



# International NGOs' framing of their legitimacy in protecting children's rights

A qualitative content analysis

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Course code: MRSK62

Semester: Autumn 2019

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Words: 12554



# Abstract

The Convention on the Rights of the Child declares how state parties and civil society share responsibility in protecting children's rights, as non-governmental organisations are intended to intercede when the state's initiatives are inadequate. In this bachelor thesis the question of how international children's rights organisations frame their legitimacy for doing the aforementioned is examined. By answering this question, the study's purpose is achieved through exploring how Save the Children International, Plan International and SOS Children's Villages International understand their role as complement to the state in protecting children's rights. The thesis' purpose is executed through a qualitative content analysis of the organisations' annual reports from 2018, as well as applying the theoretical concept of political responsibility to reveal what arguments the NGOs use. The results demonstrate that the international child rights groups perceive themselves as legitimate in their function via established expertise, agenda-setting as well as through relationships. It was concluded that these justifications were all connected to the state and its inability to attain its obligations.

*Key words:* legitimacy, international NGOs, civil society, political responsibility, children's rights, human rights, state responsibility.

# Abstrakt

Swedish title: Internationella icke-statliga organisationers legitimitet i att skydda barns rättigheter. En kvalitativ innehållsanalys av icke-statliga organisationers roll som parallell till staten.

Barnkonventionen uppger att medlemsstater och civilsamhället delar på ansvaret i att skydda barns rättigheter, då icke-statliga organisationer (NGO:er) är avsedda att intervensera när statens initiativ är otillräckliga. I denna kandidatuppsats undersöks frågan om hur internationella icke-statliga barnrättsorganisationer utformar sin legitimitet för att utföra det ovannämnda. Genom att besvara den frågeställningen nås studiens syfte om att utforska hur Save the Children International, Plan International och SOS Children's Villages International förstår sin roll som komplement till staten i att skydda barns rättigheter. Studien genomförs genom en kvalitativ innehållsanalys av organisationernas årliga rapporter från 2018 och genom applicerandet av det teoretiska konceptet om politiskt ansvar för att avslöja vilka argument de icke-statliga organisationerna använder. Resultatet demonstrerar hur internationella barnrättsorganisationer upplever sig själva som legitima i sin funktion via etablerad expertis, agenda samt relationer. Slutsatsen drogs att dessa rättfärdiggörelser genomsyrades genomgående av statens otillräcklighet i att uppfylla sina plikter.

*Nyckelord:* legitimitet, internationella icke-statliga organisationer, civilsamhälle, politiskt ansvar, barns rättigheter, mänskliga rättigheter, statligt ansvar.

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# 1 Introduction

It is general knowledge that children are especially vulnerable individuals regarding the protection of their human rights. They are for the most part in need of interventions from adults to ensure their well-being.<sup>1</sup> The state and its institutions are typically thought of as responsible for fulfilling the population's rights and therefore also dutiful in realising this task.<sup>2</sup> However, in terms of implementing children's entitlements, it is emphasised that cooperative action is required between state parties and the civil society. This is stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the treaty which is primarily referred to and considered the framework of young people's freedoms worldwide.<sup>3</sup> The convention articulates how the presence of civil society, with actors such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), is an important general measure for achieving the aims of the document's contents and putting it into effect. For that reason, the CRC demands that governments involve civil society groups are involved by governments in children's rights issues.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, from the convention's perspective, states' actions in practice are not regarded as satisfactory enough to handle the matter. Therefore, space is created for others to carry some of the responsibilities. In turn, this signifies non-governmental organisations' difficult engagement of working beside governments or at times in their place. More so as there is no binding mechanism for forcing states to uphold commitments they have made under the CRC.<sup>5</sup> The tension between NGOs and states considering their duties to realise younger individuals' rights and the complex problems it entails, constitute the foundation on which this bachelor thesis stands.

<sup>1</sup> Liebel, Manfred; Hanson, Karl; Saadi, Iven; Vandenhof; Wouter. *Children's rights from below: cross-cultural perspectives*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Marcinkutė, Lina, The Role of Human Rights NGO's: Human Rights Defenders or State Sovereignty Destroyers? *Baltic Journal of Law and Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2011, pp. 52-77.

<sup>3</sup> Polonko, Karen. A & Lombordo, Lucien X. Non-Governmental Organisations and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol. 23, 2015, pp. 133–153.

<sup>4</sup> Un Committee on the Rights of the Child. General Comment No. 5: General Measures of Implementation for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. [crc/gc/2003/5](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/crc/gc/2003/5).

<sup>5</sup> Liebel, Manfred; Hanson, Karl; Saadi, Iven; Vandenhof; Wouter. *Children's rights from below: cross-cultural perspectives*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 111.

## 1.1 Problem statement, purpose and question

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most ratified international human rights treaty.<sup>6</sup> Its comment on how states' efforts call for complements and NGOs intended role of stepping in for the state, as mentioned earlier, has an effect in many parts of the world. Due to non-governmental organisations' similar acting as state apparatuses in this endeavour, at least in regard to the international children's rights organisations, they must be perceived as reliable and held accountable in performing the appointed duties. For example, since they haven't been voted for to perform these great responsibilities it raises the reason for why they must motivate their legitimacy in "taking over".

Furthermore, following the CRC's widespread ratification among countries, it is important to examine the issue of legitimacy. Mainly because the organisations are assigned such a large area in the arena of human rights and their legitimacy framework lead to different effects on children's rights depending on their chosen approach. Hence, this study's purpose is to convey an understanding of and map how international children's rights organisations fulfil their role as parallel to the state in protecting children's rights, i.e. how they are legitimate in their function. The presented aim will be achieved by analysing international non-governmental organisations' annual reports, who work in the field of children's rights, and through answering the question formulation:

- How do international non-governmental organisations frame their legitimacy for protecting children's rights?

## 1.2 Research review

The CRC's involvement of civil society as additional duty bearers in ensuring children's rights, and non-governmental public actors' increasing engagement across national borders have generated a substantial body of literature on the role of NGOs. This research review seeks to identify and discuss existing interpretations within the field of children's rights,

<sup>6</sup> Grugel, Jean and Peruzzotti, Enrique. The domestic politics of international human rights law: implementing the convention on the rights of the child in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina. *Human rights quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2012, pp. 178-198.

international NGOs and its relationships to states. The literature has been identified and divided into three subheadings.

### **The relationship between NGOs and states**

From a conceptual perspective the space in which NGOs are active has been problematised and analysed as a theoretical tool. The CRC attempts to broaden the actors involved in implementing the convention's content by creating space for civil society in the societies in which these NGOs are working.<sup>7</sup> However, it has been argued that the concept is very vague by most of the research and some argue that no general account to it exists, such as Mark Jensen in "Concepts and conceptions of civil society" (2006).<sup>8</sup> There is a widespread recognition among scholars that civil society is distinct from government and in opposition to it. Both Chris Allen and Jensen acknowledge this.<sup>9</sup>

The role of civil society and its purpose for the relationship between these actors are examined politically as well, where much of the literature focuses on the context where regimes impact on NGOs roles and their cooperation with the state. For example, Marcinkuté contrasts the outcomes of non-governmental actors' work in regard to authoritarian and democratic rule and highlights that NGO workers are more effective in democratic countries.<sup>10</sup> It is underscored how NGOs and the CRC can be perceived as dangerous by authoritarian countries due to an assumed Western bias of the convention and their external connections to influential Western state and non-state powers. Meanwhile NGOs in democratic states are perceived as foundational pillars for their social structure.<sup>11</sup> Grugel and Peruzzotti look closely at this as well and their result suggest that domestic politics is crucial

<sup>7</sup> Oestreich, Joel E. UNICEF and the implementation of the convention on the rights of the child, *Global governance*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1998, p. 187.

<sup>8</sup> Jensen, Mark N, Concepts and conceptions of civil society, *Journal of Civil Society*, Vol .2, No. 1, 2006, p. 39, 41-42, 44, 54.

<sup>9</sup> Allen, Chris. Who needs civil society? *Review of African Political Economy*, 24:73, 1997, p. 329.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 329.

<sup>11</sup> Marcinkuté, Lina, "The Role of Human Rights NGO's: Human Rights Defenders or State Sovereignty Destroyers?", *Baltic Journal of Law and Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2011, p. 60 and Allen, Chris. Who needs civil society? *Review of African Political Economy*, 24:73, 1997, p. 329 and Quennerstedt, Ann; Robinson, Carol; I'Anson, John, "The UNCRC: The voice of global consensus on Children's Rights?", *Nordic Journal of human rights*, Vol. 36, no. 1, 2018, p. 38.

in understanding how and how far compliance with the CRC evolves.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the success of NGOs or them being involved at all, is conditioned on the relationship with the country's government.

From the political standpoint we are able to understand that the arguments above are connected to state sovereignty and complex power relations which are brought forward by NGOs action on global issues in international alliances across borders. This means that there are tensions over non-governmental organisations working in several state territories and principally diminishing the state's sovereignty. Additionally, in post-colonial times. As Marcinkuté and Howell recognise, states are the primary duty-bearers in ensuring rights and NGOs ability to perform similar tasks could therefore be undermining states legitimacy. In turn however, NGOs involvement could be asserted to strengthen state sovereignty as well through assisting the government to fulfil its obligations.<sup>13</sup>

The role of NGOs and their relationships to any given state is determined on a case by case basis and shaped by a number of factors – not least the type of government in place in a country. As a result, it is clear that NGOs roles in relation to the state has no determined pattern in the world. When it comes to NGOs' position in the arena of children's rights this is also the case. Generally, the literature above centres primarily on the general or local level when it comes to NGOs work on children's rights. The research done on this generally overlooks the practical consequences for children's rights because it is too abstract, or it remains limited to explaining only that specific countries prerequisites. Furthermore, a very brief insight is provided on the international level, which is where the actors' relationship become controversial in their shared responsibilities. It is also left out why specifically NGOs are allowed to implement certain functions when the state doesn't.

### **NGOs' and states' roles and responsibilities in relation to the CRC**

<sup>12</sup> Grugel, Jean and Peruzzotti, Enrique. The domestic politics of international human rights law: implementing the convention on the rights of the child in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina. *Human rights quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2012, p. 179, 198.

<sup>13</sup> Marcinkuté, Lina, "The Role of Human Rights NGO's: Human Rights Defenders or State Sovereignty Destroyers?", *Baltic Journal of Law and Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2011, p. 65, 70 and Howell, Jude (red.), *Global matters for non-governmental public action*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012, p. 5.

States are identified as the signatories of the CRC and thus perpetuated as responsible for the convention's realisation. This is for example illustrated in *Children's rights law in the global human rights landscape – isolation, inspiration, integration?* (2017) by Lundy alongside Byrne.<sup>14</sup> The scholarly research on this is understandably well documented as states' abilities to fulfil its tasks or not is what constitutes the very foundation for bringing in NGOs to protect children's rights. It is where the controversiality begins. Indeed, the extensive research on state's responsibilities and roles is helpful in navigating NGOs perceived responsibilities in relation to human rights and the CRC. Their role remains in the area of monitoring power holder's behaviour, keeping them accountable and directly providing the adequately functions the state won't or can't and thus represent children's interests.<sup>15</sup> That being said, the perspective allows only for square analyses and unfortunately, opposite to the extensive literature on this perspective, less is given on the motivation why the non-governmental actors have such duties. If the NGOs aren't involved by the state and the state isn't fulfilling its duties, NGOs presumably work with children's rights despite this which creates a need to frame their legitimacy to others. Since the state still is the duty-bearer. This relates to the thesis' purpose in answering how international children's rights organisations are legitimate in their function as complement to the state.

Interestingly, much current research is engaged with the Convention on Rights of the Child and its links to different actors. The body of literature favours discourses of NGOs' expertise on children's rights though and how the NGOs' knowledge of it is especially appreciated by the UN. This fails to answer how the NGOs put forward their legitimacy in providing such expertise though, since their knowledge of children's rights seem to be assumed from this perception. It is pointed out by Türkelli and Vandenhole for example that the UN child committee consider international NGOs to be competent bodies on the same level as

<sup>14</sup> Woll, Lisa. Organizational responses to the convention on the rights of the child: international lessons for child welfare organizations, *Child Welfare League of America*. No. 5, 2001, p. 670, and Lundy, Laura and Byrne, Bronagh. "The four general principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: The potential value of the approach in other areas of human rights law" in *Children's rights law in the global human rights landscape – isolation, inspiration, integration?* Eva Brems, Ellen Desmet and Wouter Vandenhole (red.) Routledge, 2017. s. 59.

<sup>15</sup> Grugel, Jean and Peruzzotti, Enrique. The domestic politics of international human rights law: implementing the convention on the rights of the child in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina. *Human rights quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2012, p. 182 and Koenig-Archibugi, Mathias. "Mapping global governance" in *Governing globalization: power, authority and global governance*, Held, David and McGrew, Anthony, (red.). Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 2003.p. 2,5 and Grugel, Jean, and Perruzzotti, Enrique. Claiming rights under global governance: children's rights in Argentina, *Global governance*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2007, p. 204.

specialised UN agencies and it is tentatively concluded that international NGOs (INGOs) have considerable influence on the UN's observations on states.<sup>16</sup> In this way, it could be argued that NGOs seem to offer credible information that can contradict the state's proclamations, but the research is confined to only calling attention to it. Furthermore, few problems seem to be apparent regarding international NGOs' accountability compared to domestic according to Türkelli and Vandenhole, where local NGOs representativeness of civil society and reliability is presents as uncertain.<sup>17</sup> However, alarmed at the growing presence and influence of thousands of rights groups UN delegates too have queried about the legitimacy of especially northern-based groups and their claims to represent populations in the south, writes Howell (2012).<sup>18</sup> The historical perspective on the issue of NGOs involvement in the drafting and monitoring of the CRC contributes with insightful points and is understandable. However, it lacks motivations for why INGOs are assumed to be more legitimate and favoured.

Research on criticisms against NGOs and their characteristics in relation to CRC connected work is of notable exception. It has been done in three different ways. Firstly, the rights-based approach which is used by NGOs is examined by Emma Harris-Curtis's, who seeks to explore some of the key issues associated with an adoption of such an approach. She puts forward that there is a need for examining the legitimacy of the concept and the role of NGOs in a dialogue on rights, since the use of this approach hasn't been explored in regard to practical effects.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, recent critiques express scepticism about the real gains of NGOs especially those which focus on the global south stressing the continuing ability of power holders to evade real change.<sup>20</sup> This is relevant for this thesis since there is an apparent need for NGOs to explain themselves and why they should be allowed to continue, in combination with Western civil

<sup>16</sup> Türkelli, Gamze Erdem and Vandenhole, Wouter, The Convention on the rights of the child: repertoires of NGO participation, *Human rights Law Review*, 12:1, 2012, p. 33, 45-46, 48, 50.

<sup>17</sup> Türkelli, Gamze Erdem and Vandenhole, Wouter, The Convention on the rights of the child: repertoires of NGO participation, *Human rights Law Review*, 12:1, 2012, p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> Howell, Jude (red.), *Global matters for non-governmental public action*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012.p. 2-3.

<sup>19</sup> Harris-Curtis, Emma, Rights-based approaches: issues for NGOs, *Development in practice*, Vol. 13, No. 5, 2003, p. 563.

<sup>20</sup> Cook, Richard, "The influence of transnational non-governmental public actors on policy processes and policy outcomes: rethinking north-south relations" in *Global Matters for Non-Governmental Public Action*, Howell, Jude (red.), Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, p. 93.

society groups' advantageous position to put certain issues and perspectives onto the international agenda.<sup>21</sup> Put differently, NGOs have to legitimise their function.

### **The Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The main objective of this study isn't children's rights but on NGOs and their role in promoting these rights. Quennerstedt, Robinson and I'Anson identify contradictions within the CRC and the ways the convention can be considered to express consensus on the meaning behind children's rights.<sup>22</sup> For both NGOs and states, the convention is considered the framework for children's rights. However, due to its inconsistencies and vagueness the claimed consensus causes conflicting perspectives on the CRC's included articles, write Quennerstedt, Robinson and I'Anson.<sup>23</sup> It could be argued that it leads actors to interpret the convention's content in separate ways. Therefore, it could be fruitful to look at how one group distinguish that information to be able to observe the consequences for children's rights.<sup>24</sup> The focus on the Convention on the Rights of the Child gives important insight about how children's rights can be observed but it says less about practical consequences. Since this thesis revolves around children's rights as a context and the prerequisites the CRC has laid out for international NGOs involvement in its implementation, it is important to have an understanding of the convention's background and the effects it has brought with it.

### **Conclusion**

Studies of international non-governmental actors have tended to focus on normative aspects of the advocacy and their attempts to promote certain principles. The view has mostly been fixed on their role in implementing the CRC but from an outset outside of the non-governmental actors. My aim is not to denounce the earlier research but rather to recognise what has been done before and what only has been scratched on the surface. This thesis seeks to offer new elements of the current literature and widen the understanding of how international children's rights organisations frame their legitimacy in protecting children's rights, since it is apparent that the subject contains existent gaps. My research will as earlier

<sup>21</sup> Howell, Jude (red.), *Global matters for non-governmental public action*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012, p. 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Quennerstedt, Ann; Robinson, Carol; I'Anson, John, "The UNCRC: The voice of global consensus on Children's Rights?", *Nordic Journal of human rights*, Vol. 36, no. 1, 2018, p.38.

<sup>23</sup> Quennerstedt, Ann; Robinson, Carol; I'Anson, John, "The UNCRC: The voice of global consensus on Children's Rights?", *Nordic Journal of human rights*, Vol. 36, no. 1, 2018, p. 39-41.

<sup>24</sup> Quennerstedt, Ann; Robinson, Carol; I'Anson, John, "The UNCRC: The voice of global consensus on Children's Rights?", *Nordic Journal of human rights*, Vol. 36, no. 1, 2018, p. 38.

research focus on the relationship between states and NGOs, but in this thesis it will problematise how INGOs fulfil their function as parallel to the state in relation to their legitimacy. In summary, current research offers insightful points and I will add to it by connecting another piece of research from the point of view of NGOs.

## 2 Research design

This thesis will be a systematic case-study where three international children's rights organisations' annual reports from 2018 are examined to answer the question of how they frame their legitimacy in working with children's rights as parallel to the state. This will be done with the help of a qualitative content analysis and the theoretical concept of political responsibility.

### 2.1 Primary data

In this section I will present the data on which my analysis is based. Firstly, a step-by-step approach is given for how the chosen data was selected. Afterwards, the material will be introduced before the specific content is described alongside delimitations and motivations for using it in this study. Lastly some criticisms of the sources will be discussed.

#### 2.1.1 Selection process

Google was used to find the international children's rights organisations' annual reports, the primary data, and listed current active NGOs around the globe. The information search consisted of the key words "international child rights organisations" and resulted in about 17 different accurate groups who work within the field of the study. Out of these only 10 were of relevance to inspect further, based on the following set criteria linked to my question; the organisation's character as non-governmental, the NGOs focus on advocating children's rights, the work being undertaken internationally as well as documents in some way discussing their legitimacy being available. The initial broad search is advantageous to achieve variation in relation to arguments for legitimacy and INGOs' perspectives on their role.

Nevertheless, the amount of texts would be too extensive to analyse for the essay's determined word limit. The INGOs also had to provide similar types of documents to analyse, for this thesis' results to be as correct and comparable as possible. Therefore, the number was decreased to the 3 remaining largest international organisations (based on budget) who all had produced annual reports from the same year. Budget became the

decisive factor as it means that the organisations definitely account for their finances and legitimise why sponsors should continue supporting them. In turn, the annual report was the only document which appeared regularly and gave appropriate information for my purpose on the NGOs' websites. In this way the data has been limited in quantity but can still contribute with sufficient insight. The specific international children's rights organisations which were left from the approach and whose annual reports will be analysed are:

- Save the Children International (44 pages, published 2018)
- Plan International (32 pages, published 2018)
- SOS Children's Villages International (67 pages, published 2018)

### 2.1.2 Data description

International non-governmental organisations were chosen as primary material due to several reasons. Firstly, they are active across state borders which indicates that public legitimisation is expected to be given for why the continued work should be allowed. Secondly, the international NGOs produce substantial volumes of communication material and motivations for their existence all of which are easily accessed. In contrast, if local NGOs would have been examined there would have been stricter limitations in the number of platforms providing documents and consequently less data. Besides a particular local context could not be motivated, as well as the fact that international character prompt more interesting dynamics for this study's purpose - how INGOs are legitimate in their function as parallel to the state - when different sorts of state polities are involved.

From the international NGOs' documentations, annual reports were selected as the primary material. As mentioned in the selection process, annual reports were partly selected because the material had to be a text that every organisation had written respectively in order to be able to discern patterns in their descriptions. The major factor though was the content. In the reports, information is included about what has been accomplished during the year. It illustrates where and to what money has been transformed, with the aim of encouraging new donors to commit to their organisation at

the same time as they motivate current donors to continue their investments.<sup>25</sup> For the INGOs to be further sponsored though it has to argue for why which is where I believe to find content to this thesis since they have to legitimise their work. Thus, it is logical to use as data.

The annual reports concern the year of 2018 as it was the most current year where all the organisations had published a report. For relevance to the situation today and to be able to contribute to the research it was accordingly desirable to favour 2018. The sources' volume is also considered to enable diverseness and simultaneously being manageable. There are however shortcomings for using these documents as data. They can't represent an exhaustive general answer for how all INGOs frame their legitimisation in protecting children's rights since the material is narrowed. It can only be perceived as one example on the issue. Another limitation is that the content doesn't always explicitly discuss the legitimisation for their function, which could hinder an answer to the question formulation as well as that the documents from the different NGOs do not always contain the same information.

### 2.1.3 Criticism of the sources

For this bachelor thesis it is important that the annual reports are written by the INGOs themselves in order to be accurate, and that the analysis is applied on their understanding and not another person's interpretation. Ergo, to eliminate shortcomings the annual reports were retrieved from the organisations' own official websites. Considering the material is taken from the international children's rights organisations' websites and their own sources have been used, it is not possible to know for certain that the figures or statements are one hundred percent accurate. My purpose though is to investigate how they fulfil their role as complement to the state by answering how they frame their legitimacy. Therefore, if incorrect information is used to conceive a certain legitimacy for their function my thesis' result will be incorrect. However, the INGOs are well-known though and considered reliable in this case since it would damage them greatly not to put forth authentic numbers and accomplishments.

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence, Leon, "A brief guide to NGO annual report", Published: 2020-01-07, Site: Medium, Accessed, 2020-01-13.

## 3 Method & Theory

This chapter presents the study's method and the theoretical concept. It will include a short abstract explanation of the method and motivations for why it is the most suitable in order to analyse. In the following part the limitations will be identified. Moreover, the theory is introduced as it is intertwined with the methodological approach and vital to understand before the actual method-analysis is outlined.

### 3.1 Qualitative content analysis

For this study, a deductive qualitative content analysis is used as a method which interprets qualitative data with the goal of comprehensively understanding a phenomenon.<sup>26</sup> This is of relevance for my thesis since the question formulation is about how the international children's rights organisations frame their legitimacy, i.e. how they understand it. The method also enables analysis on not only descriptive written content but interpretative and underlying content, as explained by Graneheim and Lundman.<sup>27</sup> Since INGOs' arguments for legitimacy are presumed to be present in the data both explicitly and inexplicitly it is a useful feature and a reason for why this method is considered more suitable than a quantitatively content analysis for instance.

The specific deductive approach means that the theory plays a big part in the process and is integrated in the analysis. The theory acts as a framework because it provides the main ideas for potentially understanding what arguments INGOs use to legitimise their work in protecting children's rights. These key ideas and words are then what is looked for in the annual reports from the INGOs. The chosen theory's implications about the phenomenon which is researched is tested against the collected data.<sup>28</sup> It seeks to validate the theory conceptually and the findings will either not support or support evidence for the theoretical

<sup>26</sup> Forman, Jane and Damschroder, Laura, Qualitative content analysis, *Advances in Bioethics*, Vol.11, 2008, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> Graneheim, Ulla H; Lindgren, Britt-Marie; Lundman, Berit. Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper, *In Nurse Education today*. 56: 2017, p. 29.

<sup>28</sup> Graneheim, Ulla H; Lindgren, Britt-Marie; Lundman, Berit. Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper, *In Nurse Education today*. 56: 2017, p. 30-31.

framework. That is a strength of this method and ensures the researcher doesn't create results based on preunderstandings.<sup>29</sup> This falls in line with the study's question as well, as the theory is applied as a potential understanding of how INGOs frame their legitimacy and if it doesn't conform to those concepts, the answer is still revealed. The theory also helps to focus the research question by directing attention to specific elements within the perspective and subject.

### 3.1.1 Limitations

The deductive content analysis also has limitations.<sup>30</sup> Instead of letting the main ideas, words or concepts emerge from the documents, the deductive approach starts out by looking for specific words, concepts etc. One negative aspect to this is the fact that the researcher might miss an idea that doesn't fit within the framework but that might nonetheless be important for the data.<sup>31</sup> It becomes a challenge how to treat the left-over data which doesn't fit the selected theory. The application of existent concepts of legitimacy from the theory on the data also entails that the researcher has a biased approach. Therefore, it is more likely for the researcher to have tendencies towards finding evidence for the theoretical framework than not.<sup>32</sup> This could be remedied in this thesis by being open to the material and for it to speak on its own without searching for certain interpretations or main ideas provided by the theory. The chosen theory allows for broad interpretations in its categories which can help.

Graneheim and Lundman also discuss the general criticism against qualitative content analysis. One criterion which needs to be included for the method to be considered properly executed, according to the authors, regards transparency and how easy it is for another person to follow the approach taken. In the method and findings, there is for that reason included citations from the annual reports to help guide the reader in how the interpretations were made and how the process has unfolded. The reader can through the citations trace and understand the reasoning behind interpretations. This is important since a text never has only one

<sup>29</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh, Sarah E. Shannon, Three approaches to qualitative content analysis, *Qualitative health research*, Vol. 15, No. 9, 2005, p. 1282-1283.

<sup>30</sup> Forman, Jane and Damschroder, Laura, Qualitative content analysis, *Advances in Bioethics*, Vol.11, 2008, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> Graneheim, Ulla H; Lindgren, Britt-Marie; Lundman, Berit. Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper, *In Nurse Education today*. 56: 2017, p. 30-31.

<sup>32</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh, Sarah E. Shannon, Three approaches to qualitative content analysis, *Qualitative health research*, Vol. 15, No. 9, 2005, p.1283.

meaning but it instead depends on the interpreter's subjective perspective.<sup>33</sup> For the overall reliability the researcher also has to be honest about his or her preunderstandings since these could affect how the material is perceived.<sup>34</sup> Lastly, in qualitative content analysis there is also a risk that the beholder read something into the data that isn't there.

### 3.1.2 Preunderstandings

As stated in the previous chapter, it is central for the analysis that the researcher is open and reflect over the own preunderstandings to increase the results trustworthiness.

Preunderstanding means that there is a perception about the phenomenon before the study is conducted. As a researcher I am aware that the INGOs' annual reports will be read from my position as a human rights student which might affect how I interpret the descriptions and claims being made. Above all, there could be a tendency to analyse in favour of the international children's rights organisations since their work concern the protection of rights. However, my purpose is not to evaluate the INGOs but research how they frame their legitimacy. Additionally, since I am Swedish, I am also from the Western world which can affect my point of view and interpretations in regard to it being only Western-based INGOs that are analysed, i.e. international children's rights organisations that were first established in the global north.

## 3.2 Political responsibility

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework that is political responsibility. The concept will be explained and then assessed in regard to its limitations. The introduced ideas or categories from the theory will later be used in the deductive content analysis.

Through participation in transnational advocacy, NGOs increasingly face challenges about their roles in international policy and the shaping of global governance.<sup>35</sup> These challenges centre on issues regarding what right NGOs have to contribute, who they represent, how they are accountable and towards whom they are accountable, states Hudson (2001) in "NGO's

<sup>33</sup> Graneheim, Ulla H; Lindgren, Britt-Marie; Lundman, Berit. Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper, *In Nurse Education today*. 56: 2017, p. 30-31.

<sup>34</sup> Graneheim, Ulla H; Lindgren, Britt-Marie; Lundman, Berit. Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper, *In Nurse Education today*. 56: 2017, p. 30-31.

<sup>35</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 335-336.

transnational advocacy networks: from ‘legitimacy’ to ‘political responsibility?’”<sup>36</sup> The challenges are about being able to provide moral justifications for political and social action which can be ascribed to an NGO by several actors with different viewpoints.<sup>37</sup> In order to come to terms with the emerging power relations and responsibilities in this context, the theoretical framework of political responsibility can be used. It is a concept of what actions should be taken in NGOs’ work to achieve political responsibility. For when it isn’t embraced, NGOs are left open to criticism about their legitimacy.<sup>38</sup> These collected actions in the concept provide an aggregate assessment of the extent to which an NGO has successfully reached accountability and similarly when it hasn’t. For this reason, it is relevant to use for answering the thesis’ question of how international children’s rights organisations frame their legitimacy. It will also contribute to achieving the aim through contributing with arguments for legitimacy that are linked to its role and relation to the state.

The theory manifests itself in seven components in total. Alan Hudson explains that one of the first actions of political responsibility that need to be taken is about establishing what requisite expertise the NGOs have.<sup>39</sup> According to Van Tuijl and Jordan this is a necessary act of accountability since it recognises boundaries within each NGO in the shape of a chosen area based on what specific knowledge the NGO possesses. Actors are therefore perceived to be experts if they for example have had a long-term presence and experience in a certain field.<sup>40</sup> In other words, the NGOs should somehow illustrate their limitations in scope of where they are able to operate to be seen as reliable. This component is formulated as *expertise*.

Likewise, NGOs are also expected in this theoretical framework to ponder upon questions of what their human rights priorities are in the chosen field, for whose benefit they are active in the field, consider which time frames are used in the advocacies and in this case with what

<sup>36</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO’s transnational advocacy networks: from ‘legitimacy’ to ‘political responsibility?’ *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 331.

<sup>37</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO’s transnational advocacy networks: from ‘legitimacy’ to ‘political responsibility?’ *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 331, 340-341.

<sup>38</sup> Jordan, Lisa and Van Tuijl, Peter, Political responsibility in transnational NGO advocacy, *World development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, p. 2052, 2054.

<sup>39</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO’s transnational advocacy networks: from ‘legitimacy’ to ‘political responsibility?’ *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 346.

<sup>40</sup> Jordan, Lisa and Van Tuijl, Peter, Political responsibility in transnational NGO advocacy, *World development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, p. 2054.

level of active opposition authorities are approached in the arena of children's rights.<sup>41</sup> It could be said to refer to and connect to the shaping of what topics they wish to put on the international agenda and what subject others should be discussing. This is the second component the theory emphasises and is important due to the consequences that follow after its application.<sup>42</sup> Jordan and Van Tuijl explain how NGOs' objectives will affect their agendas and work. Thus, it is vital to explicitly map what these are and establish a strategy with transparent goals for others to monitor.<sup>43</sup> It is for that reason formulated as the idea of *agenda-setting*.

The third action or component concerns legitimisation through work in alliances and engagement in networks.<sup>44</sup> It is argued that if international NGOs co-operate with other actors, they can gain legitimacy for their function via members in the same network who enable such a procedure.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, the partners confirm the legitimacy of the NGOs. Therefore, it is of political responsibility to embrace relationships with others which is why the component has been named *relationships* in this thesis.

The remaining four components from the theoretical concept won't be applied in the method due to the chosen data. It won't either be possible to analyse the actions for legitimacy as the information in the data doesn't include all that is required from the political responsibility framework or because it won't contribute to answering my question. However, the components will be explained shortly here. The theory highlights the importance of contributing economically for expenses in cooperation networks, providing equal access to information for everyone and to examine to what extent the frequency in which NGOs relay information or articulate information are put into comprehensible forms.

### 3.2.1 Criticisms

<sup>41</sup> Jordan, Lisa and Van Tuijl, Peter, Political responsibility in transnational NGO advocacy, *World development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, p. 2054.

<sup>42</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 346.

<sup>43</sup> Jordan, Lisa and Van Tuijl, Peter, Political responsibility in transnational NGO advocacy, *World development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, p. 2055.

<sup>44</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 337.

<sup>45</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 337.

One offered critic against the theory and its components is that it is vague. I agree with this statement, however, it could also be considered as an advantage in this thesis. Because the theory's understandings are looked for in the deductive approach, it is important that it allows for a broad interpretation of the data. In that way, the analysis is open for more variations in the results as well. Furthermore, the theory could be argued to not be of interest for this study since it focuses on advocacy and my data is limited to annual reports. To some extent, the annual reports could be considered to be advocacy and even if the data constricted the study to not use all components of political responsibility, it enables the study to work more in depth on the available theoretical components or ideas. The data is also discussing legitimacy more than any other of the available documents from the NGOs' websites, which makes it logical to use for this theory.

### 3.3 Deductive qualitative content analysis

In the deductive qualitative content analysis, the manifest content from the INGOs' annual reports, i.e. the written content that contains the most vital information for answering the question formulation, was coded. However, to be able to study how international children's rights organisations legitimise their function it is vital to know which units in the data carry these details i.e. what arguments to look for in advance.<sup>46</sup> This is where the theory's purpose and understandings comes in. The concept of political responsibility was read thoroughly beforehand to reach an overview of which existing components explain how NGOs legitimise their work. These components, or categories as they are called in the analysis, were then searched for in the INGOs' annual reports. Hence, occurrences were examined if a pattern existed between the descriptions given in the theory and the current data. The following categories were selected from the theoretical concept of political responsibility (presented in the same order as they were given in the previous chapter):

Deductive figure 1

<b>Categories</b>	Expertise	Agenda-setting	Relationships
Codes			

<sup>46</sup> Graneheim, Ulla H; Lindgren, Britt-Marie; Lundman, Berit. Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper, *In Nurse Education today*. 56: 2017, p. 30–34.

When manifest content or sentences in the annual reports matched with one of the categories from the theory, they were placed underneath one of the categories in the chart above. Groups of codes that shared common characteristics were therefore collected in the same place and could be contrasted with the other categories.<sup>47</sup>

For example, the process occurred as follows. Firstly, a sentence was studied such as: “We provide specialist care and support in child and youth development programmes for children and young people at risk of losing parental care or who have lost parental care.”<sup>48</sup> This unit concerns INGOs’ knowledge, which is based upon the wording of *specialist* and that a specific area has been identified of *parental care*. Therefore, it can be coded as specialists within parental care and placed under the category “expertise”. This process was repeated with all codes until everything had been analysed as well as put into the established chart. Because the reports are rather extensive, all codes could not be included in the chart, but the ones that represent an overall or central idea of similar codes were inserted. Additionally, to enhance the readability of the analysis, the citations have at times been shortened which is indicated by three dots [...]. This means that words not central to the understanding of INGOs framing of legitimacy was excluded.

The next step was to direct the search for latent or abstract content in the data which is formulated as themes. It is where the categories that were found were linked to the theory and interpreted into themes. Themes are the red thread through the categories and gives meaning to reoccurring topics.<sup>49</sup> They answer the question “what is this about?”.<sup>50</sup> In this bachelor thesis, it was therefore asked what subject kept occurring in the international children’s rights organisations’ framing of their legitimacy and how they were legitimate in their function as parallel to the state.

<sup>47</sup> Graneheim, Ulla H; Lindgren, Britt-Marie; Lundman, Berit. Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper, *In Nurse Education today*. 56: 2017, p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> Graneheim, Ulla H; Lindgren, Britt-Marie; Lundman, Berit. Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper, *In Nurse Education today*. 56: 2017, p. 30–34

<sup>50</sup> Graneheim, Ulla H; Lindgren, Britt-Marie; Lundman, Berit. Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper, *In Nurse Education today*. 56: 2017, p. 33.

### 3.4 Assessment of research ethics

The issue of children and their rights is a sensitive topic. It is vital that individual children's identities are protected so they won't come to harm as a consequence of this thesis. In this study, there won't be any individuals mentioned by name because the annual reports from Save the Children International, Plan International and SOS Children's Villages International have provided the included children with a different one. The data includes photographs of young people and children; however, these serve no purpose for this analysis and therefore don't pose an ethical problem to take into account.

## 4 Findings and analysis

In this section the deductive results are introduced. It is examined if and how the international non-governmental organisations frame their legitimacy for protecting children's rights in accordance to the categories from the theory. The analysis is executed with the help of quotes from the INGOs' annual reports to image what their descriptions look like. These presented categories are put forward one at a time to both answer the thesis' question and achieving the aim of understanding how international children's rights organisations are legitimate in their function as parallel to the state. The findings are discussed on the basis of the theoretical understanding of political responsibility as well as earlier research.

### 4.1 INGOs' framing of their legitimacy

#### 4.1.1 Expertise

This first category is a commonly used argument by all the international children's rights organisations reviewed in this thesis for framing their legitimacy in protecting children's rights. They claim to possess specific knowledge within the field which makes them suitable to work with the issues as parallel to the state. Plan International operates as "a leading global girls' rights organisation"<sup>51</sup>, SOS Children's Villages International is "the world's largest non-governmental organisation focused on supporting children and young people without parental care"<sup>52</sup> and Save the Children International describes itself as "one of the world's leading independent organisations" for marginalised children.<sup>53</sup> This understanding leads the actors to appear to be the best for the task of protecting children's rights. The positive connotations to words such as "leading" indicate that the INGOs' possess great capacity and influence in the human rights field which in turn transform into qualification. According to the perspective of political responsibility, this view is based on the international children's rights organisations concentrating their area of expertise to particular rights, which allows for deeper insight. The recognition of limitations is considered to strengthen the legitimacy. The

<sup>51</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p.8.

chosen words also indicate knowledge which can be said to transform into trustworthiness for the INGOs because they are according to the theory, all justifying their place in the global governance and where they operate.<sup>54</sup> It could be argued to be because the framing is perceived as more realistic compared to statements of knowing “everything” as well.

Another aspect of the argument for being qualified is the INGOs’ allege to have experience of protecting children’s rights. Similarly, to the paragraph before, the expertise entails a practical competence and familiarity in what to do which is expressed in SOS Children’s Villages International’s annual report:

Drawing on our long-term presence in the countries and communities where we work, we are well positioned to understand the needs, identify partners and act quickly.<sup>55</sup>

As illustrated in the quote the experience seems to originate from working with the same concern for a long period of time. It can be assumed that the organisation has extended knowledge within its area of expertise since the INGO has dealt with the same concerns since its year of establishment. This tends to insinuate trustworthiness in the international children’s rights organisations’ skills to handle the matter. It also gives the impression that this has created unique knowledge that others don’t necessarily possess. Moreover, it is asserted to be adapted after national context which coincides with Jude Howell’s discussion in ‘Global matters for non-governmental public action’ (2012). He highlights the special power position that northern INGOs have in regard to managing situations in the global south, which is easily questioned if not administered correctly.<sup>56</sup> The question is the same for children’s rights NGOs in particular. In this way, the reviewed INGOs’ active presence in local surroundings is used as a strategy to avoid approaching the needs of others from an imperialistic point of view. However, it could still be negatively interpreted and the international children’s rights organisations seen as organisations who engage over children’s heads and paints the actors’ framing of their legitimacy in a negative light, when the protection of children is done without the young people’s participation.

<sup>54</sup> Jordan, Lisa and Van Tuijl, Peter, Political responsibility in transnational NGO advocacy, *World development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, p. 2054.

<sup>55</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 33.

<sup>56</sup> Howell, Jude (red.), *Global matters for non-governmental public action*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012, p. 2-3.

Furthermore, the children's rights organisations outline their working methods to emphasise the legitimacy in their function as parallel to the state. The practical methods are presented as being based on expertise and objective facts. SOS Children's Villages International articulates for example how data is collected about the children they are paying attention to which enables the non-governmental organisation to verify whether present measures are improving the child right's situation and to identify gaps where children are forgotten.<sup>57</sup> It entails a degree of investigation and that the engagements are founded on being methodical. In other words, the international children's rights organisations reviewed in this thesis are portraying themselves as accountable and credible. The annual reports also include concrete examples of how the INGOs have gone about to protect children's rights with examples such as "creating economic opportunity"<sup>58</sup>, "challenge harmful gender stereotypes"<sup>59</sup> and "trained community health workers."<sup>60</sup> The process of coming to these measures as a conclusion, that seem to target the causes to the problem, could be argued to involve specialist insight. Therefore, the international NGO Save the Children International frames its legitimacy through certainty of its competence and is able to even state solutions to some of the rights issues:

We know that simple, low-cost interventions such as breastfeeding, handwashing with soap, preventative vaccinations and curative treatments, can ensure that children survive.<sup>61</sup>

In other instances, though, the descriptions of the child rights NGOs' methods aren't as clear, and they haven't therefore succeeded very well in framing their legitimacy properly according to the theory of political responsibility. Since the vagueness is interfering with the child rights NGOs being transparent and easy to monitor.

However, in the same way they know much about their particular focus on children's rights, the international child rights organisations acknowledge that they don't encompass all knowledge to protect young people's entitlements, as put forward by Plan International:

<sup>57</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 24.

<sup>59</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 22.

<sup>60</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 16.

<sup>61</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 12.

As an independent development and humanitarian organisation, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children.<sup>62</sup>

The quote evokes an interpretation of the reviewed INGOs not involving themselves with questions where they have little to contribute with, instead they turn to others for help. The theoretical perspective explains the international children's rights NGOs' behaviour through two main ideas. Firstly, admitting the area of expertise to be limited is a big part of taking political responsibility. It facilitates cooperation in that all parties are aware of the available knowledges which makes coordinating work more efficient and transparent. Secondly, the recognition also strengthens all the involved actors' legitimacy through the accountability they have towards each other in protecting children's rights.<sup>63</sup>

It is clear from the annual reports' descriptions that the international non-governmental organisations are framing their legitimacy via the argument of expertise. They frame themselves as being qualified based on their expert skills and as accountable as well as credible based on their methodical and cooperative approaches to the issues. The connection to expertise is also how the INGOs to some extent are framed in the literature. Türkelli and Vandenhole (2012) write in "The convention on the rights of the child: repertoires of NGO participation" that the organisations are portrayed as well-informed consultants to help the UN, states or groups in the civil society. According to the authors, this is the reason why the NGOs were placed as parallel to the state in regard to the Convention on the Rights of the Child from the beginning.<sup>64</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Agenda-setting

Another formulation by the international children's rights organisations in reference to framing their legitimacy is prioritising specific children's rights issues. All three organisations mention certain priorities of rights to shape the world's agenda. Plan International strives for

<sup>62</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 32.

<sup>63</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 331, 337, 340-341 and Jordan, Lisa and Van Tuijl, Peter, Political responsibility in transnational NGO advocacy, *World development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, p. 2054.

<sup>64</sup>Türkelli, Gamze Erdem and Vandenhole, Wouter, The Convention on the rights of the child: repertoires of NGO participation, *Human rights Law Review*, 12:1, 2012, p. 33, 45-46, 48, 50.

“equality for girls”<sup>65</sup>, SOS Children’s Villages International direct their work towards “preventing family separation”<sup>66</sup> and Save the Children International centre on “ensuring children’s survival.”<sup>67</sup> These rights are presented as under attack and repressed across the world, especially in contexts of crises.<sup>68</sup> This shared argument implies the viewed INGOs’ legitimate function as parallel to the state since they have selected to operate where they are deemed to be needed. Put differently, they are assumed to be rightful in order to be active in such cases. It is similarly founded on the following quote:

Our *Adolescent Girls in Crisis* reports found that girls living through major emergencies are suffering some of the most horrific human rights violations, while being largely ignored by the international community.<sup>69</sup>

The fact that very serious infringements are occurring, and states intentionally aren’t fulfilling their obligations in protecting children’s rights, the international children’s rights NGOs appear to have to step in to cover this neglected domain to not be considered illegitimate. From the understanding of the theory it is important that what priorities or objectives the civil society groups have and why, is explicitly expressed. Jordan and Van Tuijil (2000) explain that political responsibility comes from being transparent with aims and accompanied strategies because different consequences follow.<sup>70</sup> In this way Save the Children International, Plan International and SOS Children’s Villages International frame their legitimacy in line with the theory and the idea of being appropriate for protecting children’s rights.

Likewise, it seems the INGOs in this thesis are aware of the possible consequences the political responsibility framework is portraying and understand how their objectives could have positive or negative effects for children’s rights depending on their approach. This indicates that the international children’s rights organisations frame their legitimacy in terms

<sup>65</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 16.

<sup>67</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 8.

<sup>68</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> Jordan, Lisa and Van Tuijl, Peter, Political responsibility in transnational NGO advocacy, *World development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, p. 2055 and Hudson, Alan, NGO’s transnational advocacy networks: from ‘legitimacy’ to ‘political responsibility’? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 346.

of accountability. An example of this is given concerning children's education. Save the Children International claims:

Being in a safe school also means they are at reduced risk of child marriage, child labour, being recruited into armed forces or being sexually exploited or trafficked.<sup>71</sup>

The quote is related to the category expertise in the previous section for understanding why they put certain rights at the forefront of their activities. However, Emma Harris-Curtis (2003) insists on the contrary as she argues that the international children's rights organisations' are aware of the consequences of their approaches in her article "Rights-based approaches: issues for NGOs". The rights-based approach that NGOs apply is criticised for being unexplored. Therefore, even though the international non-governmental organisations have argued for how and why they are legitimate in their objectives, it is not enough according to the author if the outcomes for following this method of working is still unknown.<sup>72</sup> In fact, research such as Richard Cook's "The influence of transnational non-governmental public actors on policy processes and policy outcomes: rethinking north-south relations" (2012) have questioned the assumed positive results of NGOs' involvement in human rights issues.<sup>73</sup>

Linked to providing results is the political responsibility that needs to be taken into account concerning who is favoured by INGOs' performed actions to ensure that set aims conform to the designated beneficiaries.<sup>74</sup> Children can be assumed to be the largest group to benefit from the international NGOs' actions in this thesis. The interventions are articulated either towards all children in general or in referral to young people who are denied their human rights.<sup>75</sup> For example states Plan International:

<sup>71</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 24.

<sup>72</sup> Harris-Curtis, Emma, Rights-based approaches: issues for NGOs, *Development in practice*, Vol. 13, No. 5, 2003, p. 563.

<sup>73</sup> Cook, Richard, "The influence of transnational non-governmental public actors on policy processes and policy outcomes: rethinking north-south relations" in *Global Matters for Non-Governmental Public Action*, Howell, Jude (red.), Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. p. 93.

<sup>74</sup> Jordan, Lisa and Van Tuijl, Peter, Political responsibility in transnational NGO advocacy, *World development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, p. 2055 and Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 346.

<sup>75</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 2 and Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 8, 20.

We create spaces for young people, especially girls, in public decision-making processes and support them to advocate for change that advances gender equality and the rights of young people.<sup>76</sup>

According to the citation above, the perspective is declared for the benefit of youth overall, even though a certain attention is put on females. However, the organisation doesn't offer any definition of young people which could mean that Plan International doesn't want to exclude any children. Nevertheless, the vagueness aggravates transparency and could also be translated to many possible interpretations as to who specifically benefits which is disadvantageous from the perspective of political responsibility.<sup>77</sup> This can be understood by Quennerstedt's, Robinson's and I'Anson's (2018) explanations in "The UNCRC: The voice of global consensus on Children's Rights?" where the CRC's inconsistencies might cause several meanings of the rights.<sup>78</sup> This looseness in interpretation might be intentional as a way of making it easier for these international NGOs to frame their objectives. They need their objectives to be in line with the CRC and yet they still have their own organisational priorities and sometimes these don't match up perfectly. So, having a very loose, open conceptualisation facilitates this. It could also be linked to the viewed INGOs' dependent placement to state polity that decides if the international children's rights organisation is allowed to work with certain children or where certain children are vulnerable, as stated in Grugel and Perruzzotti's article "The domestic politics of international human rights law: implementing the convention on the rights of the child in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina (2012).<sup>79</sup>

However, the study's INGOs provide with budgets in their annual reports where it is achievable to view who benefits from the INGOs' financial support and set agenda. Comparably, the budgets are also used in the same way to show what their made priorities are via what areas of society their funds have been put into.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, statistics are provided to

<sup>76</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 18.

<sup>77</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 346.

<sup>78</sup> Quennerstedt, Ann; Robinson, Carol; I'Anson, John, "The UNCRC: The voice of global consensus on Children's Rights?", *Nordic Journal of human rights*, Vol. 36, no. 1, 2018, p. 39-41.

<sup>79</sup> Grugel, Jean and Perruzzotti, Enrique. The domestic politics of international human rights law: implementing the convention on the rights of the child in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina. *Human rights quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2012, p. 179, 198.

<sup>80</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 42-43 and Plan International, Plan International

tell if the organisation is doing what it has claimed to be doing and otherwise it can be held accountable for not reaching its goals. In connection to its economic records SOS Children's Villages International comments:

As a member of Accountable Now and a board member of the International Civil Society Centre since 2012, we take our obligations around management transparency and accountability very seriously.<sup>81</sup>

This statement further suggests that the INGOs in this thesis frame their legitimacy on accountability and statistics. Through the budget the child rights organisations in this thesis also present how many children that are reached.<sup>82</sup> In turn this implicitly means demonstrating successes and that the international children's rights organisations deliver improvements and are legitimate in their function as parallel to the state. The international NGOs reviewed in this thesis frame their legitimacy in illustrating their directives conforming with the intended objectives i.e. focusing on benefitting those who are proclaimed to be in the annual reports. In other words, the INGOs supply assumed reliable data on how children have been reached and what goals have been accomplished in 2018. Therefore, they are accountable to children in attaining its goals.

Regarding the period of time that Save the Children International, Plan International and SOS Children's Villages International plan to benefit these groups and keep the same priorities, different answers are given to frame their legitimacy in protecting children's rights. There are two occasions in the texts with explicit time frames where the first from Plan International abides:

Up to 2022 we will deliver greater impact for vulnerable children, especially girls by: working where violations of children's rights and inequality for girls are the greatest.<sup>83</sup>

It is a limited time frame which conveys that after the year 2022 these goals will be halted. This can be interpreted from the outset in the theory's idea about transparency where the set objective has distinguished effects on the INGO's strategies. By working towards a deadline,

Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 30-31, and SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 60-66.

<sup>81</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 63-64.

<sup>82</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 66.

<sup>83</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 9.

it entails that the goal thereafter will be assessed to ensure that the methods and aims are actually accurate and contributing to change. In political responsibility, this is a foundational pillar for reaching accountability.<sup>84</sup>

The second appearance of a timeframe is found in SOS Children's Villages International's report about giving direct care to young people for as long as they might need it.<sup>85</sup> The same conclusion is assumed to be drawn when it comes to other focus areas, such as "strengthening child protection systems"<sup>86</sup>, "ensuring no child dies before they turn five"<sup>87</sup> and "removing harmful practices."<sup>88</sup> where no settled time frame is conceptualised either. None of these courses of action imply ease for the international children's rights organisations to achieve but rather the opposite. The international children's rights organisations viewed in this thesis are targeting causes to the violations of children's rights and aim to build up public structures.<sup>89</sup> The unlimited timeframe in regard to this could therefore in one way be argued to frame the INGOs' position as legitimate in that they work thoroughly to amend the issues for good. As SOS Children's Villages International writes: "Our vision for children is always long-term."<sup>90</sup>

At the same time, it makes it more difficult to monitor progress and keep the INGOs accountable for making noticeable changes. It could also be questioned whether it is practically feasible to work with similar approaches forever. Researchers such as Marcinkuté (2011) in "The role of human rights NGO's: human rights defenders or state sovereignty destroyers?" and Howell (2012) in *Global matters for non-governmental public action* further highlight the tension between non-Western countries and NGOs who are established in the Western part of the world, and how this forever-strategy could be understood as imposing

<sup>84</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 346.

<sup>85</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. P. 21.

<sup>87</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 27.

<sup>89</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 21, 27 and Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 8.

<sup>90</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 33.

finalised models onto the state indefinitely or until the government caves.<sup>91</sup> The issue is relevant for the international children's rights organisations' situation in particular.

Lastly in the theory's category of agenda-setting for how the INGOs frame their legitimacy is the issue of what level of antagonism is presented against authorities.<sup>92</sup> Since children's rights NGOs' position is placed within the civil society, they are per definition detached from the state, according to Allen's (1997) article "Who needs civil society?" and Jensen's (2006) argumentation in 'Concepts and conceptions of civil society'.<sup>93</sup> It therefore has, from the perspective of the theoretical concept, significance and consequences for their agenda from what level of opposition they work.<sup>94</sup> They are intended to step in for the state in protecting children's rights and be legitimate in their function as complement to the state, so they have to provide justifications for why that is.

It is acknowledged throughout the annual reports that states have the legal responsibility to protect rights and indicators are presented for them to stand by those commitments: "[...] we advocate for governments to uphold their obligations with regard to children's rights."<sup>95</sup> In the findings there are two different interpretations made from this. The first could be implied to be that the state is currently lacking in performing its duties enough. It originates from the quotation's meaning in itself. The fact that the INGOs have to remind states to do what they have publicly announced to do, suggests how governments are failing in their role. This means the international children's rights organisations reviewed in this thesis frame their legitimacy through implicitly identifying where governments are inadequate in their efforts. In other words, the organisations are lawfully needed. Furthermore, this perception and higher level of opposition is noticeable where Save the Children International claims:

<sup>91</sup> Marcinkuté, Lina, "The Role of Human Rights NGO's: Human Rights Defenders or State Sovereignty Destroyers?", *Baltic Journal of Law and Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2011, p. 65, 70 and Howell, Jude, (eds.) (2012). *Global matters for non-governmental public action*, p. 5.

<sup>92</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 346.

<sup>93</sup> Allen, Chris. Who needs civil society? *Review of African Political Economy*, 24:73, 1997, p. 329 and Jensen, Mark N, Concepts and conceptions of civil society, *Journal of Civil Society*, Vol .2, No. 1, 2006, p. 39, 41-42, 44, 54.

<sup>94</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO's transnational advocacy networks: from 'legitimacy' to 'political responsibility'? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 346.

<sup>95</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 2, 3.

Every child has a right to survival but almost 5.4 million children die each year of preventable causes before their fifth birthday. These deaths are often due to poverty, weak health systems and lack of access to healthcare.<sup>96</sup>

The citation alludes to the state apparatus either not wanting to or not having capability to address the situations, since the violation of children's rights is declared as avertable.

Additionally, the root to children dying, such as the weak health systems which the state is supposed to be responsible for, is alluded to the state's failings in protecting children's rights.

The second interpretation of INGOs encouraging the state to execute its certain tasks is that it is generally needed. As an example, Plan International incorporates how states have to actively support children in finishing their education, enforce laws, create methods for children to voice their opinions and act to end violence.<sup>97</sup> The descriptions in the annual report imply therefore that the socioeconomic rights are manifested as only achievable through the state. Accordingly, the international children's rights organisations could be said to frame their legitimacy in declaring that they don't wish to overtake the authorities' power. Instead it is underlined in all annual reports how cooperation between the two actors is important.<sup>98</sup> In the quotation below it could be said that the reviewed INGOs translate their legitimacy in their function to be strengthening states' sovereignty and have more of a low antagonism towards power holders.

Our programming and influencing is [sic] based on strengthening child protection systems and tackling the causes of violence against children. We work to establish and support child protection mechanisms that make homes, schools and communities safer places for children, especially girls, and advocate for laws and policies that protect children from violence.<sup>99</sup>

Grugel and Perruzzotti (2012) as well as Koenig-Archibugi (2003) in their respective works "The domestic politics of international human rights law: implementing the convention on the rights of the child in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina" and "Mapping global governance" also discuss that the generally NGOs' roles from a legal perspective is linked to the governments'

<sup>96</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 12.

<sup>97</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 9.

<sup>98</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 9, 27 and SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 1, 3, 8 and Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 17.

<sup>99</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 27.

in several ways. According to them, the international non-governmental organisations are supposed to be monitoring and observing the state's accountability and they attempt to bring the state's attention to exposed peoples' interests.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, the international children's rights organisations are seen as possessing a form of inherent opposition. The agenda-setting however, and level of opposition towards authorities in the INGOs framing of their legitimacy, will be affected by the type of state they face, explains Marcinkuté (2011) in her study "The role of human rights NGO's: human rights defenders or state sovereignty destroyers?". To what degree the INGO is thought of as a threat or as a guarantee to achieve sovereignty, will have significance for how the state is perceived and what a state is perceived to be.<sup>101</sup> Plan International mentions as an example that it influences decision makers to support better solutions than the ones in place, because "[...] around 250 million children in low- and middle-income countries risk not reaching their development potential."<sup>102</sup> In this case, the main states concerned are "developing" states where the INGOs' legitimacy is framed in relation to being needed. In turn, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International and Plan International frame their role as parallel to the state and as legitimate in their function very differently depending on that factor.

#### 4.1.3 Relationships

The reviewed international non-governmental organisations in this thesis have different methods to protect children's rights whereof partnerships are one. Some of the expressed collaborations are together with governments, local communities, other child rights organisations as well as with children.<sup>103</sup> According to the international NGOs it is both a necessity and an advantage to partner with these actors, as SOS Children's Villages International puts forward: "Partnering with others strengthens our voice and brings us closer

<sup>100</sup> Grugel, Jean and Peruzzotti, Enrique. The domestic politics of international human rights law: implementing the convention on the rights of the child in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina. *Human rights quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2012, p. 182 and Koenig-Archibugi, Mathias, (2003), "Mapping global governance" in Held, David and McGrew, Anthony, (eds.), *Governing globalization: power, authority and global governance*, p. 2,5 and Grugel, Jean and Peruzzotti, Enrique. (2007), "Claiming rights under global governance: children's rights in Argentina", p. 204.

<sup>101</sup> Marcinkuté, Lina, "The Role of Human Rights NGO's: Human Rights Defenders or State Sovereignty Destroyers?", *Baltic Journal of Law and Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2011, p. 60.

<sup>102</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 july 2017 – 30 june 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 24.

<sup>103</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 july 2017 – 30 june 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 9, 15, 18 and SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 38-39.

to our objectives”.<sup>104</sup> Through the understanding of political responsibility, it is possible to explain this idea. The likeliness of being listened to and taken seriously by states, increases if there is a bigger movement aiming towards achieving the same goals. In this way, actors confirm and frame each other’s legitimacy.<sup>105</sup> It can be assumed that if a common cause is supported by several international organisations, who are in agreement about the importance of protecting children’s rights, significantly improves the chance to be able to successfully drive changes.

Through being a part of a network, the international children’s rights organisations in this thesis also acknowledge that they can’t reach their aims on their own. As previously stated, this is continuously done by the international children’s rights NGOs to be viewed as legitimate, in that they understand their political responsibility.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, it allows the INGOs to achieve greater impact and be legitimate in their function as parallel to the state because they have access to and are involved in several societal levels and areas. Put simply, they are empowered.

There are many levels to power in communities which via cooperation grant entry to earlier unavailable resources. SOS Children’s Villages International writes for instance: “We partner with authorities and communities to provide kindergartens and schools in areas that lack such facilities.”<sup>107</sup> Moreover, governments’ power to shape laws is useful since the INGOs don’t hold such functions. Therefore, the INGOs are framing their legitimacy in identifying vital actors in the arena who can complement their own abilities, as well as engaging with others to have them recognising the INGOs’ expertise in turn.<sup>108</sup> However, Grugel and Perruzzotti (2012) maintain in their study “The domestic politics of international human rights law: Implementing the Convention on the rights of the child in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina” that this outcome is dependent on the states’ willingness to cooperate and its domestic politics.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>104</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 39.

<sup>105</sup> Hudson, Alan, NGO’s transnational advocacy networks: from ‘legitimacy’ to ‘political responsibility’? *Global Networks*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 337.

<sup>106</sup> Jordan, Lisa and Van Tuijl, Peter, Political responsibility in transnational NGO advocacy, *World development*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 2000, p. 2054.

<sup>107</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 30-31.

<sup>108</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> Grugel, Jean and Perruzzotti, Enrique. The domestic politics of international human rights law: implementing the convention on the rights of the child in Ecuador, Chile and Argentina. *Human rights quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2012, p. 179, 198.

The collaborations also facilitate identification of partners in emergencies, comments SOS Children's Villages International.<sup>110</sup> It entails a spread in the world to be able to act practically with shared responsibility in which the non-governmental children's rights organisations frame their legitimacy in protecting children's rights and are parallel to the state in their function. Since the international field on children's rights is big, this is an assumed legitimate way of amending that issue without claiming domination.

The next aspect of relationships is that the reviewed international non-governmental organisations in this thesis collaborate with local communities at national levels that is argued to assist with lasting impacts, in Save the Children International's opinion.<sup>111</sup> Long rooted negative attitudes and social norms are changeable according to the INGOs through supporting and having relations with families in the areas where they work.<sup>112</sup> Their legitimacy is framed as morally justifiable as the organisations aren't applying already designed solutions without connection to the domestic context, which Jude Howell (2012) *Global matters for non-governmental public action* has warned about.<sup>113</sup> This is also how they can be understood as being legitimate in their function as parallel to the state. SOS Children's Villages International writes that the cooperation with communities also means that the child rights organisation is able to reach young people in need of help.<sup>114</sup> Linked to not behaving as an imperialist and proving they are making changes, for Plan International it is also explicitly important to be transparent and accountable to partners.<sup>115</sup> It is easier to show how set out tasks are being followed through work with others, and it illustrates who the international children's rights INGOs perceive themselves as accountable to.

<sup>110</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 33.

<sup>111</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 17.

<sup>112</sup> Save the Children International, Annual Review 2018 – How our work helped to change millions of young lives in 2018. Published 2019, accessed 2019-12-16, p. 28.

<sup>113</sup> Howell, Jude, (eds.) (2012). *Global matters for non-governmental public action*, p. 2-3.

<sup>114</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 9.

## 4.2 The understanding of how INGOs are legitimate in their function as complement to the state

The deductive approach has now been executed on the annual reports which gave a view on how the international children's rights NGOs frame their legitimacy in protecting children's rights. That result is presented in this chapter. Afterwards, the theme which is visible in the descriptions is introduced and its connection to the study's purpose of how the NGOs are legitimate in their function as parallel to the state.

The results are the following:

Deductive figure 2

<b>Categories</b>	Expertise	Agenda-setting	Relationships
<b>Codes</b>	Leading qualified independent organisations	Needed and filling gap	Part of bigger movement
	Possesses practical capabilities	Accountable in following set out agendas	Complemented by partners
	Working methods and aims based on reliable data	Successful in providing progress	Able to reach young people
		Have long-term vision	
		Build state sovereignty	

The findings above are arranged after a theme, i.e. the read thread which moves through the categories and give meaning to the reoccurring subjects. Through the theory of political responsibility, it is concluded that the international NGOs frame their legitimacy in relation to states' failings in protecting children's rights. It is explained in

this part of the analysis in what ways the categories and the INGOs' descriptions followed this theme.

It has earlier in this thesis been explained how the state and NGOs and their perspectives are located in a special relation to each other in regard to children's rights. From the investigation's findings it is apparent that the civil society is placed in opposition to the state or government and they are perceived to have a shared responsibility to ensure rights, even though this is debated in the research by Chris Allen (1997) in "Who needs civil society?".<sup>116</sup> The international children's rights organisations are expected to step in for it according to the CRC.

In the first theoretical idea of expertise therefore, the INGOs in this thesis frame their legitimacy in accordance with being leading qualified independent organisations, possessing practical capabilities and using reliable data to base working methods on. These are illustrating that Save the Children International, Plan International and SOS Children's Villages International are preparing for overtaking the protection of children's rights during states' failures. The arguments are either functions the state is in need of during its lacking in protecting children's rights or they are used, as put forward in Türkelli's and Vandenhole's "The Convention on the rights of the child: repertoires of NGO participation" (2012) for NGOs to be able to contradict governments statements when they aren't giving correct information about the human rights situation in the nation.<sup>117</sup> The reviewed INGOs in this thesis are legitimate in their function therefore as parallel to the state in global governance since the organisations possess unique knowledge no one else has in terms of protecting children's rights, that the states are held accountable with. In regard to the state not doing enough of its duties, whether it is unable or unwilling to manage the situation for different reasons, the INGOs' expertise is argued as a response to it.

In the second aspect of the theory, the international non-governmental organisations take on political responsibility through the category agenda-setting. The international children's rights organisations frame their legitimacy via arguments about being needed and filling a gap,

<sup>116</sup> Allen, Chris. Who needs civil society? *Review of African Political Economy*, 24:73, 1997, p. 329.

<sup>117</sup> Türkelli, Gamze Erdem and Vandenhole, Wouter, The Convention on the rights of the child: repertoires of NGO participation, *Human rights Law Review*, 12:1, 2012, p. 33, 45-46, 48, 50.

being accountable in following set out agendas, being successful in providing progress, having long-term visions and building up state sovereignty. The arguments for being legitimate in their function also indicates that the INGOs are taking up space where states are lacking and acting as the state's opposite. It indicates a necessity for complements. Save the Children International, Plan International and SOS Children's Villages International focus on fields where children's rights are being ignored and seem to perceive themselves as doing what the state isn't, such as being accountable and providing progress. This could for example explain the theory's category about priorities and the argumentation about what priorities the INGOs made. They targeted the ones where the state wasn't present. The code about having long-term vision as legitimising their function tend to suggest that states could be unable to fulfil its tasks without help for a longer period of time which needs to be taken into account. However, it is the state that is still the primary obligated actor and implicitly, it can be assumed that this process will continue until governments uphold their obligations.<sup>118</sup>

Relationships are furthermore used as a framework for the reviewed INGOs' legitimacy in protecting children's rights. The results illustrate how the INGOs argue for being part of a bigger movement, being complemented by partners and able to reach young people. It is a recognition of others' capabilities and contributions but also that many agree with the international children's rights NGOs' strategies and concerns. In this framing of their legitimisation, it is shown how the international non-governmental organisations are compensating for the states' failures. Through relationships, a big area that the state has left unsupervised is filled with involved parties that is also held accountable through it.<sup>119</sup>

Moreover, the relationships operate as a movement in strengthening the voice of civil society to reach its aims.<sup>120</sup> Since the CRC doesn't put binding mechanisms on the states, it is possible that the action of civil society could change states' inactivity by putting pressure on it. However, the category also points out that the state is a potential partner that might not have had the ability of reversing the trend due to factors outside their control.<sup>121</sup> In that way the INGOs in this study perceive themselves as assistance in helping the state achieve its

<sup>118</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 8.

<sup>120</sup> SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 39.

<sup>121</sup> Plan International, Plan International Worldwide annual review 2018, covers 1 july 2017 – 30 june 2018, pp. 1-30, published 2019, Accessed: 2019-12-16. p. 9, 15, 18 and SOS Children's Villages International, International annual report 2018. Accessed: 2019-12-16, p. 38-39.

obligations. In other words, the focus is turned towards the surrounding environment even though the state is still seen as failing.

## 5 Discussion

In this passage the study's results are presented and followed by a discussion about how they can be interpreted. The purpose of the study was to convey an understanding of how the INGOs are legitimate in their function as complement to the state through answering the question of how they frame their legitimacy in protecting children's rights in their annual reports. The results from the executed analysis shows that the INGOs frame their legitimacy via categories of having specific expertise, a set accountable agenda to improve the situation and relationships. The study's conclusions were reached through a qualitative content analysis and applying the theory of political responsibility and earlier research. The analysis presents how the INGOs are legitimate in their function in relation to the state lacking in its efforts.

The result of this study is of significance since it has been expressed in earlier research how the INGOs' legitimacy has been questioned due to their assigned role in protecting children's rights. Through my thesis it has been possible to extract insight in how they legitimise their role, which fills a gap in the existing research. Some of the findings reinforces already known interpretations from the earlier research, such as conveying legitimacy through expertise.<sup>122</sup> Additionally, the INGOs seem to legitimise their function through only the theory's claims and not through other presented arguments in the annual reports. Thus, the results of this thesis fortify the theory's understandings and strengthens it further.

In the field of human rights, the reader has potentially received a deeper understanding of how one of the more important actors in civil society functions. The thesis has contributed with why INGOs are sometimes (depending on state politics) allowed to perform certain activities, according to their own accounts. The concrete examples of this has been given which can't speak for all international NGOs. To some extent, the results show evidence of an agreement between how the INGOs themselves view their role and how the literature view the roles of the INGOs. General conclusions regarding this case could be illustrated.

<sup>122</sup> Türkelli, Gamze Erdem and Vandenhole, Wouter, The Convention on the rights of the child: repertoires of NGO participation, *Human rights Law Review*, 12:1, 2012, p. 45.

It is important to note in this study, that the state's autocratic or democratic politics are of significance. Since all the international NGOs have origins from the western world, it matters how the NGOs frame their legitimacy and which role they are perceived to have in relation to the state. Additionally, the CRC's required cooperation and shared responsibility between the actors is dependent on the state polity. In connection, another aspect that sticks out regarding the political nature of children's rights is the growing acceptance for the state to include civil society and INGOs regarding children's rights in contrast to other human rights issues. The underlying reason why INGOs are allowed to work parallelly to the state could be assumed to be children's rights' status as less politically charged compared to other groups of people or other human rights issues. Therefore, states and child rights NGOs have a special relationship where the INGOs view themselves as separate.

Lastly, it would be interesting to see a continuation of my thesis where future studies could examine these questions on a local and international level. How do local and international organisations view these questions and do the arguments differ? I believe it would be of use for the human rights field since questions about local NGOs' credibility were introduced in earlier research as well.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>123</sup> <sup>123</sup> Türkelli, Gamze Erdem and Vandenhole, Wouter, The Convention on the rights of the child: repertoires of NGO participation, *Human rights Law Review*, 12:1, 2012, p. 45.

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