how the change within the third sector from voluntary practice into professionalization (Ganesh & McAllum, 2012; Milligan & Fyfe, 2005) was actually effectuated discursively within a particular voluntary organization, Save the Children Sweden, through legitimation, and how a certain party benefitted in the internal debate.

I conducted this case study with the voluntary organization Save the Children Sweden (SCS) where I was an embedded researcher for two years. The particular issue concerned creating and running services financed by public means, specifically schools, youth recreation centres, and counselling for children and parents in socioeconomically deprived areas in Swedish suburbs in the 2010s. When I talked to SCS employees and members and read minutes, member magazines and motions from SCS, subtle signs raised my suspicion that a discursive change within the organization had started in 2016, as a certain Strategic Plan. This plan involved launching welfare services and was released from the secretariat (where paid employees worked), which was later challenged at the voluntary member organization's supreme decision-making body in 2018.

2. Theoretical Approach and Related Studies

This study is based on seven main concepts that are basic to the analytic design for this study: discourse, social practice, recontextualization, identity, legitimation, and intertextuality and interdiscursivity.

Discourse. Like van Leeuwen (2008), I see discourse as social practice in which knowledge about a certain aspect of reality is construed, normalized, legitimized, negotiated, and transformed. I use Fairclough's (1992, p. 73) classical three-dimensional view of discourse in which any instance of discourse (discursive event) is simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice (processes of text production and interpretation), and an instance of

social practice (institutional and organizational circumstances shaping and restricting a text). Previous research on competing discourses in the voluntary sector showed that SCS (in its international work) constructs aid as two conflicting discourses: *charity*, which sees aid as a non-obligatory, commendable act, and *provision of entitlement*, which sees aid as universal or conditional and as an obligatory non-commendable act (Lindström, 2016).

Social practice: the already mentioned dimension of Fairclough's (1992) model. Hvenmark's (2008) study on how ideas and values are realized in voluntary member federations is relevant. Hvenmark used an hourglass metaphor to describe the power of members as flowing down from an upper chamber (where democracy, solidarity, and principles of equality and mutual dependency reign) through a bottleneck (the national board) to a lower chamber (dominated by ideas of managing practical economic and political issues as rationally and effectively as possible). Hvenmark (2008, pp. 215–218) regards the flow from upper to lower chamber as a consequence of marketization, including how civil society is getting its subsidies from the State which is under influence of New Public Management.

Recontextualization. van Leeuwen (2008, p. 4) describes discourse as the recontextualization of social practice. Four major transformations take place in the process of recontextualization where the first transformation (a) is formed by substitutions (2008, p. 17). In this process, elements of the actual social practice are substituted by semiotic elements. A social actor, such as an individual, a group or an organization like a government, can be represented in discourse in various ways. van Leeuwen lists the following representation types: exclusion, role allocation, genericization/specification, assimilation, association/dissociation, indetermination/differentiation, nomination/categorization, functionalization/identification and over-determination (2008, p. 28–51). In this study, the focus is on functionalization/identification. Functionalization is at display when social actors are referred to in terms of something they do, such as an occupation or role (2008, p. 42). Identification occurs when social actors are defined in terms of what they, more or less permanently, are (2008, p. 54–59).

Identity is tied to van Leeuwen's model of substituting social actors by semiotic elements that stress functionalization/identification. Fairclough (1992, p. 64) distinguishes three aspects of the constructive effects of discourse: construction of social identities, construction of social relationships, and construction of systems of knowledge and beliefs. Gunnarsson (2009) views discourse as of crucial significance in constructing and maintaining a competitive and trustworthy organizational identity, even if it is difficult to create a coherent organization working for the same vision across the board. Following Albert and Whetten (1985), I view organizational identities as complex, ambiguous, imprecise, and changing over time. I thus see social actors and their respective identities, and social actions as embedded in and part of an organization's social practices. Therefore, I regard social identity as more stable than social practice.

To continue with van Leeuwen's four major transformations in the recontextualization process, (a) 'substitutions' is followed by (b) 'deletions', where elements of the social practice are omitted, (c) 'rearrangements', where elements of the relevant social practice are rearranged, e.g., placed in a non-chronological order, and finally (d) 'additions', where elements are added to the recontextualized social practice. The additions may take the form of repetition,

reaction, purpose, evaluation, and legitimation (2008, p. 18–21), the last one forming my next concept.

Legitimation provides explanations for, and justifications of, social practices of specific institutional orders (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 105–106). There are four strategies of legitimation:

a) ‘authorization’. Among the sub-strategies of authorization are the following:

i) ‘personal authority’ as expressed by an actor in verbal process clauses, typically containing some form of obligation modality;

ii) ‘expert authority’, as expressed by an actor’s credentials and verbal or mental process clauses carrying some kind of recommendation including an assertion of what is *good*, etc.;

iii) ‘impersonal authority’, expressed by nouns such as *regulation*, or adjectives like *compulsory*, sometimes accompanied by verbal process clauses;

iv) ‘authority of tradition’, expressed by words like *tradition* (2008, p. 106–109). (van Leeuwen lists even more sub-strategies of authorization, which did not prove relevant in this study.)

b) ‘moral evaluation’ with reference to value systems, expressed by, e.g., evaluative adjectives (2008, p. 109–112).

c) ‘rationalization’ with reference to goals and uses of institutionalized social action, expressed in the pattern of an activity – a purpose link, such as *to, for* – and the purpose itself (2008, p. 113–117). Here, too, are several sub-strategies, of which goal-oriented, means-oriented and effect-oriented are of interest for my study. Regarding the goal-oriented sub-strategy, the purpose link can be expressed by a purpose clause, such as *to, in order to*, or it can be implicit. Regarding a means-oriented sub-strategy, the purpose link can be expressed by facilitating processes such as *allow, promote, help*, etc. In effect orientation, the link is expressed by, e.g., *so that*. (2008, p. 114–115).

d) ‘mythopoesis’ is a legitimation strategy that is conveyed through narratives with a protagonist rewarded for engaging in legitimate social practices, or punished for not conforming to the norms of social practice (2008, p. 117–119).

These legitimation strategies may also be used to delegitimize social practices (2008, p. 106). Abdi and Basarati (2018) give more prominence to the concept of identity in legitimation analysis. They attempted to show how van Leeuwen’s (2008) four legitimation strategies did not only legitimize social practice, but were also used to highlight certain identities of social actors within that social practice. More specifically, they studied how, in a speech in 2016, Obama legitimized the peace-loving and America-minded identity of Muslims in the US. However, I note that van Leeuwen’s criteria, designed for legitimizing social practice rather than to privilege certain identities of social actors within that practice, were not used consistently in Abdi and Basarati’s (2018) analysis. In half of the claimed legitimations, they leave out some of the criteria postulated by van Leeuwen, e.g., purpose link and purpose (Abdi & Basarati 2018, pp. 91–91). Another study, by Schnurr et al. (2015), investigates legitimation in the political context of legitimations of leadership in relation to nuclear non-proliferation. Instead of working with van Leeuwen’s four strategies (2008), they analyze other types, such as epistemic and deontic legitimation, creating ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy, and usage of strong assertions. Investigating a three-fold corpus (UN Security Council resolutions, US President and Vice-President speeches, and broadsheet media reports) they

introduce the notion of an (inter)discursive chain of legitimization, in which the UN Security Council was located on top of the chain. Its discursive practice of election, debate and voting lent legitimacy to their resolutions. These resolutions, in their turn, gave legitimacy to the national leaders represented in the UN Security Council. In this way, national leaders and the Security Council were involved in a dialectic, where the leaders could display a more proactive stance towards UN propositions – a stance which was, however, always legitimized in the last instance by the position taken by the Security Council. This dialectic was relayed in national broadsheet media, which influenced politicians, voters and business leaders (Schnurr et al., 2015, pp. 200–201). Notably, intertextuality was detected in many legitimations, such as quoting a resolution, referring to another speech or reporting on a statement (2015, pp. 193; 196). Like Schnurr et al. I include intertextuality in my study of SCS, and attempt to fill in the gaps that, in my reading, Abdi and Basarati (2018) left in some of their claimed legitimations of identity derived from van Leeuwen's (2008) model.

Intertextuality and **interdiscursivity**. A text more or less overtly drawing upon another specific text (or several texts) is called 'manifest intertextuality' (Fairclough, 1992, p. 117). According to Fairclough (1992, p. 104), intertextuality can be exhibited through quotation marks or other markers such as *as mentioned in*, but it can also be an unmarked instance of manifest intertextuality which is integrated structurally and stylistically, e.g., by a rewording of the original, in the surrounding text, or even merged into unattributed background assumptions of the text. Interdiscursivity, according to Fairclough (1992, p. 124), is when a text draws upon other text types or discourse conventions (genres, discourses, styles, or activity types).

3. Data and Collection Techniques

3.1 SCS-Embeddedness and Field Notes

From February 2020 to February 2022, I was an embedded researcher at SCS as part of the Flexit program, which encourages academic researchers to collaborate with organizations outside academia on relevant topics (see also 'Declaration of Interest'). My contact person at SCS, who was responsible for applying to Riksbankens Jubileumsfond [Jubilee Fund of the Swedish Central Bank] to host an embedded researcher, was also in charge of the strategic and operational welfare services activities. The information I gathered was written down by hand as chronological field notes (12 notebooks of 200 pages). Due to the covid-19 pandemic, meetings and chats were mostly held over Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

The Swedish Ethical Review Authority determined that my study was not eligible for ethical review, meaning that the authority had no considerations (dnr 020-01667). SCS authorized me to access all documents. Comments from members and employees have been pseudonymized except for the secretary-general, as I see her position so central that pseudonymization is not possible.

3.2 Text Data: Collection Methods and Characteristics

From informal chats and formal appointments with members and employees, I learnt that the overall discourse was about working for children's rights. Employees taught me how the organization functioned, with the general assembly as its supreme decisive body. Motions, the board's answers to motions, bills and minutes from the assembly were core documents and therefore included in my data set. However, strategic ideas (e.g., welfare services) were launched in a strategic plan, which was also incorporated in the data set. However, even before ideas were articulated there, I understood that they had been debated in the member magazine and (later) in the newsletter, so I included those as well. The core values and methods, on the other hand, were articulated in the charter and the platform of values, which were also included in the data set. To capture more direct implementations of decisions, plans and values, I included 'orientation' (future plans) in the data set, as well as annual reports (retrospect). All these documents were published at a national level, but SCS also had local clubs where members met to discuss more local issues. To understand if and how welfare services were discussed locally three (out of 123) clubs were selected and their annual reports were gathered. In order to see if members and employees discussed welfare service at more informal meetings, I gathered programs from events where representatives from those two categories met: at dialogue fora and activity conferences. The time span of my text data is set from 2010 to 2020 to capture the plans (first launched 2016) of starting welfare services. The text data were gathered from May–September 2020 from intranet and internal national and local archives. Employees and members at times assisted me as some documents were difficult to find. Only a limited subset of the data related to the change to delivering welfare services (elaborated below). In the Appendix, a complete list with a direct public link to all documents (as PDFs) is provided. I received clearance from SCS to publish them. The documents were originally Word, PDF, or Outlook files (only applicable for newsletters). The Appendix also presents Table 1 where data type, publication year, content and number of words are summarized. I performed the analyses of the Swedish original documents and subsequently translated the examples given in the Analysis and Results section.

4. *Research Question and Discourse Analysis Methods*

My primary research question is 'How is change of social practice and identity within SCS legitimized?' Using this question as a springboard, I also investigate how identity can be more closely tied to legitimation in van Leeuwen's (2008) framework.

I commenced with a close-reading of the text dataset thoroughly and taking notes. All files were then converted into text files (.txt) that formed a digitally-searchable corpus. I performed the analyses on the Swedish original documents and translated the examples into English. From my first reading, I identified that the debate on whether SCS would continue doing advocacy work only, or would start delivering welfare services as well, revolved around the phrases/the word 'third-sector welfare provision', 'children's right to education' and 'state'. These three expressions were used as search phrases in #LancsBox, and analyzed for the two first search phrases, all occurrences, and regarding the

third search word 'state' I performed a collocation analysis in #Lancs Box (MI collocations, threshold 3.0, collocation frequency 5) with the lemmatized version *stat* (**stat**) 'state' and I investigated the top 35 collocations, from which I selected *stat* combined with *ålägger* 'imposes', *skyldigheter* 'obligations', *tillräckliga* 'satisfying', *landsting* 'region' and *agerande* 'actions' for further analysis, since they showed relevant to welfare issues. Some occurrences were excluded, as they related to another context or were irrelevant for other reasons. I limited my actual analysis to thematically coherent text passages to avoid irrelevance. The analysis focuses on identifying coherent discourses and how they legitimate social practices of SCS and the related social identity of the organization. The criteria for qualifying as legitimation followed closely on van Leeuwen (2008, p. 106–119), with the addition of intertextual and interdiscursive elements, where I used Fairclough's criteria (1992, p. 104, p. 124), as listed above in section 2.

Field notes were used to support the discourse analysis of the text dataset. I also used the field notes to shed light on issues of debate. The hand-written field notes were not digitalized, so I relied on my memory as to in what circumstance (e.g., meeting) I had seen or heard certain information. Then I searched my digital outlook calendar for that circumstance and could retrieve the date, then find the date in the chronologically ordered field notes, and consider the notes for that particular circumstance.

5. Analysis and Results

Applying the criteria on the data set resulted in around 25 text passages where 'legitimation' occurred. Below, I have chosen the most representative ones to discuss the various types of legitimations that occurred. I will first give an account of the discourses involved, and then report how these discourses, through various strategies, legitimized different, potentially conflicting, social practices and identities.

From a previous study on Save the Children by Lindström (2016), I anticipated to find a charity discourse, which, however, I did not find. The reason for this difference was probably that Lindström studied the international program of Save the Children whereas I studied the domestic work, where charity had become out of date. The word 'charity' was next to absent in my corpus. Several employees declared that charity was an abandoned method at SCS (field notes).

Consistent with Lindström (2016), I did identify a provision-of-entitlement discourse. This discourse legitimized the social identity of a child-rights organization. I also identified a member-democracy discourse, which could be connected to how volunteers of the third sector execute tasks according to Ganesh and McAllum's (2012) and to Hvenmark's (2008) results on democracy within voluntary member organizations. The member-democracy-discourse legitimized the social practice of advocacy work, but also a meta-social practice, more specifically, how the decision on welfare services happened. That discourse also legitimized an identity of a democratic member organization. Then, drawing on a combination of three other discourses, actors within the organization challenged the provision-of-entitlement-discourse and the member-democracy-discourse via a professionalization-discourse (whose presence in general in the third sector was acknowledged by Ganesh and

McAllum, 2012), a marketization-discourse (cf. Hvenmark, 2008), and a social-innovation-discourse. Actors drew on these three discourses together so that in addition to the existing practice of advocacy work, they wanted to initiate, facilitate and legitimize a new social practice, that of welfare services, and to promote, alongside with the identity of a child rights organization, new identities as market actor and social innovator. The remaining part of this chapter will go into detail about how these legitimations were carried out in the corpus. Members claimed the following:

(1) Within SCS, work dedicated to transfer the organization from a child rights organization to that of a society builder is happening... [...] According to the Charter, SCS is a democratic, politically unaffiliated and religiously nondenominational popular movement which campaigns to protect and promote children's rights... [...] There may be a risk that the child rights issues are neglected as SCS hastens away towards SCS3.0, third-sector welfare provision and other direct support. (Member Motion 19, General Assembly 2018)

Example (1) was analysed as a discursive event of the provision-of-entitlement discourse at display in *child rights organization*, *protect and promote children's rights*, and *child rights issues*. The provision-of-entitlement discourse was further supported by ethnographic data: the articles of the U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child were mentioned and quoted in the secretariat, e.g., on walls, staircases, and glass doors (field notes). In example (1), the members from civic society claim that if the identity of a *child rights organization* is changed into that of a *society builder*, there is a risk that the social practice of *child right issues* are neglected on the expense of the social practice of *third-sector welfare provision*. Example (1) explicitly invokes the charter: *According to the Charter, SCS is...* and the quotation maintains that the organization campaigns to protect and promote children's rights. I claim that the provision-of-entitlement discourse here legitimizes the identity of a child rights organization. The legitimation is carried out through 'impersonal authorization'. But as opposed to the impersonal authority legitimation strategy that legitimates social action in van Leeuwen's (2008) model, (1) lacks the presence of nouns such as *regulations* etc. and adjectives such as *compulsory*. Instead, I claim that the legitimation is realized through manifest 'intertextuality', by a reference to the regulations (*Charter*). At the same time, the 'social practice' of welfare services (*third-sector welfare provisions*) is delegitimized. This is carried out in an instrumental 'rationalization' with effect orientation, action (*SCS hastens away*), purpose link (*a risk that*) and effect (*child right issues are neglected*). Simultaneously, (1) is a discursive event of the member-democracy discourse, visible in *a democratic* and *popular movement*. The member-democracy discourse was supported by ethnographic data from meetings between members and employees, where members sometimes argued that the employees did not understand their role (stated in the Charter) to serve the national board of the member organization, but seemed to create and work for independent ideas (e.g., starting schools) (field notes). This member-democracy discourse in (1) legitimizes an identity of democratic member organization, through impersonal authorization, making a manifest intertextual reference to the Charter. In this way, the two discourses, provision-of-entitlement and member-democracy, enforce each other using the same reference to the Charter, to promote the two closely related identities of

child rights organization and democratic member organization. (1) expresses concern that welfare services cannot be combined with advocacy work. This concern was supported by ethnographic data where a member uttered *You don't bite the hand that feeds you*, meaning that if SCS were to receive municipal subsidies to run youth recreation centres, and were SCS to detect violations of child rights in that very municipality, then SCS would have difficulties criticizing the municipality because that might jeopardize the subsidies (field notes). This view holds that simultaneous advocacy and provision of welfare services is impossible.

In the member magazine, the 2011 chair was interviewed:

(2) We are distinct that we don't take over society's responsibility, but we have seen in other areas, such as women's shelter work, that the public sector has tried to put too much on the volunteers. Our volunteers also put pressure [on politicians]. We have strong local organizations, active and committed people that meet children and youths. They can tell how the young people are. Most decisions that affect children are taken at municipal level. There, our members can put pressure on their politicians, in the right direction. (Member magazine 2011 #4, p. 13)

In (2), the member-democracy discourse, exhibited in *our volunteers, local organizations, people, they, our members* legitimizes the social practice of advocacy work (*put pressure on their politicians, in the right direction*). The legitimation is carried out through moral evaluation with positively loaded adjectives (*strong, active, committed, and right*).

SCS also had an upcoming social-innovation discourse, which legitimized the practice of welfare services. The authors (employees) of the Strategic Plan wrote:

(3) We will make significant changes to the operation in Sweden, taking on greater responsibility as a social innovator in areas where others are not able to safeguard the rights of children who experience a high degree of marginalization and deprivation. SCS will help to improve life chances in socioeconomically deprived areas. SCS will scale up the use of more direct interventions, including running third-sector welfare provision ...[...] This will also form the basis for a deeper knowledge of which interventions and methods work, which will in turn feed into our systematic advocacy work... (2016 Strategic Plan, p. 7)

Example (3) is analysed as an event of the social-innovation discourse, because of the expression *social innovator*. The presence of the social-innovation discourse was also supported by ethnographic data, as *social innovation* was often mentioned at external seminars with lobbying organizations (field notes). In (3), the discourse legitimizes the social practice of welfare services (*third-sector welfare provision*). It does so through rationalization, with the action (*make significant changes to the operation in Sweden, scale up the use of more direct interventions*), links (*taking - gerundive form can express purpose, help to, form the basis for, feed*) and purposes (*improve life chances, deeper knowledge, systematic advocacy work*). In (3) the same discourse also legitimizes the same practice by a moral evaluation strategy, through evaluative adjectives (*significant, greater, deeper, and systematic*) and a positively-loaded verb (*improve*). Furthermore, I take the expression *as a social innovator* as signalling an identity for SCS (social

innovator). The expression can also be understood as an instance of functionalization in van Leeuwen's model of recontextualization. Thus, I analyse (3) as the social-innovation discourse legitimizing the identity of social innovator. This legitimation is carried out through an unmarked instance of manifest intertextuality which is integrated structurally and stylistically, i.e., by a rewording of the original manifest intertextuality, more specifically rewording of a passage in Platform of Values. *Direct interventions* I interpret as a reference to SCS's four methods, which are: a) research and analysis; b) direct support for children; c) knowledge dissemination and capacity building; d) advocacy and raising awareness (2008 Platform of Values, p. 21–22; 2012, p. 17–19; 2016, p. 21–23). In the policy documents, *direct interventions* and *direct support* are used interchangeably. Further, the words *significant changes to the operation in Sweden* paired with *scale up the use of more direct interventions* I interpret as a new approach to the direct support method (b). The new approach harmonizes with the updated description of the method in the latest Platform of Values. I would like to elaborate example (3) a little with regard to how the method of direct support was updated. Below, the former description of the direct support method (4) is compared with the most recent description (5):

(4) We carry out direct initiatives to provide children with support, especially in emergency situations. We also work directly with children and young people in order to gain more knowledge of what their problems are, better ideas as to how to solve them, and new impulses for developing methods which can help us reach more children. (2008 Platform of Values, p. 21; 2012 Platform of Values, p. 17)

(5) We carry out direct initiatives for children in order to acquire knowledge and be able to make use of the rights of the child. The initiatives complement those from the State, county councils and municipalities, but we do not take over the public sector's responsibilities. We carry out direct initiatives in disaster situations in order to be able to provide immediate help. (2016 Platform of values)

Direct support in catastrophes is mentioned in the first sentence in (4), but only in the third sentence in (5). The catastrophes that SCS worked in took place abroad, which can be drawn intertextually from texts and pictures of catastrophes (e.g., the earthquake in Haiti, Annual report 2010:17). For the domestic program, at that time, the question was asked whether direct support should be part of SCS's methods in Sweden (field notes). In (4), the direct support method, performed in order to gather knowledge, has an *also* added, but in (5), this *also* has been omitted and the method is mentioned first, thereby being given more prominence than catastrophe support. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the adverb *especially* has been deleted from the description of direct support in catastrophes in (5). In my interpretation, the use of *significant changes to the operation in Sweden* paired with *scale up the use of more direct interventions* in (3) qualifies as a rewording of (5), and also it contains the unattributed background assumption that direct support can also take place in Sweden (not only abroad), an assumption that originates from the modification of (4) into (5). I interpret (3) as an instance of intertextuality linking to (5). Note that no reference is made to the Charter.

The type of legitimation actualized in (3) I thus regard as an intertextual reference to another document (5). Here I claim that the specific rationalization

legitimation is carried out in another document (5) and that it suffices to make an intertextual reference in document (3) to legitimize the identity of social innovator. In (5), there is activity (*we carry our direct initiatives*), link (*in order to*) and purpose (*acquire knowledge and be able to make us of the rights of the child*). Here we see a kind of '(inter)discursive chain of legitimation' as Schnurr et al. (2015) called it.

In all, my interpretation is that the social-innovation discourse legitimizes, by rationalization, a new, updated identity of SCS, that of being a social innovator, connected to the practice of delivering welfare services, legitimized through rationalization and moral evaluation. The clash between the provision-of-entitlement discourse and social-innovation discourse that is feared in (1) is contradicted in (3), as (3) suggests that welfare services can improve advocacy work. This view is supported by ethnographic data, as the secretary-general clearly expressed that the two types of social practice (not using those words, though) could be combined (field notes). Welfare services were further legitimized in (6):

(6) New operational forms such as third-sector welfare provision... open up new opportunities for financing from municipalities, county councils and the state as well as agreements on public third-sector partnership, agreements within the framework of procurement, and so on. (2016 Strategic Plan, p. 23)

I interpret the word *financing* (6) as a discursive event of the marketization discourse in the voluntary sector, i.e., that voluntary organizations become actors on a market and compete with each other as well as with the public sector, to attract, e.g., pupils to their schools. The presence of the marketization-discourse was supported by ethnographic data as the idea behind these new operational forms was discussed among employees as a way to secure long-term-money on contracts with the public sector (field notes). I understand (6) as the marketization discourse legitimizing the practice of welfare services (*third-sector welfare provision*). The legitimation is formed by rationalization, with activity (*new operational forms*), link (in the form of a facilitating process *open up*), and purpose (*new opportunities for financing*). Since means (*finances*) are targeted, I interpret (6) as exhibiting means-oriented rationalization focusing on potentiality. Further, in (6), the marketization-discourse legitimizes, through impersonal authority, realized through interdiscursivity (expressed by the word *agreements*) the identity of market actor. The *agreements* refer to juridical contracts of a type that the third sector (but not SCS at that time, 2017) had been working on since the public sector after 2000 started to commission the third sector to execute welfare services (cf. Johansson, 2005).

Example (7) is a more elaborated event of the marketization discourse:

(7) Examples of concrete value propositions that need and have excellent scope for development, together with members and active volunteers, and with donors and partners: (...) Model for collective impact in improving urban districts in Sweden through third sector welfare. Development of business model and proposition: what builds up the unique value in the welfare services that SCS, in partnership with others, intends to create through initiative such as recreation centres, schools and case management centres, in order to meet specific needs in socioeconomically deprived areas? (2016 Strategic Plan, p. 25)

Example (7) is an event of the discourse of marketization (*value propositions, business model, and unique value*). It can simultaneously be understood as an event of professionalization discourse visible in *recreation centres, schools and case management centres* (run by professional employees and not by members/volunteers), and also at display in the expression *together with members and active volunteers, and with donors and partners*. Those who act together with members are (implicitly) the employed staff at SCS. This implicitness may be analysed as an instance of exclusion in van Leeuwen's recontextualization model (2008). The professionalisation discourse was supported by ethnographical observations: members at meetings made inquiries for future task distribution between professionals and members in the welfare services, and were informed that while paid staff would work at the youth recreation centres, members were welcome to join for certain activities like homework help (field notes). In (7), the discourse of professionalization and marketization together legitimize the practice of welfare services (*third sector welfare*) through instrumental rationalization, with activity (*intends to create ... recreation centres, schools and case management centres*), link (*in order to*), and purpose (*meet specific need in socioeconomically deprived areas*).

In the 2016 Strategic Plan, the employees also wrote:

(8) In the early 20th century, the Swedish popular movements were beacons of social innovation. Activities such as public dental care, home help and preschool were initially founded by popular movements and organizations and then later transferred into the Swedish welfare system. [...] We meet children whose prospects for completing school with good grades are non-existent, and we meet children whose life chances are inhibited by violence, in the home and in the public sphere. [...] The conclusion is that SCS, like other actors in the third sector, must once again take up the role of social innovator in a drive to promote a socially sustainable society that safeguards all child rights. The focus will be on "Socioeconomically deprived children", "Children in migration and displacement" and "Children subjected to violence". Activities are expected to be run by members and active volunteers, as well as employees with particular skills. [...] The responsibility lies with the state, but where the public sector has failed, SCS works to develop and provide social welfare via the third sector. (2016 Strategic Plan, p. 12–13)

Example (8) is analysed as an event of the social-innovation-discourse (*social innovation and social innovator*). *Social innovator* is simultaneously an instance of functionalization, since the role *innovator* expresses what SCS should do. I understand (8) as legitimizing the practice of welfare services (*social welfare via the third sector*.) The legitimation happens through mythopoesis, as I interpret example (8) as a narrative in which SCS plays the protagonist role. The story claims that SCS will work for safeguarding all children. Even if the narrative does not show that SCS has been rewarded for doing this, it can be expected that SCS will be praised by society if the organization solves a major societal challenge and ensures good schooling for all children. (8) can also be interpreted as the social-innovation-discourse legitimizing the practice of welfare services through authority of tradition, with a verbal process (*the conclusion is -- where SCS is implicit as sender*), an authority's utterance (*that SCS, like other actors in the third sector, must once again take up the role of social innovator in a drive to promote a socially*

sustainable society that safeguards all child rights) and the fact *In the early 20th century, the Swedish popular movements were beacons of social innovation* which shows that SCS (being a Swedish popular movement) has a 100-year-tradition of social innovator.

Example (9) is a case where a meta-social practice is delegitimized:

(9) The Strategic Plan which is valid for the entire organization, employees and members, among other things highlighted the importance of becoming more active within the sector for the concept of values-based welfare. [...] The secretariat has, as we have been informed by the chair and the leader of the Domestic Program ... been asked to investigate what a prototype school run by SCS could look like. The results will be presented at the General Assembly in October 2018. [...] Despite the decided Business orientation 2017–2024 and the rich information regarding this process, we sense that many have strong worries that the members, at the end of the day, will not have had the opportunity to participate in a decision on the matter. (Members' motion 25, 2018 general assembly)

Example (9) is an event of the member-democracy discourse (*members, we, chair, and decided* -- as the decision was taken at a previous members' general assembly). It is contrasted with another discourse, namely the professionalization discourse (*employees, secretariat, leader of the Domestic Program*). The member-democracy discourse delegitimizes the social practice of deciding (*decision*) on welfare service (*values-based welfare*) more specifically if members will have had *the opportunity to participate in a decision*. This I regard a meta-social practice on welfare services. The delegitimation has the form of moral evaluation, expressed by the phrase *strong worries*. The motion resulted in a decision that SCS could not continue with the plans to start a school. But the secretariat continued with the welfare services anyhow, which led to the opening of recreation centres in 2021 and counselling clinics for infants and parents in 2022, in Stockholm (field note).

6. Conclusion and Discussion

From this empirical analysis I conclude that a change of social practice took place in SCS as the organization started to deliver welfare services in 2021. I see this change as a local appropriation of the national change that started in 2000, when the public sector started commissioning the voluntary sector to deliver services instead of demanding accountability (Johansson, 2005). The local appropriation was preceded and later accompanied by a discursive change within SCS 2016–2022, where crucial discursive events were the launching of welfare services plans in the 2016 Strategic Plan and the resistance in the General Assembly motions 2018.

I discerned several conflicting discourses, on the one hand a provision-of-entitlement discourse and a member-democracy discourse, enforcing each other, and on the other hand, a social-innovation discourse and a marketization discourse, often in combination. Unlike the other discourses, the social-innovation discourse had not been previously documented in studies on the voluntary sector, but since it was rather prominent in my large data set, I am convinced that it will surface in future discourse analyses in the voluntary sector. Using a legitimation analysis combining van Leeuwen's (2008) model

with aspects from Abdi and Basarati (2018) and Schnurr et al. (2015), I have described how the mentioned discourses legitimized conflicting social identities and practices. The provision-of-entitlement discourse and the member-democracy discourse legitimized, through authorization, identities of child rights organization and democratic member organization. The discourses used moral evaluation to legitimize social practice of advocacy work, and rationalization to delegitimize welfare services. They also used moral evaluation to delegitimize a meta-social practice, that of deciding on welfare services. The social-innovation-discourse and the marketization-discourse used rationalization to legitimize identities of social innovator and market actor, while they used authorization, mythopoesis and rationalization to legitimize welfare services.

When actors in favour of advocacy work legitimized their idea of identities, their effort did not work. Instead, they can be interpreted as traditional and conservative, clinging to the old, well-known identity of SCS and to the old tasks of the voluntary sector in relation to the public sector. The legitimations of the new social practice and the modified identities can be interpreted as more up-to-date, valuable, and rational in light of a (at the time) new political situation, conforming with the new task of the voluntary sector in relation to the public sector. In my understanding, these legitimations helped the actors in favour of welfare services substantially.

Furthermore, those in favour of welfare services did not see any hindrance in combining welfare service with advocacy work, which can be interpreted as not seeing any clash between marketization, professionalization and social-innovation discourses on the one hand, and the provision-of-entitlement and member democracy discourses on the other hand. Actors in favour of advocacy work, however, acknowledged such a clash. Possibly this point of dispute is where the bifurcation, of which Milligan and Fyfe (2005) speak, starts; i.e., that the voluntary sector splits into two branches, one comprising professionalized, business-like organizations and one comprising grass-roots, advocacy-oriented groups. My analysis points to the conclusion that SCS has chosen the professionalized, business-like path. Therefore, it is noteworthy that those in favour of welfare services still claimed that these services would feed the advocacy.

Like Abdi and Basarati (2018), I have argued that discourses may not only legitimize social practice but also identity. Thus, the analysis captures an organization's struggle for consolidating or changing its identity, e.g., to be able to compete with other organizations about members, funding, or private donations. Following Abdi and Basarati (2018), I acknowledge that van Leeuwen's strategy of authorization has a connection to identity in the sense that it is the strategy most suited to legitimize identity, because of the close semantic ties between words like *tradition*, *custom*, *habit* and the concept of identity. But I argue that the strategy of rationalization may also be used, e.g., if the suggested identity has anything to do with aspects such as economic power or find new solutions. Like Schnurr et al. (2015), I claim that legitimation is detectable on a text level through intertextuality, but I have also added interdiscursivity as relevant. As the legitimation strategies are still authorization, moral evaluation and rationalization, van Leeuwen's model is not challenged. I do, however, suggest a more articulate tie between social actor, functionalization and legitimation, spun by intertextuality and interdiscursivity. It is my hope that future studies will try my suggestion to help

improve our knowledge of how discourse, social practice, identity and legitimation interact in language.

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Declaration of interest: During data collection and analysis (February 2020–February 2022), I was an embedded researcher at and employed by Save the Children Sweden (SCS). My working time consisted of 75% research (funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, securing my independence) and 25% other assignments (funded by SCS), which included tasks like editing reports, being involved in discussions on terminology, and providing abstracts from scientific articles. In my daily practice at the organization, I reminded both myself and my colleagues that I was an academic scholar whose main task was to relate critically to the business. Therefore, I do not see the arrangement as constraining my independence as a researcher.

Ethical considerations: The Swedish Ethical Review Authority determined that my study was not eligible for ethical review, meaning that the authority had no considerations (dnr 020-01667). All comments from members and employees have been pseudonymized except for the secretary-general, as I see her position so central that pseudonymization is not possible.

Data availability: Data are accessible at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/collection/the-role-of-civil-society-in-the-welfare-state/>

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Appendix

SCS Sources Dataset

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/collection/the-role-of-civil-society-in-the-welfare-state/>

- Activity conference [Verksamhetskonferens] 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019.
- Annual report local club Arvidsjaur [Verksamhetsberättelse Arvidsjaur] 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017..
- Annual report local club Malmö [Verksamhetsberättelse Rosengård] 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017. [Verksamhetsberättelse Malmö].
- Annual Report local club Malmö and Rosengård 2019 [Verksamhetsberättelse Malmö/Rosengård] 2018, 2019
- Annual report local club Sundsvall [Verksamhetsberättelse Sundsvall] 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019.
- Annual report national [Verksamhetsberättelse och årsredovisning] 2010, 2011, 2012. [Årsrapport] 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019.
- Barn. Member magazine 2010–2015 (4 issues/year), 2016 (3 issues).
- Business orientation [Verksamhetsinriktning] 2009–2012, 2013–2016, 2017–2024.
- Charter [Stadgar] 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018. 2012 available in English.
- Dialogue forum [Dialogforum] 2019, 2020.
- General Assembly Bills [Riksmöte förslag] 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020.
- General Assembly Minutes [Protokoll Riksmöte] 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020.
- General Assembly Motions and Board's answer to motions [Riksmöte motioner] 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020.
- Newsletter for active members [Nyhetsbrev] 2017 (2 issues), 2018 (4 issues), 2019 (6 issues), 2020 (9 issues).
- Platform of Values [Kompassen] 2008–2016, revised 2012, revised 2016. 2008–2016 and revised version 2016 available in English.
- Strategic Plan [Strategisk plan] 2009–2012, 2013–2016, 2017–2021. 2017–2021 available in English.

Table 1. Data

| Data type | Publication years | Content | Number of words |
|---|------------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Ethnographic field notes (12 books, 200 pages each, around 100 words/page) | | | 240,000 |
| Text data section total (specified below) | | | 1,078,259 |
| Charter | 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 | Regulations for SCS. Describes what SCS is and what it does. Approved by general assembly. | 23,262 |
| Minutes, general assembly | 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 | Decisions from SCS supreme decisive body. | 41,246 |
| Motions and board's answers to motions, general assembly | 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 | Suggestions from members to change or reinforce what SCS does, which are subject to voting at the general assembly, and how the national board recommends that these suggestions are decided upon by the general assembly. | 165,172 |
| Bills, general assembly | 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 | Suggestions from the national board, subject to voting (yes or no) at the general assembly | 31,833 |
| Strategic plan | 2008, 2012, 2016 | Description of future long-term actions from the secretariat. | 42,382 |
| Business orientation | 2008, 2010, 2012, 2016 | Description of how the strategic plan | 3,362 |

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|-------------------------------------|--|---|---------|
| | | is implemented. Approved by general assembly. | |
| Platform of values | 2008, 2012, 2016 | Description of core values and methods. Approved by general assembly. | 17,758 |
| Annual report national | 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 | Economic report and description of main events. Approved by general assembly. | 271,962 |
| Activity conference | 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019 | Programme for members' conference. | 1,858 |
| Dialogue forum | 2019, 2020 | Programme for meeting between chairs of district level (between national level and local level) | 864 |
| Annual report local club Arvidsjaur | 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 | Economic report and description of main events. | 3,689 |
| Annual report local club Sundsvall | 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, [duplicated for quantitative reasons] 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 | Economic report and description of main events. | 15,782 |
| Annual report local club Malmö | 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 | Economic report and description of main events. | 17,522 |
| Member magazine (27 issues) | 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 | Independent magazine, published by SCS, dedicated to report on child right issues. | 459,024 |

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|--------|
| Newsletter for active members (22 issues) | 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 | Information from secretariat to members – replaced member magazine when magazine was taken out of production. | 14,376 |
|---|---------------------------|---|--------|