



**Preparedness Beyond Emergencies:
Civil Society Organizations, Legitimacy, and the Framing of
Crisis Preparedness in Sweden**

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Abstract

This thesis examines how Swedish civil society organizations (CSOs) construct and communicate their role in crisis preparedness through online communication, and what perceived gaps between civil society and the state emerge through this discourse. Drawing on a qualitative digital ethnographic approach, the study analyzes Facebook posts and selected organizational reports from the Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children Sweden, Stockholms Stadsmission, and Civil Rights Defenders across the periods 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024-2026.

Four central themes emerged from the material: complementarity, gap-filling, responsibility-shaping, and legitimacy construction. Together, these themes illustrate how CSOs not only provide support during crises, but also actively shape public understandings of vulnerability, preparedness, and responsibility. The findings show that preparedness is repeatedly framed as broader than emergency response alone and intricately connected to welfare systems, social inequality, trust, and social inclusion.

The analysis further demonstrates how online communication functions as a strategic form of public positioning through which organizations construct legitimacy and frame themselves as socially necessary actors within preparedness systems. By examining how preparedness is communicated and negotiated through digital platforms, the thesis contributes to research on civil society, crisis preparedness, and development studies by highlighting the importance of communication, framing, and social conditions in contemporary preparedness discourse.

Keywords: crisis preparedness; civil society organizations; legitimacy; framing; vulnerability; preparedness communication; Sweden

Popular Science Summary

In recent years, crisis preparedness has become a growing topic of discussion in Sweden. Major events such as the 2018 wildfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, together with increasing economic insecurity and social vulnerability, have raised concerns about how societies prepare for crises and who is expected to support people when existing systems are under pressure.

This thesis explores how Swedish civil society organizations (CSOs) communicate about crisis preparedness online. The study focuses on four organizations; the Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children Sweden, Stockholms Stadsmission, and Civil Rights Defenders, and analyzes Facebook posts together with selected organizational reports. By examining their Facebook posts during the time periods of 2018, 2020, 2022, 2024-2026, the thesis studies how these organizations describe their role in society, how they communicate about responsibility, and how they position themselves in relation to the state.

Communication suggests that crisis preparedness is framed as something much broader than emergency response alone. Rather than focusing only on extraordinary events such as natural disasters, wars, or pandemics, the organizations repeatedly connect preparedness to everyday social conditions. Issues such as poverty, loneliness, housing insecurity, mental health, exclusion, and access to welfare support are presented as closely linked to society's ability to cope with crises.

Across the collected material, CSOs describe themselves as flexible, locally rooted, and able to respond quickly to social needs. Their communication emphasizes close contact with vulnerable groups, local knowledge, volunteer engagement, and the ability to provide support in situations where public institutions are perceived as limited or overstretched. Social media functions as more than a tool for spreading information. Through Facebook, the organizations actively shape discussions about crises, vulnerability, inequality, and societal responsibility. As such, communication itself becomes part of preparedness work by influencing how problems are understood and which forms of action appear necessary or legitimate. Finally, the thesis argues that crisis preparedness should not only be understood as a technical or institutional issue, but also as a social and political one. Preparedness emerges as closely connected to trust, welfare systems, social inclusion, and societal resilience. By examining how CSOs communicate online, the research contributes to a broader understanding of how preparedness is negotiated and constructed in contemporary Sweden.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, crisis preparedness has become a prominent public concern in Sweden, shaped by a shifting security landscape, large-scale crises, and renewed debates about societal resilience. From the 2018 wildfires to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing pressures connected to economic insecurity, violence, and social vulnerability, crises now resemble ongoing societal conditions, rather than exceptional or isolated events. These developments make it necessary to examine how responsibility for preparedness is divided and negotiated between the state and civil society organizations (CSOs) (Lundgren & Sundelius, 2007; Danielsson & Olofsson, 2019).

As a result, CSOs have taken on responsibilities that extend beyond their traditional roles. Organizations such as the Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children Sweden, Civil Rights Defenders, and Stockholms Stadsmission participate in a wide range of activities, but their work now includes both immediate crisis response and longer-term efforts aimed at addressing underlying vulnerabilities, such as homelessness and youth exclusion. This aligns with the Nordic model, where authorities often work with CSOs through established partnerships and long-term funding, rather than treating them as separate or temporary actors (Micheletti, 1995; Trägårdh, 2007; Sjöstrand & Wijkström, 2020). At the same time, growing civil society involvement in areas traditionally associated with state responsibility raises questions about accountability, legitimacy, and the redistribution of responsibility (Edwards, 2014).

Recent reports from CSOs describe increasing pressure on welfare systems, with more individuals seeking support for basic needs such as food, housing, and social assistance (Stockholms Stadsmission, 2026; Vedin et al., 2025). This indicates widening gaps between what welfare institutions can provide and the everyday needs that fall between institutional mandates and are left without adequate support, increasingly fall to CSOs (Stockholms Stadsmission, 2026). Swedish preparedness now depends on multi-actor coordination in which public authorities, private actors, and CSOs share responsibility for managing complex situations, such as a societal crisis (Bevelander & Hellström, 2019; Olsson & Nordvall, 2018). Several organizations stress that these efforts cannot replace political responsibility for addressing structural inequalities (Save the Children, 2026; Vedin et al., 2025).

Research also highlights how Swedish crisis preparedness increasingly relies on collaboration between public authorities, private actors, and CSOs (Lundgren & Sundelius, 2007). Danielsson & Olofsson (2019) depict this as systems in which responsibility is

distributed across networks rather than centralized within the state. Within these arrangements, CSOs may play important roles in addressing preparedness gaps, particularly when public systems are under strain or struggle to reach certain groups.

Empirical studies show that CSOs can rapidly organize volunteers, distribute resources, and maintain support when public systems are under pressure (Bevelander & Hellström, 2019; Murphy, 2020; Olsson & Nordvall, 2018). This suggests that CSOs are increasingly positioned not only as emergency responders, but as actors involved in maintaining social support during prolonged periods of societal strain.

CSOs shape interpretations of crises by highlighting specific needs, groups, and responsibilities in their communication, e.g., which situations are treated as crises, whose needs are made visible, and what kinds of responses are expected. This is especially observable online, where organizations can strategically frame crises, highlight specific vulnerabilities, and present their own role to public audiences in real time (Hine, 2015; Hjorth et al., 2017). Online communication also plays a key role in crisis coordination and volunteer mobilization (Murphy, 2020).

Although research on civil society and crisis management is growing, existing research often focuses on institutional arrangements, governance structures, or policy frameworks (Edwards, 2014; Lundgren & Sundelius, 2007; Danielsson & Olofsson, 2019), while less attention has been given to how CSOs themselves frame their role in crisis preparedness and communicate it in their everyday work.

This thesis addresses this research gap by examining how selected CSOs in Sweden construct and communicate their role in crisis preparedness through their public communication on Facebook. Drawing on social media posts and selected organizational reports referenced within that communication, this thesis explores how CSOs position themselves in relation to the state, how they articulate gaps in existing systems, and how they assign responsibility for addressing these challenges. In doing so, the analysis connects with debates in development studies and civil society research about how actors define problems and shape responses (Desai & Potter, 2014; Escobar, 2012).

The thesis is guided by two research questions:

- ***How do civil society organizations construct and communicate their role in crisis preparedness online, and what perceived gaps between their role and the state emerge in this discourse?***

- *How is legitimacy constructed and communicated through civil society preparedness communication?*

To answer these, it adopts a qualitative, interpretivist approach and analyzes Facebook posts from four organizations across different time periods: 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024-2026. These periods were selected because they represent distinct types of crises, enabling analysis of how organizational framing shifts across different forms of vulnerability and preparedness.

The analysis is structured around three themes. First, civil society is examined as a complement to the state, working alongside public institutions. Second, civil society is analyzed as a gap-filler, addressing needs not fully met by existing systems. Third, civil society is explored as a shaper of responsibility, influencing how crises and their solutions are understood. Together, these themes show how CSOs present themselves as complementary, necessary, responsible, and legitimate actors within preparedness communication (Edwards, 2014).

By analyzing how CSOs describe their role in crisis preparedness, the thesis shows how they frame responsibility and point to gaps in existing systems in their everyday communication. It also demonstrates how CSOs help shape public understandings of what counts as a crisis and what kinds of responses are seen as necessary.

2. Background

This review situates the study within sociological research on state-civil society relations and crisis management. It brings together research that understands civil society organizations (CSOs) as both an institutionalized part of welfare systems and a sphere operating alongside, and sometimes beyond, formal state structures. The review also draws on insights from Development Studies to examine how civil society actors negotiate responsibility, respond to societal challenges, and participate in public problem-solving. Together, these perspectives provide a framework for analyzing how CSOs communicate their responsibilities in crisis preparedness and how they articulate perceived gaps in existing systems.

2.1 - State-Civil Society Relations in the Swedish Context

Research on Swedish state-civil society relations highlights a long-standing model of cooperation rather than opposition. Civil society is commonly understood as a sphere of voluntary collective action that exists alongside, but not separate from, the state and the market (Edwards, 2014). In the Nordic context, this relationship has historically been characterized by close cooperation rather than opposition. As Trägårdh (2007) and Micheletti (1995) argue, Sweden represents a model in which a strong state coexists with a highly organized and institutionalized civil society, where collaboration in welfare provision and social policy is expected.

More recent research shows that this relationship is shaped by shifting expectations, changing funding conditions, and evolving interpretations of civil society's role. Sjöstrand and Wijkström (2020) describe how CSOs navigate changing policy frameworks, funding structures, and expectations of flexibility. Edwards (2014) similarly conceptualizes civil society as a heterogeneous sphere that can simultaneously complement, substitute, and challenge the state. These overlapping roles show how CSOs' positions vary across issue areas, institutional settings, and policy environments.

Research on innovation in idea-based welfare further suggests that CSOs are increasingly expected to identify unmet needs and develop innovative solutions, particularly in areas where public provision is limited (Lindberg, 2025). This positions civil society as a service provider, while simultaneously being an actor expected to identify and respond to emerging social problems. At the same time, these expectations can pressure organizations to compensate for structural shortcomings in welfare provision.

2.2 - Crisis Preparedness and Institutional Collaboration

Research on crisis preparedness shows that effective response in Sweden depends on coordination between multiple actors rather than on state institutions alone. Lundgren and Sundelius (2007) emphasize that crisis management depends on institutional capacity, and legitimacy, as well as coordination between actors.

Danielsson and Olofsson (2019) highlight how differing mandates and priorities can complicate coordination within collaborative preparedness systems. As organizations frequently approach crises with differing mandates and priorities, this can complicate coordination during high-pressure situations.

Recent research also mentions the role of CSOs within preparedness structures. Haug, Nordensvärd & Wihlborg (2024) describe CSOs as important resources within local crisis preparedness, particularly due to their flexibility, local knowledge, and ability to respond quickly to emerging needs. Similarly, Garcia et al. (2024) show how Swedish crisis management often relies on flexible forms of collaboration in which CSOs contribute alongside public institutions.

From a Development Studies perspective, this reflects shifts in how social challenges are addressed through interactions between state and non-state actors. Desai and Potter (2014) highlight how social challenges are addressed through interactions between multiple societal actors, while Escobar (2012) emphasizes how such relationships are shaped through discourse and practice. These perspectives help show how Swedish CSOs define their preparedness role in relation to state responsibility and social vulnerability.

2.3 - Civil Society in Practice: Crisis Response and Preparedness

Research on refugee reception in Sweden shows how civil society actors have played a crucial role in providing support, mobilizing resources, and addressing gaps in public service provision (Bevelander and Hellström, 2019; Olsson and Nordvall, 2018). These cases illustrate how CSOs can respond quickly and flexibly to emerging needs, often in ways that complement or extend public systems.

Similarly, Murphy (2020) analyzes crisis volunteerism following the 2018 Swedish forest fires, demonstrating how digital tools enabled new forms of coordination and participation. Johansson (2023) highlights the importance of civil society in preparedness, emphasizing that its role is operational while also strategic, contributing to broader societal

resilience and the development of civil preparedness systems. This shows that CSOs contribute both to immediate crisis response and to longer-term preparedness and resilience.

Across the literature, civil society is described as both complementing public systems and compensating for their limitations. On the one hand, organizations extend the reach and capacity of public systems; on the other, they respond to needs that remain unmet within those systems, effectively compensating for their limitations (Edwards, 2014; Sjöstrand & Wijkström, 2020). This dual role demonstrates how preparedness systems depend on CSOs while revealing gaps in formal welfare provision.

This reliance shows both the strengths of the Swedish model and the limitations of formal preparedness structures. CSOs therefore operate within institutional contexts that both rely on their flexibility and limit their long-term capacity for innovation and sustained support. As a result, CSOs are expected to address unmet needs while navigating structural constraints that limit their long-term capacity (Lindberg, 2025).

2.4 - Civil Society as a Discursive Actor

Beyond their operational role, CSOs function as discursive actors who shape how crises are interpreted. From a social constructionist perspective, meanings such as “crisis,” “vulnerability,” and “responsibility” are produced and stabilized through social interaction and communication (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). These communicative practices shape how organizations construct meanings around crises, vulnerability, and responsibility. They influence which problems are prioritized and which responses are presented as legitimate or necessary.

Research on online communication shows that digital platforms function as arenas for meaning making. Hine (2015) emphasizes that digital environments are sites where social realities are created, while Hjorth et al. (2017) show how digital media shape interaction and self-presentation. In crisis contexts, these platforms are used both for coordination and information-sharing, but also for framing issues, defining problems, and articulating responsibility (Murphy, 2020).

From a sociological perspective, these communicative practices function as forms of knowledge production that shape how crises are interpreted. Burke (2000) argues that knowledge is shaped by the context in which it is produced meaning that CSOs actively contribute to how crises are understood and addressed. Such knowledge reflects institutional positions and communicative practices rather than neutral descriptions of reality.

This perspective highlights that CSOs do more than carry out practical tasks; they actively shape interpretations of crises. They shape interpretations of crises through their actively constructed interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Rather than only examining what organizations do, it becomes important to analyze how they construct their role and how they frame relationships with other actors, particularly the state. This includes how they present themselves as partners (complementing the state), as gap-fillers (addressing unmet needs), or as advocates (shaping responsibility and calling for change), roles identified in existing research (Edwards, 2014; Sjöstrand & Wijkström, 2020; Olsson & Nordvall, 2018; Bevelander & Hellström, 2019).

2.5 - Identified Gap and Contribution of the Study

By focusing on publicly available organizational communication, the study shifts attention from institutional arrangements to discursive practices. The study contributes to sociological discussions by showing how CSOs articulate responsibility and identify gaps in existing crisis arrangements.

The literature shows that responsibilities for preparedness, welfare, and social support are increasingly negotiated between state institutions and CSOs. These insights provide the foundation for the empirical analysis that follows, structured around CSOs as complements, gap-fillers, and shapers of responsibility in crisis preparedness.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretivist, and primarily deductive research design to explore how civil society organizations (CSOs) communicate their role in crisis preparedness within a Swedish context. The study focuses on how organizations construct meaning around crisis preparedness and state responsibility through their public communication. From an interpretivist perspective, organizational communication is treated as situated representation rather than neutral information, reflecting particular understandings of crisis, vulnerability, and responsibility (Bryman, 2016; Mason, 2017; Tracy, 2010)

3.1 - Research Design: Netnography

The study is informed by a netnographic approach, understood as an adaptation of ethnographic methods to digital environments (Hine, 2015). Netnography makes it possible to study communication, interaction, and meaning making in online contexts, where organizations increasingly engage with audiences and construct public narratives (Hine, 2015; Hjorth et al., 2017).

In this study, netnography is applied in a focused, non-participatory manner. Rather than observing interaction between users or engaging directly with participants, the analysis centers on how organizations present themselves through publicly available communication. Facebook is used as the primary site of analysis, as it is one of the most widely used social media platforms in Sweden and allows organizations to publish relatively detailed textual content. Facebook is treated both as a communication channel and as a social arena where organizations publicly frame crises, vulnerability, and preparedness.

3.2 - Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select organizations and posts directly relevant to the research questions. Four organizations are included: the Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children Sweden, Stockholms Stadsmission, and Civil Rights Defenders. These organizations were selected to capture variation across humanitarian aid, social support, child rights, and human rights advocacy.

The organizations were selected because they actively communicate about crisis-related issues and therefore provide material directly relevant to the research question. The organizations were chosen based on their active public communication and their engagement with issues related to crisis, vulnerability, and societal challenges. Organizations with limited

or inconsistent Facebook activity were excluded because they did not provide sufficient material for systematic analysis.

3.3- Data Collection

This section explains how the dataset was compiled and why particular years and events were selected for analysis. The empirical material consists of publicly available Facebook posts and selected organizational reports. The analysis focuses on four key periods: 2018 (wildfires), 2020 (COVID-19), 2022 (Russia's invasion of Ukraine), and 2024-2026 (contemporary communication), allowing for comparison across different types of crises and historical contexts within Sweden. Within these periods, more specific periods of time were applied to focus the dataset: May to September 2018, June 2020 to January 2021, October 2022 to January 2023, and December 2024 to March 2026. These periods were selected to capture periods of heightened societal attention and organizational communication linked to key events in the Swedish context.

For 2018, the period aligns with the large-scale wildfires during the summer as well as the nationwide distribution of the civil preparedness brochure "If crisis or war comes" (May 2018). For 2020, the selected months correspond to the emergence and rapid spread of COVID-19 in Sweden, beginning with the first confirmed case (January 2020) and the escalation of the pandemic during spring. The 2022 period captures the aftermath of the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions (February 2022), Russia's invasion of Ukraine (24 February 2022), Sweden's NATO application (May 2022), and the structural reform of Sweden's civil defence and crisis preparedness system (1 October 2022). Finally, the 2024-2026 period reflects more recent communication shaped by ongoing and increasingly normalized crisis awareness. These time periods allow for comparison of how CSOs communicate across environmentally, health-related, geopolitical, and institutional crises.

In line with perspectives from Development Studies, crises are understood as sudden emergency events, and as processes connected to broader social vulnerability, inequality, and institutional strain (Desai & Potter, 2014). This perspective helps analyze how organizations link crisis preparedness to broader issues such as welfare gaps, exclusion, and everyday insecurity within the Swedish context.

In total, approximately 259 posts were analyzed (Stockholms Stadsmission: 44; Swedish Red Cross: 64; Save the Children Sweden: 73; Civil Rights Defenders: 78). The dataset was compiled by recording publication dates, organizational affiliation, and thematic relevance for each post.

Organization	2018	2020	2022	2024-2026	Total
Stockholms Stadsmission	3	4	11	27	44
Swedish Red Cross	4	14	15	31	64
Save The Children	4	13	12	44	73
Civil Rights Defenders	0	18	15	45	78

Table 1

Only posts situated within a Swedish context were included to maintain analytical consistency. Content focused exclusively on international contexts without a clear connection to Sweden was excluded in order to maintain analytical consistency. Posts were selected based on their relevance to the research question, including those addressing crisis response, vulnerability, collaboration with public authorities, and discussions of responsibility. Posts primarily focused on events, fundraising campaigns, or membership recruitment were excluded unless they also contained substantial discussion of preparedness, vulnerability, or organizational responsibility.

All quotations from Swedish-language material have been translated into English by the author. The translations aim to preserve the meaning and tone of the original material as closely as possible.

3.4 - Thematic Analysis

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing for systematic identification of patterns within the material (Charmaz, 2006; Tracy, 2010). The analysis involved repeatedly comparing the empirical material with relevant theoretical concepts to refine emerging interpretations.

The process involved three main stages. First, the material was read closely to gain familiarity and identify initial patterns. Second, an open coding process was conducted, where segments of text were assigned codes capturing key ideas such as collaboration,

vulnerability, responsibility, and critique. Third, these codes were grouped into broader themes.

The analysis was primarily deductive, using existing concepts related to civil society, preparedness, legitimacy, and responsibility. Meanwhile, the coding process remained flexible and open to patterns that emerged from the material itself.

The final themes were interpreted using concepts of social construction, framing, and legitimacy. This resulted in four main analytical themes: CSOs as complements to the state, CSOs as gap-fillers, CSOs as shapers of responsibility, and the construction of legitimacy and trust. While all themes were analytically significant, legitimacy and trust emerged as particularly cross-cutting themes, influencing how organizations framed authority, responsibility, expertise, and their relationship to public institutions across multiple contexts. Because legitimacy appeared across multiple themes, an additional analytical focus was added to examine how organizations constructed and communicated legitimacy.

Themes were identified by tracing recurring patterns in how organizations described unmet needs, framed responsibility, and positioned themselves in relation to the state. For example, organizations that consistently portrayed their work as extending or reinforcing public institutions were categorized as strongly complementary, while organizations that addressed responsibility more indirectly or less consistently were assessed as moderate within that theme.

3.5 - Ethical Considerations

Although the study uses publicly available material, ethical considerations remain relevant because the communication is produced for specific audiences and purposes. Following established guidelines for online research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Israel, 2015), the analysis focuses on organizations rather than individuals and avoids misrepresentation. The study recognizes that public communication is shaped by specific contexts and intended audiences, and the analysis was conducted with this in mind.

3.6 - Positionality and Reflexivity

My current involvement in the Swedish Red Cross provides contextual insight into civil society practices but also introduces potential bias. This familiarity offers contextual insight, which requires careful reflection on how my experiences may shape interpretation.

To address this, I adopt a reflexive approach that involves ongoing consideration of how my background shapes interpretation. This includes questioning initial interpretations, remaining open to alternative explanations, and ensuring that analytical claims are grounded in the empirical material. Reflexivity is therefore integrated throughout the research process rather than treated as a separate stage.

3.7 - Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, as it analyzes publicly available communication rather than internal organizational practices, the findings therefore reflect how organizations present and frame their role in public discourse. This may differ from internal decision-making processes and everyday organizational practices.

Second, the dataset is based on a purposive sample of posts across selected periods (2018, 2020, 2022, and 2026). While this enables an in-depth and contextually grounded analysis, the findings should be interpreted as illustrative rather than generalizable. The selection of posts also involves researcher judgment, which may shape what is included as analytically relevant.

Third, the study focuses on a single platform (Facebook). Although Facebook is widely used in Sweden and suitable for longer-form organizational communication, this excludes other platforms (e.g., Instagram, X) where different forms of messaging and audience engagement may occur. As the analysis captures one important dimension of organizational communication, it does not represent the full range of platforms CSOs use.

Fourth, only posts situated within a Swedish context were included. This improves analytical consistency but excludes organizations' international communication, which may shape how they construct their role across different contexts.

Fifth, online communication is inherently curated and shaped by platform logics and strategic considerations. Because posts are crafted to inform, mobilize, or advocate, they reflect strategic communication rather than unfiltered organizational perspectives.

Finally, the interpretation of civil society as a gap-filling and legitimacy-building actor is informed by recurring patterns in the data, but also by my prior experience in the Swedish Red Cross. This is addressed through reflexive analysis and by grounding interpretations closely in the empirical material.

3.8 - Summary

The study employs a qualitative interpretivist approach and a focused netnographic design to analyze how CSOs construct and communicate their preparedness role online. The study uses a qualitative interpretivist approach and a focused netnographic design to analyze how CSOs construct and communicate their preparedness role online. Through thematic analysis, the study identifies recurring patterns related to responsibility, legitimacy, vulnerability, and preparedness within organizational discourse.

4. Overview of Selected Civil Society Organizations

4.1 - Swedish Red Cross

The International Committee of The Swedish Red Cross was founded in 1863 in Geneva alongside the first Geneva Convention. The Swedish Red Cross, established in 1865, forms part of the global Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and focuses on humanitarian assistance and crisis preparedness.

The organization operates before, during, and after crises, including natural disasters and armed conflicts. In peacetime, its work focuses on providing humanitarian, social and material support, as well as strengthening preparedness through first aid education and public information. Humanitarian principles, particularly neutrality, guide the organization's role in conflict and crisis settings (Swedish Red Cross, 2025).

4.2 - Save the Children Sweden

Save the Children was founded in 1919 in the United Kingdom, with Save the Children Sweden established the same year as part of the international movement. The organization focuses on protecting children's rights in both crisis and peacetime contexts.

Alongside humanitarian work during war and disaster, the organization engages in advocacy aimed at influencing political decision-making and ensuring that children's rights and perspectives are represented in policy and legislation. Its work is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and includes both direct support and efforts to create safer environments for children exposed to violence or vulnerability (Rädda Barnen, n.d.; Rädda Barnen, 2016).

4.3 - Stockholms Stadsmission

Stockholms Stadsmission was founded in 1853 and focuses on supporting people in vulnerable situations within Sweden. The organization works with issues connected to poverty, exclusion, homelessness, and social inequality through both practical support and advocacy.

Its activities focus on ensuring access to basic needs such as food, housing, education, and healthcare, while also addressing the structural causes of vulnerability. The organization explicitly positions itself as responding to gaps within welfare and social support systems, while emphasizing empowerment and long-term social inclusion (Stockholms Stadsmission, 2026).

4.5 - Civil Rights Defenders

Civil Rights Defenders was founded in 1982 under the name Svenska Helsingforskommittén för Mänskliga Rättigheter. The organization works internationally with the protection of human rights and democratic principles.

Its work focuses on monitoring human rights violations, supporting affected individuals, and advocating for democratic accountability. Compared to the other organizations included, Civil Rights Defenders operates more explicitly through legal advocacy, democratic accountability, and human rights monitoring (Civil Rights Defenders, n.d.).

5. Theory and Concepts

This study draws on sociological perspectives on social construction, framing, legitimacy, and knowledge production to analyze how civil society organizations (CSOs) define problems, assign responsibility, and position themselves within crisis preparedness. Rather than treating crises, responsibilities, and organizational roles as fixed or self-evident, Berger & Luckmann (1966) argue that social reality is continuously created through interaction and communication. This perspective makes it possible to analyze how CSOs define problems, position themselves, and shape understandings of responsibility in relation to the state.

5.1 - Social Construction of Crisis and Responsibility

Central to this perspective is the understanding that terms such as “crisis,” “vulnerability,” and “responsibility” are shaped through social processes rather than being fixed or objective categories. Berger & Luckmann (1966) show how meanings emerge through processes of interaction and become stabilized over time, eventually appearing natural or taken for granted. What appears as “reality” is therefore the product of repeated interpretations that become taken for granted over time.

This perspective is especially useful for crisis preparedness, where actors often interpret the same situation differently and attach different meanings to risk and responsibility. What counts as a crisis, who is considered at risk, and what forms of response are viewed as appropriate are therefore not fixed but shaped through interpretation and negotiation. For example, a situation framed as a temporary disruption may call for short-term relief efforts, while the same situation framed as a structural issue may demand long-term policy intervention. CSOs therefore play a dual role, where they respond to crises while also shaping how crises are identified, described, and prioritized.

Hacking (1999) adds an important nuance by emphasizing that while categories are socially built, they are not arbitrary. Once established, they can have real and material consequences for the people they describe. Categories such as “vulnerable populations” or “at-risk groups” can shape access to resources, public attention, and policy priorities. In this study, this means that the ways in which CSOs frame vulnerability or responsibility are not merely rhetorical choices but contribute to shaping how problems are understood and addressed in practice.

5.2 - Framing and Meaning Making

Framing provides a useful lens for understanding how CSOs organize and present interpretations of crises. Building on Goffman's work, Persson (2018) describes framing as the ways in which actors organize and present experiences, shaping how situations are understood by themselves and others. Through framing, certain aspects of reality are highlighted while others are downplayed or excluded. Communication is therefore not neutral, but selective and purposeful, guiding how audiences interpret both problems and solutions.

Framing refers to the selective emphasis of certain aspects of a situation to guide how audiences interpret problems and appropriate responses. By emphasizing particular elements, such as urgency, responsibility, or vulnerability, organizations guide audiences toward specific interpretations. These interpretations, in turn, shape what is perceived as necessary, appropriate, or even possible in terms of action (Persson, 2018). Framing shapes how crises are perceived and which actions come to be seen as necessary or legitimate.

In the context of CSOs, framing can be seen in how they present their role in relation to the state and to broader societal challenges. Organizations may emphasize cooperation and shared responsibility, presenting themselves as complements to public institutions. At other times, they may highlight unmet needs or systemic shortcomings, implicitly or explicitly presenting themselves as filling gaps. In still other cases, they may adopt a more advocacy-oriented stance, seeking to influence how responsibility is understood and distributed. These framings actively construct expectations about who should act, how responsibility is distributed, and what role CSOs should play.

Framing takes on added significance online, where communication must be concise, strategic, and tailored to platform-specific audiences. Social media platforms require organizations to communicate in ways that are immediate, selective, and audience oriented. As Hine (2015) suggests, online environments function as spaces of meaning making, while Hjorth et al. (2017) highlight how digital platforms shape both the form and content of communication. CSOs therefore need to balance informing, engaging, and mobilizing audiences, often within limited formats (Hine, 2015; Hjorth et al., 2017). This underscores that communication is not merely informational but actively shapes how crises and responsibilities are understood.

Online communication introduces dynamics of visibility, where the reach and impact of posts depend on how audiences interact with them. Posts are often crafted with specific

audiences in mind, and their impact depends on how they are received, shared, and interpreted (Hine, 2015; Hjorth et al., 2017). This means that framing becomes not only about content, but about timing, tone, and platform-specific forms of communication. Understanding framing in this context is therefore essential for analyzing how CSOs communicate their role in crisis preparedness.

5.3- Legitimacy and the Role of Civil Society Organizations

Legitimacy is central to understanding how CSOs justify their involvement in crisis preparedness and present themselves as credible actors. Lundgren and Sundelius (2007) emphasize that legitimacy is central to crisis management because public trust influences whether actors are viewed as credible, reliable, and capable during periods of uncertainty.

For CSOs, legitimacy is linked between what they do and how they communicate their role. Organizations often emphasize expertise, local presence, or humanitarian values to present themselves as trustworthy and necessary actors. They therefore construct particular understandings of why their involvement matters and why they should be listened to.

Legitimacy is especially crucial when organizations highlight unmet needs or critique public institutions, as such claims require maintaining public trust. In these situations, organizations must criticize institutional shortcomings while maintaining public trust and legitimacy. Their ability to influence public discussions about preparedness and responsibility therefore depends partly on how successfully they establish themselves as legitimate actors within public discourse.

This perspective is relevant here because legitimacy appeared consistently across the material, shaping how organizations framed authority, responsibility, and expertise. Organizations repeatedly framed themselves as reliable actors capable of supporting individuals and communities during crises, while positioning themselves in relation to public institutions and state responsibility.

5.4 - Knowledge Production and Public Discourse

These dynamics align with sociological perspectives on knowledge production, which emphasize how understandings of crises are shaped by those who communicate them. Burke (2000) argues that knowledge is historically situated and shaped by the contexts in which it is produced. Knowledge is therefore shaped by the perspectives and institutional positions of those who produce it, influencing which issues gain visibility.

For CSOs, communication is mainly about conveying information, while shaping how issues are understood in public discourse. Using communication, organizations help shape narratives about crisis preparedness, vulnerability, and responsibility, influencing both public perception and policy discussions (Burke, 2000). These narratives can reinforce dominant interpretations or bring attention to vulnerabilities that might otherwise remain overlooked.

Online platforms intensify these processes by enabling rapid dissemination and direct engagement with audiences. Social media platforms allow organizations to communicate directly with the public, bypassing traditional gatekeepers such as journalists or policymakers (Hine, 2015; Hjorth et al., 2017). This expands CSOs' capacity to influence public discourse but also heightens the stakes of how they frame crises and responsibility. Understanding communication as a form of knowledge production therefore provides an important lens for analyzing how CSOs construct their role in crisis preparedness.

6. Results and Findings

This section presents the findings from the qualitative analysis of Facebook posts produced by four civil society organizations (CSOs) in Sweden. The analysis focuses on how they position themselves in relation to the state, to societal needs, and to questions of responsibility and legitimacy. Posts are treated as situated representations, understood as active meaning making rather than neutral information (Persson, 2018).

Over the years, four recurring themes were identified: complementarity, gap-filling, responsibility-shaping, and legitimacy. These themes should be seen as interrelated dimensions of how CSOs operate within crisis preparedness and welfare systems. Together, these themes form a coherent analytical framework capturing how CSOs communicate, justify, and position their role within preparedness systems.

Organization	Focus Area	Complimentary (Theme 1)	Gap-filling (Theme 2)	Responsibility (Theme 3)	Legitimacy (Theme 4)
Swedish Red Cross	Humanitarian aid	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Strong
Save the Children Sweden	Child rights	Strong	Very strong	Strong	Strong
Stockholms Stadsmission	Social welfare	Moderate	Strong	Strong	Strong
Civil Rights Defenders	Human rights advocacy	Limited	Moderate	Very strong	Strong

Table 2

Table 2 provides an overview of how these thematic emphases vary across the analyzed organizations. The categorizations are indicative and based on recurring patterns rather than quantitative measurement.

The analysis examines each theme in turn. It begins with how CSOs construct their role as complementary to the state before turning to how they address gaps in existing systems, shape responsibility, and establish legitimacy as actors within crisis preparedness.

6.1 - Theme 1: Civil Society as Complement to the State

This theme examines how CSOs construct their role as working alongside the state in crisis preparedness. Rather than presenting themselves as alternatives or substitutes, the organizations generally frame their role as supporting and extending existing systems. Civil society is presented not as an external substitute for the state, but as part of a coordinated response, but as part of a broader and coordinated response. This aligns with research that conceptualizes civil society as closely connected to state institutions and welfare structures rather than operating separately from them (Edwards, 2014; Trägårdh, 2007).

Across the material, this complementary positioning is visible in repeated references to cooperation with authorities, alignment with public guidelines, and the portrayal of CSO activities as filling in formal responses. Posts frequently include phrases such as “supporting municipalities,” “working together with authorities,” or “helping where needs arise,” which situate civil society within an existing system rather than outside it (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2018-2021; Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2020). These frame crisis preparedness as a shared effort in which responsibilities are distributed across several actors (Lundgren & Sundelius, 2007; Danielsson & Olofsson, 2019).

From a framing perspective, the repeated emphasis on collaboration and coordination encourages audiences to understand crisis preparedness as dependent on cooperation rather than on state capacity alone (Persson, 2018). The complementary role is actively constructed through communication rather than merely described.

6.1.1 - 2018 - Event-based complementarity (wildfires)

During the 2018 wildfires, the organizations present themselves as rapidly mobilizing to support ongoing emergency efforts. Swedish Red Cross posts emphasize volunteer deployment, local presence, and coordination with emergency services, often highlighting how volunteers “support rescue services” or “assist affected communities” (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, July-August 2018). The emphasis is placed on adding capacity to an existing response rather than replacing it. Later Red Cross material describing the organization as being “on site before, during and after a crisis,” framing humanitarian support as an integrated part of preparedness systems rather than an external intervention (Swedish Red Cross, 2026).

This communication reinforces a division of roles in which authorities lead formal crisis management while CSOs contribute flexibility and rapid support. The stress on speed,

adaptability, and local engagement positions CSOs as addressing needs beyond formal structures. At the same time, frequent mentions of cooperation with municipalities and rescue services reaffirm the state's central role.

Save the Children's posts during the same period focus on children's emotional wellbeing, providing advice to parents and highlighting children's experiences of fear and disruption (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2018). By foregrounding psychosocial support rather than emergency response, the organization constructs a complementary role within the broader response. This frames crisis management as a coordinated effort in which different actors contribute distinct forms of support.

6.1.2 - 2020 - Supporting system functionality (COVID-19)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the complementary role becomes more closely connected to the functioning of welfare and support systems. Unlike the wildfires, which were more localized and time-bound, the pandemic affected multiple sectors simultaneously over a longer period. In this context, CSOs shift from providing temporary support toward helping systems function under prolonged strain.

Posts from Stockholms Stadsmission repeatedly highlight how services such as food distribution, shelter, and social support make it possible for vulnerable groups to follow public health recommendations (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2020). References to helping people "stay home" or ensuring access to hygiene products and food construct civil society not only as responding to need, but as helping public systems function in practice. Public recommendations often assume stable housing, financial security, and access to support, which are conditions that are not universally available. CSOs are framed as bridging the gap between public health recommendations and the everyday conditions of people who lack stable housing or resources. Unlike the wildfire communication, which focused on acute emergency support, the pandemic posts increasingly frame civil society as necessary for maintaining the everyday functioning of support systems over time.

The Swedish Red Cross similarly emphasizes volunteer mobilization and support efforts aligned with national messaging. Posts stress solidarity, collective responsibility, and helping risk groups, while also describing practical activities such as delivering food, coordinating volunteers, and providing psychosocial support (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2020-2021). This alignment with public health messaging reinforces a framing of crisis response as a collective effort.

The Swedish Red Cross' communication also touched upon how its role expands during periods of heightened societal pressure. In *Humanitärt bokslut 2025*, the organization explicitly reflects on how increasing social vulnerability has led to greater dependence on civil society support, particularly for basic needs such as food, social contact, and guidance through bureaucratic systems (Swedish Red Cross, 2025). The report further suggests that civil society increasingly takes on functions that public systems either no longer fully provide or struggle to reach consistently. This suggests that what begins as temporary support can become a structural expectation placed on CSOs.

Save the Children's communication during this period focuses strongly on the effects of school closures, social isolation, and insecurity among children (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2020-2021). Their posts frequently translate policy impacts into everyday experiences, describing how children struggle with loneliness, disrupted routines, or increased stress within families. In doing so, the organization positions itself as helping bridge the gap between abstract public policy and lived experience.

The organizations do not frame their work in opposition to the state. Rather, they frame their interventions as helping systems function more effectively under difficult conditions. This reflects how preparedness capacity becomes distributed across multiple actors during prolonged crises (Lundgren & Sundelius, 2007). Civil society contributes flexibility, local presence, and responsiveness, while public authorities provide institutional structure and legitimacy.

The repeated emphasis on solidarity, cooperation, and support encourages audiences to understand crisis preparedness as dependent on collaboration between sectors rather than state capacity alone (Persson, 2018). Posts rarely present their support as temporary or extraordinary. Instead, they normalize the idea that civil society should be involved in helping society function during periods of disruption.

Communication shapes how audiences interpret support measures, restrictions, and responsibilities during crises. In this way, CSOs become integrated into the everyday functioning of preparedness and welfare systems during periods of disruption.

6.1.3 - 2022 - Preparedness, solidarity, and democratic resilience (Ukraine)

Communication connected to Russia's invasion of Ukraine introduces a somewhat different form of complementarity, where preparedness becomes linked to solidarity, democratic resilience, and support for displaced populations. Unlike the COVID-19 communication, which focused heavily on welfare functionality and everyday support, the

2022 posts place greater emphasis on mobilization, humanitarian solidarity, and national preparedness.

The Swedish Red Cross highlights fundraising, refugee support, and volunteer mobilization, often emphasizing cooperation with municipalities and other organizations to receive and support people fleeing the war (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2022). Posts repeatedly frame civil society as part of a broader response in which public institutions and voluntary actors contribute different forms of support.

Save the Children similarly foregrounds the experiences of children affected by war and displacement, emphasizing psychosocial support, safety, and access to education (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2022). Through this communication, the organization positions itself as complementing public reception systems by addressing needs that extend beyond formal emergency assistance.

Civil Rights Defenders contribute a more explicitly rights-based perspective, framing support for Ukraine in relation to democracy, human rights, and institutional accountability (Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2022). Preparedness is linked both to emergency response, and to the protection of democratic values and legal rights during periods of geopolitical instability. Compared to the pandemic material, the 2022 posts place greater emphasis on collective solidarity, humanitarian mobilization, and national preparedness.

6.1.4 - 2024-2026 - Integrated support within welfare systems

In the 2024-2026 material, complementarity is no longer tied to discrete crisis events but appears as an ongoing condition of welfare provision. Posts repeatedly frame civil society as a continuous presence that “exists where needs arise” and “reaches across the country,” emphasizing stability, accessibility, and everyday support (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, Dec 2024-Mar 2026). In several instances, this is articulated explicitly as continuity, e.g., being present “every day, not only in crisis”, which shifts the historical framing from exceptional response to permanent capacity (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). The language shifts from describing emergency responses to emphasizing continuing, everyday support.

This shift is visible across organizations in how they describe their activities. Swedish Red Cross posts highlight nationwide volunteer networks, local branches, and the ability to mobilize support “close to where people live,” often in coordination with municipalities and other actors (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). The emphasis on proximity

and continuity positions civil society as extending the reach of public systems into everyday life.

Stockholms Stadsmission similarly frames its work through ongoing programs, such as youth centers, family support, and food distribution, described as “creating security in everyday life” and “strengthening communities over time” (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). These posts rarely focus on a single crisis. Instead, they describe a landscape of vulnerability in which needs are constant. This framing is reinforced in *Fattigdomsrapporten 2025*, where Sveriges Stadsmissioner argues that poverty and exclusion are no longer temporary disruptions, but enduring social conditions shaped by weakening safety nets (Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2025). In doing so, they present their activities as necessary complements to welfare provision rather than temporary responses.

Save the Children’s communication continues to foreground children’s rights and wellbeing, but during this period it increasingly connects these concerns to longer-term structural issues such as poverty, mental health, and educational inequality (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Posts emphasize how their work “supports children in difficult situations” and “ensures that children’s voices are heard,” linking everyday support to broader policy concerns. This framing positions the organization as addressing needs that fall outside or extend beyond formal state provision. Save the Children’s report on children’s economic vulnerability similarly frames civil society support as necessary for ensuring children’s rights and wellbeing when public systems do not fully meet existing needs (Save the Children et al., 2026).

Civil Rights Defenders contribute to a slightly different angle, emphasizing legal support, advocacy, and rights-based monitoring. Their posts highlight how defending rights and holding institutions accountable is part of strengthening democratic resilience (Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). While less directly service-oriented, this still reflects a complementary logic in which civil society supports the system by reinforcing its normative and legal foundations.

Collaboration continues to appear frequently across posts. Posts describe partnerships between organizations, as well as coordination with public actors, often framed as “working together to strengthen support” or “creating long-term solutions” (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2026). Unlike earlier periods, where collaboration was tied to specific crises, it is now presented as routine and ongoing. This framing normalizes a preparedness model in which multiple actors are continuously involved. In *Hemlöshetsrapporten 2026*, Sveriges Stadsmissioner explicitly describe how cooperation between municipalities and civil society

has become central to addressing homelessness and social exclusion (Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2026).

From a framing perspective, these patterns present complementarity as both stable and necessary. By consistently emphasizing continuity, presence, and cooperation, the organizations guide audiences toward understanding their role as an integrated part of how support systems function (Persson, 2018). Crisis preparedness is therefore not limited to extraordinary events but becomes embedded in everyday practices.

However, this framing has implications. If civil society is portrayed as constantly necessary, the distinction between complementing and substituting becomes increasingly blurred. Notably, posts rarely articulate this as a tension; instead, they normalize shared responsibility as a taken-for-granted condition. This normalization can be seen as a discursive effect that makes shared responsibility appear self-evident. By repeatedly presenting cooperation as obvious and unproblematic, the communication obscures the extent to which public systems rely on civil society capacity. Civil society's role is therefore not only to provide services, but also to make problems visible and actionable through everyday practices and communication.

In this period, complementarity is structural rather than situational. Civil society is presented as a stable component of welfare and crisis preparedness systems, expected to be present during crises while simultaneously being a part of the ongoing organization of support.

6.1.5 - Across periods - A stable but evolving complementary role

Across the different periods, complementarity remains consistent but expands in scope. In 2018, CSOs are primarily framed as supporting acute crisis response. During COVID-19, they increasingly helped maintain the functioning of welfare and support systems under prolonged strain. The 2022 communication connected to Ukraine then introduces a stronger emphasis on solidarity and national preparedness. By 2024-2026, civil society is presented as integrated into the continuing functioning of welfare provision and preparedness systems.

This reflects findings in crisis preparedness research that highlight the importance of coordination between actors with different capacities (Lundgren & Sundelius, 2007). Civil society contributes flexibility, local knowledge, and reach, complementing formal structures. However, the increasing reliance on CSOs also raises questions about responsibility.

If civil society is consistently framed as necessary, the distinction between complementing and substituting becomes increasingly blurred. Posts rarely problematize this

dependence and instead normalize shared responsibility through repeated framing (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

By emphasizing cooperation, alignment, and shared responsibility in Facebook posts across time, CSOs reinforce a model in which crisis preparedness is distributed across multiple actors. At the same time, this framing can obscure the extent to which public systems depend on civil society capacity.

6.2 - Theme 2: Civil Society as Gap-Filler

Theme 2 looks at how CSOs present their role as stepping in where existing systems do not fully reach, as reflected in Facebook posts that repeatedly highlight unmet needs, exclusion, and limitations in access to support (Swedish Red Cross, Stockholms Stadsmission, Save the Children, Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2018-2026). In contrast to Theme 1, where civil society is framed as working alongside the state, the communication analyzed here repeatedly points to situations where support systems do not fully include certain groups or adequately address lived realities. These gaps are not always explicitly framed as failures of the state. Instead, they become visible through descriptions of unmet needs, structural inequalities, and everyday struggles. In doing so, the organizations position themselves as necessary actors bridging the distance between formal systems and lived experience, translating abstract policy into practical support (Persson, 2018).

Across the material, this gap-filling role appears through three recurring patterns: identifying groups that fall outside existing systems, highlighting the gap between policy design and lived reality, and presenting CSO interventions as what makes systems function in practice, all of which are noticeable across posts from multiple organizations and time periods (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2020; Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2020-2021; Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Posts frequently move from describing a problem to implicitly or explicitly demonstrating how the organization intervenes, for example, by juxtaposing unmet needs (e.g., inability to follow public health guidelines) with concrete services such as food distribution, shelter, or psychosocial support (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2020; Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2020-2021; Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2020-2021), thereby linking problem construction directly to proposed action (Persson, 2018). The result is a recurring framing in which civil society appears not as supplementary, but as necessary for systems to function under real-world conditions (Lundgren & Sundelius, 2007; Danielsson & Olofsson, 2019).

6.2.1 - 2018 - Event-based gaps (wildfires)

During the 2018 wildfires, the organizations present themselves as responding to immediate needs that exceed the capacity or reach of formal emergency systems. Swedish Red Cross posts emphasize how volunteers were rapidly mobilized to support affected communities, often highlighting how they “assist where the need is greatest” or “provide support on the ground” (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, July-August 2018). While framed as supportive, this communication also reveals the limits of formal crisis response, particularly in terms of speed, local presence, and reach across dispersed areas.

Save the Children’s posts during the same period highlight a different type of gap: psychosocial support for children. Their communication focuses on fear, uncertainty, and emotional distress, often emphasizing the need for adults to help children process crisis experiences (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2018). These needs are not central to traditional emergency management, and the visibility they receive in the posts suggests that they are insufficiently addressed within formal systems. As such, CSOs construct a gap not through direct criticism, but by drawing attention to what is missing.

The 2018 material shows how gaps are framed as situational and event-based, as evidenced by posts that emphasize immediate needs, emotional distress, and rapid volunteer mobilization during the wildfires (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, July-August 2018; Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2018). Civil society is presented as stepping in where systems cannot fully respond in the moment, particularly in areas requiring flexibility, immediacy, or specialized forms of support. This aligns with research highlighting how CSOs address coordination and responsiveness gaps during crises (Olsson & Nordvall, 2018; Johansson, 2023).

6.2.2 - 2020 - System stress and exposed limitations (COVID-19)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, gaps become both more noticeable and more systemic, as reflected in posts that repeatedly highlight barriers to following public health measures and accessing basic resources (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2020; Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2020-2021). Rather than being tied to a single event, they emerge through the interaction between universal policy measures and unequal living conditions. Stockholms Stadsmission’s posts repeatedly highlight how public health recommendations, such as “staying at home” or maintaining hygiene, are not feasible for individuals without stable housing or access to basic resources (Stockholms Stadsmission,

Facebook posts, 2020). In several cases, the gap is made explicit through rhetorical questions about how these measures can realistically be followed in practice, thereby exposing the disconnect between policy and lived reality.

CSO interventions are then presented as what makes these policies workable in practice. Services such as shelter, food distribution, and hygiene facilities are framed as necessary for compliance, effectively positioning civil society as bridging the gap between policy design and implementation. This reflects the limits of universal welfare approaches when confronted with structural inequalities (Micheletti, 1995).

A similar pattern appears in Swedish Red Cross communication, where posts emphasize increased demand for support, including food distribution and assistance to vulnerable groups (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2020-2021). The scale and urgency of these interventions suggest that existing safety nets become insufficient during periods of widespread disruption. Even when framed in terms of cooperation, the underlying message is that the system alone cannot meet basic needs.

Save the Children's posts highlight how children are affected by indirect consequences of the pandemic, such as school closures, isolation, and family stress (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2020-2021). Their communication often focuses on how these effects are not fully addressed by institutional responses, thereby revealing gaps between policy intent and lived experience. By translating abstract measures into concrete impacts on children's lives, the organization constructs the gap as both visible and urgent.

These illustrate how gaps are connected to how public policies assume certain living conditions, e.g. housing, stability, and access to resources, which are not universally present. Civil society therefore becomes necessary for helping public systems function in practice by compensating for these mismatches.

6.2.3 - 2022 - Displacement, rights, and unequal access (Ukraine)

Communication connected to Russia's invasion of Ukraine introduces a somewhat different type of gap-filling, centered around displacement, access to protection, and the uneven ability of institutions to respond quickly to changing humanitarian needs. Compared to the COVID-19 material, which focused strongly on welfare systems under pressure, the 2022 posts increasingly emphasize refugee reception, legal uncertainty, and psychosocial support connected to war and displacement.

The Swedish Red Cross mentions support for people arriving in Sweden, including information, humanitarian assistance, and volunteer mobilization at transportation hubs and

reception points (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2022). While framed as humanitarian solidarity, these posts also reveal how civil society becomes necessary for addressing immediate needs during large-scale displacement.

Save the Children's communication focuses heavily on children affected by war, displacement, and interrupted schooling, repeatedly emphasizing the importance of safety, stability, and emotional support (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2022). In doing so, the organization identifies gaps between formal reception systems and the psychosocial needs of children and families.

Civil Rights Defenders approach these issues from a rights-based perspective, highlighting legal protections, democratic values, and the risks faced by vulnerable groups during periods of geopolitical instability (Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2022). Their communication frames gap-filling as humanitarian support, but also as defending access to rights and institutional protection.

Compared to the 2018 wildfire material, where gaps were primarily situational and immediate, the 2022 communication places stronger emphasis on displacement, long-term uncertainty, and unequal access to protection. The material also acts as a bridge toward the later 2024-2026 communication, where structural vulnerability and institutional insufficiency become increasingly normalized themes.

6.2.4 - 2024-2026 - Normalized and structural gaps

In the 2024-2026 material, gap-filling is no longer framed as episodic, but as a persistent condition of social life. Across posts, the organizations repeatedly foreground ongoing hardship, such as rising living costs, food insecurity, housing precarity, mental health strain, and rights-related exclusions, thereby reframing "crisis" as continuous rather than exceptional (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, Dec 2024-Mar 2026). Instead of urgency tied to single events, posts emphasize duration and recurrence (e.g., people "struggling month after month," services needed "every day, not only in crisis"), which normalizes the presence of gaps over time (Stockholms Stadsmission; Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2025-2026).

A first pattern concerns the routinization of material deprivation. Swedish Red Cross posts frequently highlight sustained demand for food assistance and basic goods, often stressing that recipients have "done everything right" yet still fall short (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). By linking moral deservingness with unmet need, these posts frame poverty as structurally produced rather than individually caused. This framing is

reinforced in *Humanitärt bokslut 2025*, where the Swedish Red Cross describes how increasing numbers of people seek support for “basic needs such as food, clothing and rest,” while public welfare systems struggle to meet growing needs (Swedish Red Cross, 2025). The report further emphasizes that people increasingly “falls between the lines in the welfare system” and that organizations are forced to adapt to “new and increasing needs”, reinforcing the idea that civil society is responding to long-lasting organizational shortcomings rather than temporary hardship. Stockholms Stadsmission amplifies this through recurring narratives and short quotations that render everyday budgeting, skipped meals, and reliance on low-cost food initiatives, such as Matmissionen, visible and relatable (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Here, the gap is not a temporary shortage but a durable mismatch between welfare provision and the cost of living. This is echoed in *Fattigdomsrapporten 2025*, which argues that the “the ultimate safety net” no longer protects people from poverty and describes a shift from “welfare society to charity society” (Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2025). The report also explicitly frames growing dependence on civil society support as a consequence of weakened welfare protections and increasing barriers to economic support.

A second pattern shows the translation gap between policy and lived reality. Posts frequently juxtapose formal entitlements or recommendations with conditions that make compliance difficult or impossible. For instance, guidance on nutrition, schooling, or safety alongside accounts of overcrowding, unstable income, or limited access to services (Save the Children; Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). This juxtaposition mirrors earlier pandemic-era dynamics but is no longer tied specifically to emergency measures. Instead, it becomes a recurring feature of how policy meets everyday life. Similar concerns are raised in *Barnfamiljers ekonomiska svårigheter 2026*, which highlights how increasing numbers of families struggle to afford food, housing, and participation in everyday activities despite existing welfare structures (Hyresgästföreningen et al., 2026). The report further stresses that CSOs increasingly encounter families whose basic needs are no longer met through ordinary welfare provision, reinforcing the framing of vulnerability as normalized and permanent. CSO interventions (food distribution, counseling, after-school support, outreach) are then presented as what makes these policies workable in practice.

A third recurring pattern concerns rights-based and institutional gaps. Save the Children and Civil Rights Defenders increasingly foreground how legal and policy frameworks generate exclusion, particularly in relation to migration status, access to protection, and due process (Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Posts

emphasize cases, advocacy efforts, and monitoring activities that “hold institutions accountable” or “ensure rights are respected,” thereby framing gaps as embedded in institutional design rather than only in resource shortages. This is reflected in *Hemlöshetsrapporten 2026*, which explicitly frames homelessness as emerging when “societal systems fail” and when people “falls between the systems' areas of responsibility” (Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2026). The report repeatedly emphasizes that structural homelessness is produced by institutional arrangements and insufficient coordination between welfare systems, reinforcing how gaps are framed as organizational rather than temporary (Trägårdh, 2007). In this register, gap-filling includes legal support and advocacy, not just service provision.

Across organizations, posts often follow a consistent narrative sequence: (1) make a gap visible through concrete examples or short testimonies, (2) generalize it as a broader pattern (e.g., increasing numbers, recurring needs), and (3) present organizational action as the immediate bridge (e.g., “we provide,” “we support,” “we ensure access”) (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). This sequence links problem construction directly to intervention, reinforcing a framing in which CSOs are necessary for systems to function under real conditions (Persson, 2018).

Collaboration is still present but reframed. Rather than event-specific coordination, posts describe ongoing partnerships and ecosystems of support, between CSOs, municipalities, and other actors, aimed at “long-term solutions” or “strengthening support over time” (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2026). This normalizes a preparedness system where civil society support becomes ongoing rather than temporary.

These dynamics show how CSOs translate diffuse social problems into actionable cases and routinized forms of intervention. The repeated visibility of gaps, together with continuous provision of support, helps stabilize expectations: needs persist, and so does the civil society response.

The implication is a deepened tension. As gaps are framed as permanent features, CSO activity becomes both indispensable and normal. Posts rarely problematize this dependency. Instead, they normalize a situation in which structural shortfalls are managed through continuous intervention. Gap-filling both exposes systemic limitations and contributes to their stabilization by ensuring that acute consequences are mitigated in the short term (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The 2024-2026 posts constructs gap-filling as an underlying, enduring function of civil society. Across two years of posts, CSOs consistently connect persistent hardship to ongoing

intervention, presenting themselves as the actors who make welfare and rights regimes work in practice, day after day.

6.2.5 - Across periods - From situational gaps to structural condition

Across the different periods, a clear development emerges, based on the patterns observed across posts from all four organizations over time (Swedish Red Cross, Stockholms Stadsmission, Save the Children, Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2018-2026). In 2018, gaps are mainly temporary and event-specific. During COVID-19, they are exposed to systemic weaknesses under pressure. The 2022 communication connected to Ukraine then introduces displacement, unequal access to protection, and rights-related vulnerability as central themes. By 2024-2026, gaps are increasingly described as lasting conditions linked to inequality, exclusion, and structural vulnerability.

This shift gradually transforms the role of civil society from temporary responder to permanent support structure, as increasingly evident in posts that frame support as constant rather than crisis-specific (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2025-2026; Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Gap-filling becomes normalized, reflecting trends in which civil society compensates for limitations within public systems (Edwards, 2014; Sjöstrand & Wijkström, 2020). At the same time, crisis preparedness literature emphasizes how complex crises make such flexible actors necessary (Lundgren and Sundelius, 2007).

This normalization also creates a tension, which can be seen in how posts simultaneously highlight severe unmet needs while presenting civil society interventions as sufficient responses (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2025-2026; Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2026). While CSOs make systems function in practice, their interventions may obscure the extent to which those systems are insufficient. By addressing immediate needs, organizations reduce visible pressure on public institutions without necessarily changing the underlying conditions.

By repeatedly framing gaps as manageable through civil society action, CSOs contribute to a narrative in which continuing vulnerability is addressed through continuous intervention rather than structural change (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Organizations consistently construct themselves as gap-fillers through their communication, as demonstrated across Facebook posts that repeatedly connect unmet needs with organizational intervention across all time periods (Swedish Red Cross, Stockholms Stadsmission, Save the Children, Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2018-2026). By identifying unmet needs, translating policy into lived experience, and presenting their

interventions as necessary, they expand the meaning of crisis preparedness from responding to events to managing ongoing vulnerabilities.

6.3 - Theme 3: Civil Society as Shaper of Responsibility

This section examines how CSOs move beyond providing support and actively shape how responsibility for crises is understood. Building on Theme 1 (complementarity) and Theme 2 (gap-filling), this theme shifts the focus from *what CSOs do* to *how they define who should act*, adding a more explicit political and interpretive dimension to their role. While Theme 1 showed how CSOs position themselves alongside the state, and Theme 2 demonstrated how they fill systemic gaps, this theme focuses on how they define who is responsible for both the causes of crises and their solutions. In doing so, CSOs respond to crises, while also interpreting them, assigning meaning, and direct attention to particular actors and institutional levels.

Across the material, this role appears through three recurring patterns observable in Facebook posts, which mirror and extend the dynamics identified in the previous themes: (1) shifting responsibility from individuals to structures, (2) translating lived experiences into political claims, and (3) explicitly calling for policy change (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2018-2026). Through these practices, CSOs position themselves as actors shaping public understandings of crisis preparedness rather than simply contributing to it. This aligns with research suggesting that actors participate in defining problems and responsibilities (Lundgren & Sundelius, 2007; Danielsson & Olofsson, 2019). It also reflects framing theory, where problem definitions shape interpretations of responsibility (Persson, 2018).

Responsibility-shaping in this material rarely takes place through abstract policy discussions alone. Instead, organizations repeatedly anchor responsibility claims in concrete examples, everyday experiences, and emotionally resonant narratives. Posts describing hunger, loneliness, insecurity, or bureaucratic obstacles are frequently followed by broader statements about political priorities, welfare systems, or institutional shortcomings. In this way, individual experiences are transformed into evidence of structural problems. Communication therefore operates on two levels at the same time: it documents lived realities while also interpreting them politically.

This dual movement is sociologically significant because it demonstrates how CSOs participate in constructing public understandings of crisis and accountability. Rather than

presenting crises as isolated events or unfortunate circumstances, the posts repeatedly connect vulnerability to institutional structures, social inequality, and political decision-making. As Berger & Luckmann (1966) argue, social realities become stabilized through repeated interpretation and communication. CSOs contribute to normalizing particular understandings of where responsibility lies and what forms of action are considered necessary or legitimate.

6.3.1 - 2018 - Implicit responsibility (wildfires)

During the 2018 wildfires, responsibility-shaping is present, though largely implicit. Swedish Red Cross posts emphasize coordination, preparedness, and rapid response, often highlighting how volunteers “are in place quickly” and “support rescue services” (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, July-August 2018). While these posts focus mainly on action, they also construct expectations about how crisis systems should function, suggesting that effective preparedness requires capacities beyond formal institutions.

Save the Children’s posts foreground children’s emotional experiences, such as fear, uncertainty, and the need for adult reassurance (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2018). By emphasizing that children require tailored support, these posts implicitly assign responsibility to “the adult world” and to crisis planning more broadly. Responsibility is not directly attributed to specific actors, but the posts still establish expectations regarding what adequate preparedness should include.

Across this period, responsibility is constructed through omission as much as through statement: by highlighting what is needed, CSOs implicitly define what systems ought to provide. From a framing perspective, this constitutes a soft form of responsibility assignment, where expectations are established without direct critique (Persson, 2018).

6.3.2 - 2020 - Revealing system limitations (COVID-19)

During COVID-19, responsibility becomes more visible and more clearly tied to structural conditions. Posts frequently juxtapose policy expectations with lived realities, for example, contrasting recommendations such as “stay at home” or maintain hygiene with situations of homelessness or financial insecurity (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2020), thereby framing responsibility as connected to system design rather than individual behavior (Persson, 2018). Several posts highlight how recommendations such as “stay at home” or “maintain hygiene” are not feasible for individuals lacking stable housing or income. Several posts use concrete examples or rhetorical contrasts to highlight the gap between policy and practice.

The Swedish Red Cross reinforces this dynamic by emphasizing the scale of need and the reliance on volunteer-based support, often noting increased demand for food, social contact, and assistance (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2020-2021). While not always directly critical, these posts make the limits of existing systems visible and suggest that responsibility cannot be placed solely on individuals.

Save the Children adds a generational dimension by highlighting how children are affected by decisions such as school closures and isolation (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2020-2021). Posts often translate abstract measures into everyday consequences such as loneliness, disrupted education, and increased stress, thereby shifting responsibility toward decision-makers and societal structures.

Across this period, responsibility is increasingly seen as structural rather than individual. The communication repeatedly highlights how policies presuppose certain conditions, e.g. housing, stability, and resources, that are unevenly distributed. Through their communication, CSOs make these mismatches noticeable and actionable.

6.3.3 - 2024-2026 - Explicit responsibility and advocacy

In the 2024-2026 material, responsibility-shaping becomes both more explicit and more sustained over time, reflecting a shift from episodic critique to ongoing public positioning. Rather than implying responsibility, CSOs frequently name actors, decisions, and policy domain directly, and do so repeatedly over time. This repetition gives responsibility claims durability. The same issues of cost of living, child poverty, housing insecurity, migration, and rights, are revisited across months, creating a cumulative narrative in which responsibility becomes increasingly difficult to ignore (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, Dec 2024-May 2026).

A first pattern involves the explicit attribution of responsibility to political actors and policy choices. Swedish Red Cross posts not only describe rising need but also call for political action, for instance stating that “politicians must act” or that “more must be done” to address structural inequality (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). These statements are often paired with statistics or summaries of increasing demand (e.g., more people seeking food support), which help strengthen the claim. This pattern is reinforced in *Humanitärt bokslut 2025*, where the Swedish Red Cross explicitly argues that increasing social vulnerability and pressure on welfare systems require stronger political action and long-term coordination between the state and civil society (Swedish Red Cross, 2025). Responsibility is therefore constructed through a combination of evidence and direct appeal.

A second pattern involves translating everyday hardship into systemic critique. Stockholms Stadsmission consistently links lived experiences, difficulty affording food, unstable housing, reliance on aid, to decisions and institutional arrangements. Posts frequently juxtapose short testimonies or concrete situations with generalized claims about “the distance between decisions and reality” (Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Over the two-year period, this pairing repeats across different issues such as food, youth support, and housing, producing a recurring pattern in which individual experiences are connected to administrative explanations and broader responsibility claims. This is echoed in *Fattigdomsrapporten 2025*, where Sveriges Stadsmissioner repeatedly frame poverty as a structural and political issue rather than an individual failure (Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2025). In several posts, this is condensed into a single narrative arc, where a quote or vignette is immediately followed by a broader statement about systemic shortcomings.

A third pattern concerns the increasingly normative tone of responsibility claims, particularly in Save the Children’s communication. Posts repeatedly assert that certain conditions “should not happen” in a well-functioning society, framing children’s exposure to poverty, violence, or insecurity as unacceptable outcomes of collective failure (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Over time, these statements move from describing impacts (e.g., school stress, isolation) to asserting standards (what society ought to guarantee), thereby widening the scope of responsibility from specific decisions to societal obligations. Responsibility is framed broadly as located in the “adult world,” institutions, and policymakers, and anchored in a rights-based logic. Similar arguments appear in *Barnfamiljers ekonomiska svårigheter 2026*, where the participating organizations stress that civil society can provide support, but that long-term responsibility ultimately rests with political decision-makers (Hyresgästföreningen et al., 2026).

Civil Rights Defenders provide the most direct and sustained form of responsibility attribution. Their posts repeatedly refer to legislation, court rulings, and political developments, arguing that these actively produce or exacerbate crises related to rights and democratic protections (Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Responsibility is not framed in diffuse terms but is often tied to specific policies or institutional actions. This rights-based framing is strengthened by repeated references to democratic accountability and institutional responsibility in relation to vulnerability and exclusion. Over the two-year period, this creates a consistent frame in which crises are understood as outcomes of political and institutional decisions rather than external shocks.

Across organizations, posts frequently follow a recurrent discursive sequence: (1) make a problem noticeable through a concrete example or brief testimony, (2) generalize it as a pattern (e.g., “more people,” “increasing numbers,” “a growing issue”), and (3) assign or imply responsibility at the level of systems or decision-makers (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). This sequence appears repeatedly across topics and months, suggesting a stable communicative strategy rather than isolated instances. It links problem construction directly to responsibility assignment, demonstrating how framing organizes both interpretation and attribution (Persson, 2018).

The sequential extension of the dataset reveals how responsibility claims are reinforced over time. Issues introduced in earlier posts are revisited with new examples, updated figures, or renewed calls for action. This repetition does not simply restate the same message. Instead, it accumulates examples and reinforces a particular understanding of where responsibility lies. Over time, recurring references to poverty, exclusion, and institutional shortcomings across both posts and reports create a coherent narrative in which responsibility is increasingly framed as structural rather than individual (Swedish Red Cross, 2025; Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2025). Over time, responsibility becomes less contestable and more taken for granted within the discourse.

These practices illustrate how CSOs participate in shaping public understandings of accountability by defining what counts as a problem, who is considered responsible, and what forms of action are presented as necessary. Responsibility therefore becomes a central site through which public expectations and interpretations are negotiated in communication.

At the same time, this sustained responsibility-shaping also introduces tension. While CSOs increasingly act as critics and agenda-setters, they continue to operate within and alongside the systems they critique. Posts rarely resolve this tension; instead, they hold together two positions: collaboration and critique. Over time, this dual role becomes normalized, reflecting a complex position in which civil society both supports and challenges public institutions and welfare systems.

This tension is particularly noticeable in posts where organizations simultaneously thank municipalities, authorities, or political actors for cooperation while also emphasizing unmet needs and systemic shortcomings (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Communication therefore avoids presenting the state as entirely absent or ineffective. Instead, responsibility is framed as shared but unevenly fulfilled. CSOs

position themselves as actors that can identify shortcomings because of their close contact with affected populations, while still emphasizing the need for long-term political solutions.

Responsibility-shaping also becomes a way of legitimizing civil society's own role within preparedness and welfare systems. By repeatedly demonstrating awareness of institutional problems and articulating where responsibility should lie, organizations position themselves as knowledgeable actors with both practical and moral authority. Their communication suggests that responding to crises is both about delivering aid and about interpreting social realities and advocating for change. This contributes to a broader framing in which civil society is framed not merely as supportive, but as politically and socially necessary within contemporary crisis preparedness and welfare systems.

Across two years of posts, CSOs repeatedly translate lived experiences into claims about organizational and political accountability, reinforcing their role as actors who actively define who is expected to act and why.

6.3.4 - Across periods - From implicit expectations to explicit claims

Across the periods, a clear progression emerges, consistent with the developments identified in Themes 1 and 2. In 2018, responsibility is implicit, embedded in expectations about preparedness. During COVID-19, it becomes visible through the exposure of system limitations. By 2026, it is explicitly articulated through critique, advocacy, and direct calls for action (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2018-2026). This shift suggests that CSOs are increasingly moving into a role where they help define them.

By translating lived experiences into political claims, they frame structural problems as visible and actionable. As CSOs become more explicit in assigning responsibility, they move further into political and advocacy-oriented positions. This may challenge their role within preparedness and welfare systems, particularly when they criticize the same institutions they collaborate with. Responsibility-shaping therefore operates alongside complementarity and gap-filling, creating a more complex and sometimes contradictory position.

From a social constructionist perspective, these communicative practices contribute to shaping how responsibility is understood and where it is located within society. By repeatedly framing crises as outcomes of structural conditions and policy decisions, CSOs contribute to a narrative in which responsibility is located beyond the individual level (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). At the same time, by providing support and mitigating immediate consequences, they may also contribute to stabilizing the very systems they critique.

The analysis shows that CSOs play a significant role in shaping responsibility within crisis preparedness. Together with Themes 1 and 2, this suggests that civil society's role is to complement systems or fill gaps, and to define how those systems are understood, evaluated, and held accountable. Across posts and time periods, they move from implicit expectations to explicit claims, increasingly directing attention toward structural and political accountability.

7. Civil Society as Legitimate and Trusted Actor

The final theme that emerged examines how civil society organizations (CSOs) construct themselves as credible and trustworthy actors within crisis preparedness. While the previous themes have focused on how CSOs position themselves within preparedness systems (complementarity), why they are needed (gap-filling), and how they shape responsibility, this theme addresses how they justify their position within these roles. In doing so, the theme shows how legitimacy is constructed through specific communicative strategies (Edwards, 2014).

Across the material, legitimacy is built through three recurring patterns in Facebook posts, which mirror and reinforce the dynamics identified in the previous themes and appear consistently across organizations and time periods: (1) emphasizing expertise and experience, (2) highlighting proximity to affected populations, and (3) reinforcing trust through transparency, consistency, and moral positioning (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2018-2026). Together, these elements frame CSOs as competent and trustworthy actors whose involvement is presented as socially necessary (Edwards, 2014). From a framing perspective, these patterns guide audiences toward understanding why CSOs are positioned as reliable actors (Persson, 2018).

During the 2018 wildfires, legitimacy is primarily created through visible action and presence. Swedish Red Cross posts emphasize rapid mobilization, volunteer presence, and coordination with emergency services, often highlighting how they are “on site” and “supporting affected communities” (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, July-August 2018). These posts frequently combine descriptions of urgency with concrete actions, such as distributing supplies or assisting evacuees, making action itself a form of evidence. Legitimacy is established through visible responsiveness and concrete actions rather than through abstract claims.

A similar pattern appears in Save the Children’s communication, although expressed through a different type of expertise. Posts focusing on children’s emotional reactions to the fires and guidance directed toward parents position the organization as possessing specialized psychosocial knowledge that complements formal emergency response (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2018). By foregrounding needs that are less noticeable within emergency management structures, the organization constructs legitimacy through competence in a specific and often overlooked area (Persson, 2018).

During this period, legitimacy is closely tied to visible action and rapid engagement. Organizations establish credibility by demonstrating that they are capable of acting quickly, supporting affected communities, and addressing needs that public systems may not fully reach. Legitimacy therefore emerges through practice and presence.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, legitimacy becomes more strongly connected to expertise, interpretation, and institutional trustworthiness. Whereas wildfire communication emphasizes visible action, the pandemic material increasingly constructs legitimacy through expertise and interpretation.

Swedish Red Cross posts frequently align with public health recommendations, reinforcing guidance about distancing, hygiene, and support for risk groups (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2020-2021). Through this alignment, the organization positions itself as a trusted intermediary capable of translating official recommendations into practical and socially meaningful action. Rather than distancing themselves from authorities, the posts emphasize reliability and coordinated action. This pattern is also reflected in *Humanitärt bokslut 2025*, where long-term humanitarian presence, local trust, and sustained cooperation are framed as essential for responding to increasing vulnerability (Swedish Red Cross, 2025).

Legitimacy is also constructed through demonstrating understanding of lived realities. Stockholms Stadsmission and Save the Children repeatedly juxtapose policy expectations with situations of housing insecurity, poverty, or social vulnerability, highlighting how some individuals are unable to follow public recommendations under existing conditions (Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2020-2021). In these cases, legitimacy emerges not only from supporting public recommendations, but also from demonstrating awareness of their practical limitations.

This period reflects a shift toward legitimacy grounded in expertise and interpretive authority. Trust becomes tied to both the ability to act, and to the ability to interpret, explain, and contextualize crises in socially meaningful ways. By presenting themselves as actors who understand both institutional expectations and lived experience, CSOs reinforce their position as credible and necessary actors within crisis preparedness systems (Persson, 2018).

A different form of legitimacy emerges in communication connected to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, where preparedness becomes tied to solidarity, democratic values, and protection of displaced populations. Compared to the pandemic material, which centered heavily on welfare functionality and institutional trust, the Ukraine-related communication places stronger emphasis on humanitarian solidarity and moral positioning.

The Swedish Red Cross frequently highlights volunteer mobilization, refugee support, and cooperation around reception efforts, presenting itself as both practically capable and socially dependable during geopolitical instability (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2022). Save the Children similarly constructs legitimacy through advocacy for children affected by war and displacement, repeatedly emphasizing safety, psychosocial wellbeing, and access to education (Save the Children, Facebook posts, 2022). Civil Rights Defenders contribute a more explicitly rights-based form of legitimacy by framing support for Ukraine in relation to democracy, legal protections, and institutional accountability (Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2022).

Across these examples, legitimacy is tied to competence, humanitarian values and ethical positioning. Organizations present themselves as trustworthy because they defend humanitarian principles, rights, and democratic ideals during periods of uncertainty. This creates a bridge toward the later communication from 2024-2026, where moral authority and long-term societal presence become increasingly central.

7.1 - Continuity, proximity, and moral authority

In the 2024-2026 material, legitimacy is seen as an ongoing and multi-dimensional quality rather than something connected only to specific events. Across posts spanning more than a year, CSOs consistently emphasize their long-term presence, accumulated experience, and sustained engagement with social issues (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, Dec 2024-May 2026). This continuity reinforces trust by presenting the organizations as stable and reliable actors over time through repeated references to long-term engagement, accumulated experience, and recurring involvement in social crises (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, Dec 2024-May 2026).

A key pattern is the use of proximity and everyday contact with affected groups as a basis for legitimacy. Posts frequently highlight direct contact with individuals and communities, often through short narratives, quotes, or examples. Posts frequently emphasize organizations' daily contact with affected individuals and their direct exposure to consequences, positioning CSOs as uniquely qualified to speak about social realities and to interpret them authoritatively (Stockholms Stadsmission; Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). These claims are often supported by brief testimonies or concrete situations, linking abstract issues to lived experience. This proximity becomes a form of

experiential expertise, reinforcing credibility through direct engagement. Rather than relying mainly on formal credentials, organizations repeatedly position themselves as legitimate because they are present in everyday life and continuously encounter the consequences of poverty, exclusion, and insecurity. This pattern is also reflected in *Fattigdomsrapporten 2025*, where Sveriges Stadsmissioner emphasize their direct encounters with increasing poverty and social vulnerability as the basis for their broader societal critique (Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2025).

A second pattern involves building legitimacy through consistent messaging and repeated engagement over time. Across organizations, legitimacy is strengthened through sustained visibility over time rather than isolated interventions. Repeated communication about similar issues creates continuity and reinforces the perception that CSOs possess long-term knowledge and commitment rather than temporary engagement. Across the extended time period, similar themes, such as vulnerability and rights, are revisited in multiple posts. This repetition produces a stable narrative about organizational identity and long-term commitment. By consistently presenting themselves as actors who address ongoing needs, CSOs reinforce a coherent identity that strengthens trust and supports their position as reliable actors within crisis preparedness and welfare systems.

A third dimension involves constructing moral authority through rights-based and normative claims, particularly in Save the Children and Civil Rights Defenders' communication. Here, legitimacy is tied not only to competence or experience, but to ethical positioning and rights-based claims about what society should protect and prioritize. Posts frequently include normative statements such as "this should not happen" or explicit critiques of rights violations, framing certain conditions as unacceptable (Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). These statements are often tied to concrete examples, e.g. children experiencing poverty, individuals affected by policy decisions, linking moral claims to lived realities. *Barnfamiljers ekonomiska svårigheter 2026* reinforces this pattern by framing children's economic insecurity as a social issue, and as a moral and political failure requiring structural action (Hyresgästföreningen et al., 2026). In doing so, CSOs build legitimacy through both demonstrated competence and explicit ethical commitments (Persson, 2018).

7.2 - Legitimacy Shifts

Posts often follow a pattern in which a concrete example is presented, followed by a broader claim about systemic issues, and finally an implicit or explicit call for change. This

mirrors the responsibility-shaping dynamics identified in Theme 3, but here the focus is on how such claims are made credible. By grounding critique in lived experience and repeated observation, CSOs position themselves as justified critics rather than distant commentators (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission; Save the Children; Civil Rights Defenders, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Through communication, CSOs actively construct credibility by linking knowledge, experience, and values.

The extended time frame shows that legitimacy is accumulated gradually through repeated communication. Across organizations, similar themes, examples, and claims reappear throughout posts, reinforcing perceptions of continuity, reliability, and long-term engagement with social vulnerability. Organizations such as the Swedish Red Cross and Stockholms Stadsmission frequently reference their historical presence, humanitarian mission, and ongoing societal involvement, implicitly framing longevity itself as evidence of trustworthiness and stability (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2025-2026). Through repeated exposure to consistent narratives about needs, interventions, and values, audiences come to view CSOs as reliable actors (Persson, 2018; Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Across the material, legitimacy shifts in character over time. During the 2018 wildfires, organizations primarily establish legitimacy through action and immediate responsiveness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, legitimacy becomes more strongly connected to expertise, interpretation, and institutional trustworthiness. Communication connected to Ukraine in 2022 then adds a stronger emphasis on humanitarian solidarity, democratic values, and moral positioning. By 2024-2026, legitimacy increasingly rests on continuity, proximity, and the ability to demonstrate long-term engagement with social vulnerability and inequality.

As CSOs become more integrated into preparedness and welfare systems, legitimacy shifts from demonstrating capability in isolated crises to maintaining long-term trust and visibility. Legitimacy becomes essential maintaining public trust, but also for enabling CSOs to complement institutions and influence understandings of responsibility.

Growing legitimacy introduces tensions, particularly when organizations criticize the same systems they collaborate with. As organizations increasingly shape public discussions about vulnerability, policy, and institutional shortcomings, they move beyond purely supportive roles and become more visible political and moral actors. This may create challenges, particularly when organizations criticize the same systems they collaborate with. However, the material suggests that CSOs manage this tension by grounding their critiques in lived experience, humanitarian values, and repeated observation.

8. Discussion

8.1 - Crisis Preparedness as a Socially Embedded Process

Through Facebook posts and organizational reports, the analyzed CSOs repeatedly frame crisis preparedness as a socially embedded process connected to welfare, inequality, trust, and societal resilience. Across the material, crises are consistently framed as connected to broader social and structural conditions rather than as isolated events.. Instead, organizations repeatedly connect vulnerability to broader social and structural conditions such as poverty, homelessness, exclusion, and unequal access to welfare support

This framing reflects findings in disaster risk and resilience research, which emphasize how structural inequalities shape vulnerability and recovery (UNDRR, 2024; Stark, Osvalder & Borell, 2024). This perspective emphasizes how social conditions shape both vulnerability and recovery capacity during crises. Within the analyzed material, these factors are repeatedly connected to preparedness through posts and reports describing how vulnerable populations face greater difficulties coping with economic instability, social disruption, or periods of uncertainty (Swedish Red Cross; Save the Children; Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2024-2026).

The analyzed material expands the notion of preparedness beyond technical planning by linking it to welfare structures, inclusion, and long-term social conditions. Instead, preparedness emerges as deeply connected to welfare structures, inclusion, and long-term social sustainability. Across the analyzed organizations, preparedness is repeatedly linked to social protection, inclusion, and long-term support systems rather than solely to technical emergency planning.

8.2 - CSOs within Preparedness Systems

A central finding is that CSOs increasingly present themselves as embedded, long-term actors within preparedness and welfare systems. This is particularly visible in the way organizations repeatedly frame their work as continuous and long-term rather than crisis specific. Posts rarely frame organizational involvement as temporary; instead, they emphasize continuous engagement with recurring needs. Instead, communication emphasizes ongoing support, recurring societal needs, and sustained engagement with vulnerable populations over time.

This continuity normalizes civil society involvement by presenting CSOs as routine contributors to preparedness systems. The repeated emphasis on proximity and flexibility also

contributes to presenting civil society as more adaptive and socially responsive than larger bureaucratic systems. The material repeatedly frames preparedness as dependent on collaboration and trust-based relationships between CSOs, public institutions, and local communities. Organizations frequently emphasize cooperation with municipalities, volunteer networks, schools, healthcare actors, and local communities in order to maintain support systems and reach vulnerable populations (Swedish Red Cross; Stockholms Stadsmission, Facebook posts, 2020-2021).

This broader framing aligns with research emphasizing that preparedness increasingly depends on coordination between public institutions, civil society actors, and local communities rather than centralized emergency management alone (Lundgren and Sundelius, 2007; Haug, Nordensvärd & Wihlborg, 2024). Within the analyzed material, organizations repeatedly connect preparedness to social relationships, trust, and inclusion. Organizations construct resilience as dependent on institutional planning as well as trust, local anchoring, and everyday social support.

Rather than framing these issues as secondary social concerns, organizations frequently present them as factors that directly influence societal resilience during crises. Swedish Red Cross posts repeatedly describe loneliness and exclusion as increasing vulnerability and weakening individuals' ability to cope during periods of uncertainty or disruption (Swedish Red Cross, Facebook posts, 2024-2026). Similar themes appear in *Humanitärt bokslut 2025*, where social isolation and exclusion are discussed as broader societal challenges affecting preparedness and long-term social sustainability (Vedin et al., 2025). Through this framing, preparedness becomes tied not only to physical or logistical readiness, but also to social inclusion and emotional security.

Crisis preparedness is increasingly framed as inseparable from welfare structures, housing stability, and access to social support. Poverty, insecure housing, limited access to resources, and unequal access to institutional support are repeatedly framed as factors shaping how individuals and communities are able to prepare for, respond to, and recover from crises. Preparedness becomes inseparable from questions concerning social protection, inclusion, and long-term societal resilience.

The findings also reveal important tensions within this development, particularly regarding the perceived gaps between CSOs and the state that emerge throughout the analyzed discourse. While organizations frequently frame their role as complementary to the state, the analyzed communication simultaneously suggests that civil society increasingly compensates for structural shortcomings within welfare and preparedness systems. Reports

such as Fattigdomsrapporten 2025, Humanitärt bokslut 2025, and Hemlöshetsrapporten 2026 repeatedly describe growing demand for organizational support, increasing social vulnerability, and welfare systems struggling to meet basic needs (Swedish Red Cross, 2025; Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2025; Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2026).

While organizations consistently frame their work as collaborative and supportive in relation to public institutions, the analyzed communication simultaneously suggests that CSOs increasingly intervene in areas where welfare and preparedness systems appear insufficient or overstretched. Reports discussing poverty, homelessness, and social vulnerability repeatedly describe rising demand for food support, social assistance, and practical aid (Swedish Red Cross, 2025; Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2025; Sveriges Stadsmissioner, 2026). This creates a pressure in which CSOs both reinforce preparedness systems, while also revealing their structural limitations. Although organizations rarely frame this development confrontationally, their communication highlights unmet needs that implicitly question institutional capacity.

This discussion is particularly relevant within the Nordic context, where welfare systems have historically been associated with strong public responsibility and institutional universalism (Trägårdh, 2007). The analyzed material suggests that CSOs increasingly occupy hybrid roles that combine humanitarian support, welfare-related assistance, advocacy, and preparedness functions. This does not necessarily imply that the state is withdrawing entirely from preparedness responsibilities. However, it does suggest that preparedness responsibilities are becoming more distributed and dependent on cooperation between public and non-state actors.

The organizations themselves rarely frame this development in explicitly confrontational terms. Rather than directly criticizing the state, communication often adopts a more indirect form of critique by highlighting unmet needs, structural vulnerabilities, and recurring social problems. In this way, the organizations construct preparedness gaps through narratives about lived experiences rather than through explicit political confrontation.

This dynamic is especially visible in online communication, where selective framing shapes how audiences perceive both problems and organizational roles. Social media communication is inherently selective and strategic, allowing organizations to shape how audiences perceive both societal problems and the organizations themselves. The analyzed posts therefore do not simply reflect operational realities but also construct particular public images of what the organizations are, what roles they fulfill, and why their involvement should be considered necessary or legitimate.

Organizations also frame preparedness in ways that emphasize welfare, inclusion, and long-term social conditions. Rather than presenting preparedness primarily as emergency response or institutional coordination, communication repeatedly connects preparedness to welfare, inclusion, social trust, and structural vulnerability. In doing so, the organizations guide audiences toward understanding preparedness as dependent on broader social conditions and on the continued involvement of civil society actors. At the same time, repeated narratives about unmet needs and ongoing support raise broader questions about how responsibility for preparedness is distributed between public institutions and civil society actors over time.

8.3 - Legitimacy, Trust, and Communication

The findings indicate that legitimacy and trust are central to how CSOs position themselves within contemporary preparedness systems. Because CSOs increasingly engage with issues related to welfare, vulnerability, and public problem-definition, they must continuously establish their authority to speak and act within these domains. Legitimacy is therefore created through demonstrated expertise, long-term societal presence, proximity to affected populations, and moral positioning. Communication becomes a preparedness practice in its own right, shaping how vulnerability and responsibility are publicly understood. By using different narratives to shape public understandings of vulnerability, responsibility, and resilience, CSOs can influence how preparedness is interpreted within society.

Across posts and reports, organizations combine emotional narratives, statistics, and policy critique to shape how preparedness is interpreted. Communication repeatedly combines emotional narratives, statistical information, practical advice, and policy critique within the same communicative space, framing preparedness simultaneously as a humanitarian, political, and social issue. This pattern aligns with Persson's (2018) argument that framing influences which actions are perceived as necessary or legitimate. The analyzed material therefore suggests that online communication functions not only as information sharing, but also as a strategic form of public positioning where organizations actively shape how audiences perceive vulnerability, responsibility, legitimacy, and organizational necessity.

From a social constructionist perspective, these repeated communicative practices contribute to shaping and stabilizing public understandings of vulnerability, preparedness,

and responsibility (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Within the analyzed material, preparedness is repeatedly linked to broader societal concerns such as exclusion, loneliness, mental health, and rights protection. Organizations contribute to normalizing the idea that preparedness is inseparable from social welfare and inclusion by connecting these issues to crisis resilience and societal vulnerability.

Legitimacy plays a crucial role in this process because CSOs must justify their authority to speak on societal issues. Because CSOs increasingly position themselves within preparedness discussions, they must continuously justify their authority to speak on societal issues. The analyzed material demonstrates that legitimacy is constructed through multiple communicative strategies, including references to expertise, long-term societal engagement, humanitarian values, proximity to affected populations, and direct experience of social vulnerability. Legitimacy becomes closely connected to preparedness itself, since organizations must first be perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable in order to influence public understandings of crises and resilience.

8.4 - Preparedness, Welfare, and Future Implications

This understanding of preparedness carries implications for how future preparedness systems are organized. If preparedness increasingly depends on trust, legitimacy, and social inclusion, then strengthening preparedness cannot be reduced solely to strengthening institutional emergency capacities. It may also require addressing structural inequalities, strengthening social cohesion, and improving cooperation between public institutions and CSOs. The material also connects to broader debates about how civil society and the welfare state interact within the Nordic model.

The analyzed material also connects to broader discussions concerning the relationship between civil society and the welfare state within the Nordic context. Previous research has frequently emphasized the strong role of the state within Nordic welfare and preparedness systems (Trägårdh, 2007). However, the analyzed material suggests that CSOs increasingly occupy central positions within preparedness-related governance and support structures. This does not necessarily signal a withdrawal of the state, but rather a shift in how preparedness responsibilities are shared and understood.

9. Conclusion

9.1 - Concluding Remarks

This study examined how civil society organizations (CSOs) construct and communicate their role in crisis preparedness online, and what perceived gaps between their role and the state emerge within this discourse. Through a qualitative netnographic analysis of Facebook posts and organizational reports produced by the Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children Sweden, Stockholms Stadsmission, and Civil Rights Defenders, the study explored how preparedness, vulnerability, and responsibility are framed within contemporary Swedish civil society communication.

The findings show that CSOs construct their preparedness role as rooted in everyday social conditions, welfare support, and interpersonal forms of engagement. Rather than presenting preparedness only as emergency management or response to exceptional events, the analyzed organizations repeatedly connect preparedness to social conditions such as inclusion, trust, access to welfare support, housing security, and protection against poverty and exclusion. Preparedness emerges as an ongoing societal process tied to welfare systems, social vulnerability, and long-term social stability.

Across the analyzed material, four closely connected themes emerged concerning how CSOs frame their role within preparedness systems. Organizations repeatedly presented themselves as complementary and flexible actors capable of maintaining close contact with vulnerable populations through local presence, volunteer networks, and long-term engagement. The material consistently framed CSOs as responding to unmet needs and structural vulnerabilities connected to poverty, exclusion, loneliness, homelessness, and unequal access to welfare support.

The findings also show how organizations shape understandings of responsibility by linking individual hardship to broader institutional and political conditions. Finally, legitimacy emerged as a central aspect of preparedness communication, as organizations continuously claim authority through references to expertise, humanitarian values, long-term societal engagement, and proximity to affected populations.

CSOs broaden public understandings of crisis preparedness by framing it as dependent on welfare access, inclusion, and social trust. The analyzed discourse repeatedly constructs preparedness as deeply connected to welfare systems, social trust, inclusion, and the ability to address structural vulnerabilities before crises intensify. At the same time, the material reveals perceived gaps between civil society and the state, particularly concerning welfare

provision, institutional reach, long-term social support, and the ability to respond to increasing social vulnerability.

9.2 - Contributions and Implications

This study contributes to crisis preparedness research by showing how preparedness is constructed through welfare-related and social vulnerability discourse rather than solely through emergency management. While preparedness research has traditionally focused on institutional coordination, risk management, and emergency response capacities, the analyzed material suggests that preparedness is also closely connected to inequality, exclusion, trust, and access to societal resources.

A central contribution of the study is the argument that preparedness should be understood as a socially embedded process shaped by welfare structures and everyday conditions. This aligns with disaster risk and resilience research emphasizing that poverty, inequality, and exclusion function as underlying drivers of vulnerability during crises (UNDRR, 2024; Stark, Osvalder & Borell, 2024). Within the analyzed communication, these vulnerabilities are repeatedly framed as preparedness-related issues because they shape how individuals and communities are able to cope with disruption, uncertainty, and societal crises.

The study also contributes to discussions of distributed preparedness by showing how CSOs occupy increasingly central roles within these systems. The findings suggest that CSOs increasingly occupy central positions within preparedness systems by providing local knowledge, volunteer mobilization, social trust, and flexible support structures. This reflects broader shifts in which preparedness responsibilities are increasingly shared between state and non-state actors (Haug, Nordensvärd & Wihlborg, 2024).

While organizations frequently frame their work as complementary to public institutions, the analyzed material simultaneously suggests that civil society increasingly compensates for perceived shortcomings in welfare and preparedness systems. Reports describing increasing poverty, social vulnerability, and growing demand for organizational support indicate that CSOs are support preparedness systems, while also responding to structural gaps within them.

This tension between complementing and compensating for the state is one of the study's key implications. Distributed preparedness systems may strengthen resilience by enabling flexibility, local engagement, and rapid mobilization. However, they may also risk

normalizing the transfer of responsibility from public institutions to CSOs and volunteer-based support structures

The findings highlight that communication, framing, and legitimacy are central mechanisms through which CSOs shape public understandings of preparedness. Through Facebook posts, reports, campaigns, and public narratives, organizations actively shape how crises, vulnerabilities, and responsibilities are interpreted within society. The analyzed material therefore suggests that online communication functions mainly as information sharing, but that it also holds as strategic public positioning through which organizations shape perceptions of vulnerability, preparedness, legitimacy, and organizational necessity. It suggests that preparedness within contemporary Swedish society is increasingly understood as social, distributed, and welfare-dependent. CSOs are not constructed merely as emergency responders, but as actors involved in maintaining social stability, trust, inclusion, and societal resilience over time.

9.3 - Reflexive Reflections

Throughout this study, my own positionality influenced both the research process and the interpretations I developed. As someone with prior involvement in the Swedish Red Cross and experience within civil society and crisis preparedness contexts, I entered the project with an existing understanding of how organizations communicate about vulnerability, preparedness, and support. This familiarity helped me identify patterns, organizational language, and recurring preparedness narratives that may otherwise have been more difficult to notice.

This proximity required ongoing reflexive attention to how my background shaped interpretation. One of the challenges throughout the research process was remaining attentive to how my own experiences and assumptions shaped the analysis. Because I already viewed CSOs as important actors within preparedness work, I had to remain aware of the risk of approaching the material too sympathetically or interpreting organizational communication through assumptions I already brought into the project.

This was particularly important during coding and thematic analysis, where personal familiarity risked influencing interpretation. Many of the organizations communicate in emotionally engaging and morally persuasive ways, particularly when discussing poverty, loneliness, exclusion, or children's living conditions. As someone already familiar with humanitarian and civil society work, I sometimes found it difficult to separate my own

emotional responses from the analytical process itself. This required me to continuously return to the material, grounding interpretations in recurring patterns across posts, reports, and theoretical perspectives rather than relying solely on personal impressions.

Early in the project, I approached preparedness primarily through a more traditional crisis preparedness perspective connected to emergency response, coordination, and crisis management structures. Initially, I expected the organizations' communication to focus more heavily on emergency preparedness campaigns, crisis response capacities, volunteer mobilization during disasters, or practical preparedness information.

However, as I analyzed the material, it became increasingly clear that the organizations themselves framed preparedness in much broader ways. What surprised me most throughout the study was how strongly preparedness became connected to welfare support, social vulnerability, and structural inequality within the communication. The analyzed discourse repeatedly returned to issues such as poverty, exclusion, loneliness, housing insecurity, mental health, and children's living conditions. Over time, I began to understand that the organizations were not only communicating about crises, but were actively constructing preparedness as dependent on social stability, trust, inclusion, and welfare systems.

This realization shifted the direction of the thesis toward understanding preparedness as intertwined with welfare and social vulnerability. Rather than treating welfare-related communication as separate from preparedness, I increasingly understood these issues as central to how preparedness itself was being framed. This also changed how I understood preparedness theoretically. I gradually came to understand preparedness less as emergency response alone and more as connected to welfare, trust, and social support.

The project prompted a more critical reflection on how civil society and the state share and negotiate preparedness responsibilities. Throughout the analysis, I repeatedly encountered a tension between organizations presenting themselves as complementary actors while simultaneously describing growing societal needs and increasing dependence on organizational support. While the organizations rarely framed this tension in explicitly confrontational terms, the material nevertheless raised important questions concerning responsibility, sustainability, and the long-term consequences of relying on civil society to compensate for structural vulnerabilities.

This tension became particularly visible in posts and reports describing increasing demand for food assistance, support for children and families, homelessness-related support, and psychosocial aid. While the organizations frequently emphasized collaboration with municipalities and public institutions, the material simultaneously suggested that many forms

of support had become normalized responsibilities for CSOs. This made me increasingly aware of how blurred the boundaries between complementing and compensating for the state can become within preparedness systems.

Conducting this study reinforced how central communication is to shaping public understandings of preparedness. Through repeated narratives, campaigns, and public communication, organizations shape how vulnerability and preparedness are understood within society. This made me increasingly aware that preparedness is shaped through institutions and policy, as well as through discourse, framing, and public meaning making.

Finally, the project reshaped my own understanding of preparedness. Before beginning the study, I largely associated preparedness with crisis response capacities and organizational readiness. By the end of the project, preparedness had instead come to represent something much broader: the ability of societies to maintain trust, inclusion, social protection, and support structures before crises escalate. This broader understanding became one of the most important insights I take away from the research process itself.

9.4 - Future Research

This study points to several directions for future research. One particularly important area concerns the relationship between crisis preparedness and welfare support. Comparative research could contribute to broader understanding of how different institutional arrangements shape the relationship between civil society, welfare, and preparedness. By examining how crisis preparedness is communicated and constructed across different national contexts and welfare systems, it can further explore how preparedness is connected to poverty, exclusion, housing insecurity, mental health, and access to welfare systems. Future research could examine how welfare structures shape societal resilience and how inequalities influence preparedness across different groups.

Future studies could also examine how state actors themselves communicate preparedness in relation to welfare and social vulnerability. Comparing civil society discourse with governmental preparedness communication could provide more profound understanding of how preparedness responsibilities are negotiated and distributed between different actors within Swedish governance systems. Further research would also benefit from looking at how preparedness communication differs across crises, organizational contexts, and digital platforms. Comparing communication surrounding events such as pandemics, wildfires, war-related displacement, or economic crises could provide deeper insight into how preparedness

narratives shift depending on the type of crisis being addressed. Similarly, comparative analyses of online and offline communication could help clarify how strategic framing differs between online public communication and other organizational contexts.

Another relevant direction concerns the experiences of vulnerable populations themselves. Since this study focused on organizational communication and public discourse, future qualitative research involving interviews or ethnographic methods could contribute valuable perspectives concerning how preparedness, trust, and institutional support are experienced by different social groups in practice.

This study focused on organizational communication and public discourse, meaning that it did not examine how affected individuals interpret or experience preparedness systems in practice. Future qualitative studies involving interviews or ethnographic methods could therefore contribute valuable perspectives concerning how preparedness, trust, and institutional support are experienced by different social groups.

Further research could compare preparedness communication across platforms to understand how framing strategies differ between digital contexts. While the research focused primarily on Facebook communication and organizational reports, other digital platforms may produce different forms of engagement, framing, and interaction. Comparative studies involving other countries or preparedness systems could also provide valuable insight into how welfare models and governance structures shape preparedness discourse.

The findings also offer potential contributions to development studies, particularly regarding resilience, social justice, and structural vulnerability. Because the analyzed organizations repeatedly connected preparedness to inequality, exclusion, welfare access, and social vulnerability, future research could further explore preparedness through broader development studies perspectives concerning resilience, social justice, and structural vulnerability.

Throughout this project, preparedness repeatedly emerged as a question of social justice, inclusion, and access to societal resources, more than emergency management. Understanding preparedness in this broader sense may become increasingly important in societies facing growing inequality, economic instability, and complex forms of social vulnerability.

9.5 - Final Reflections

Over time, the project became not only a study of CSO communication but also an examination of how preparedness is publicly understood in Sweden. The analyzed material repeatedly connected preparedness to welfare systems, social trust, inclusion, and the ability to support vulnerable populations before crises intensify. Rather than appearing solely as emergency response or institutional coordination, preparedness emerged as deeply connected to broader social conditions and long-term societal resilience.

Through their communication, CSOs actively shape public understandings of vulnerability, responsibility, and resilience. They do not merely respond to crises but also participate in shaping the societal meanings attached to vulnerability, responsibility, and resilience. This makes civil society communication an important site for understanding how preparedness is negotiated and publicly understood within contemporary Sweden.

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