Faith-based Organizations and Welfare State Retrenchment in Sweden: Substitute or Complement?

Charlotte Fridolfsson and Ingemar Elander

Linköping University Post Print

N.B.: When citing this work, cite the original article.

Original Publication:

Charlotte Fridolfsson and Ingemar Elander, Faith-based Organizations and Welfare State Retrenchment in Sweden: Substitute or Complement?, 2012, Politics and Religion, (5), 3, 634-654.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1755048312000338>

Copyright: Cambridge University Press (CUP)

<http://www.cambridge.org/uk/>

Postprint available at: Linköping University Electronic Press

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:liu:diva-89816>

Faith-based Organizations and Welfare State Retrenchment in Sweden: Substitute or Complement?

Charlotte Fridolfsson

Linköping University

Ingemar Elander

Örebro University

Abstract: Local governments in Europe are facing difficulties in meeting citizens' demands for welfare provision. This opens new opportunities for profit as well as non-profit providers of social welfare. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are one type of non-governmental organizations addressed by governments to complement or replace parts of public welfare provision. This article gives some examples of FBOs in action as providers of welfare in a European context, with a particular focus on Sweden. Following the introduction, the second part locates the phenomenon of FBOs within the scholarly debate about secularism/post-secularism as related to multi-level governance. The third part gives an overview of potential roles of FBOs in welfare provision combating poverty and social exclusion, illustrated by a few examples from European contexts. Focus in the fourth part is upon the role of FBO engagement in Sweden as developing after World War II. It is concluded that no system is all encompassing in catering to those who suffer from poverty and social exclusion. There will always be a need for the competence and avant-garde role potentially provided by FBOs. However, due to historical circumstances FBOs in Sweden have been, and still are, complementary rather than an outright alternative to public welfare provision.

An earlier version of this article was presented at the seminar Governance, Organization and Resistance, Nordic Institute for Housing and Urban Research, Gävle, Sweden, September 23–24, 2010. Thanks to Nils Hertting and other participants for their constructive comments.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to: Ingemar Elander, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Örebro University, Fakultetsgatan 1, SE- 701 82 Örebro, Sweden. E-mail: ingemar.elander@oru.se; or to Charlotte Fridolfsson, Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning, Linköping University, Campus Valla, SE- 581 83 Linköping, Sweden. E-mail: charlotte.fridolfsson@liu.se

INTRODUCTION¹

For a decade or so, many European countries face severe financial problems coupled with restructuring of their welfare systems and devolving of responsibilities to the market, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and/or the family (Kokx and Van Kempen 2010, 39–42; Schubert et al. 2009a, 6–7; 2009b). In this process of welfare state restructuring or “retrenchment,” other welfare providers than the state are possible, i.e., for-profit as well as non-profit organizations, including a number of faith-based organizations (FBOs). In addition, international migration has led to social change and new needs within the welfare state (Rittersberger-Tilic et al. 2008; Günes-Ayata 2008; Kinnvall and Larking 2011). As these needs cannot always be fulfilled within the traditional realm of state welfare provision, this, in turn, has brought religion back from the private to the public sphere.

Although there is a great variety of typologies of FBOs (Cnaan 2006; Jeavons 2004; Monsma 2004), for the purpose of this article, we contend with considering FBOs as any organization that refers directly or indirectly to religion or religious values, and functions as providers of basic, emergency social services, and as instigators of political action, mobilization and contestation (Dierckx, Vranken, and Kerstens 2009, 11). In a European context, FBOs include Christian churches, Islamic mosques, and Jewish synagogues as well as corresponding congregations and linked associations — as long as these institutions also provide social services to people in need, besides proselytizing. In this article differences in religious belief are not emphasized, but instead how and to what extent FBOs act as welfare providers.

Swedish politics has not been exempted from the strains of global financial crisis neither from neo-liberal currents of thought. This opens an arena for more intense communication and potential cooperation between local governments and FBOs. Thus, if welfare was previously provided exclusively by the state and by local governments, it is now increasingly becoming a matter of mixed modes of governing, where competition among private for-profit companies and FBOs for public tenders will decide the final mode of care within a certain sector (Granberg 2008).

The overall aim of this article is to investigate the role of FBOs’ responsibilities as providers and protectors of social welfare in a broad sense, in times of *financial* crises. The article frames the topic of FBOs and welfare in a European context, but will focus on the role of FBOs in Sweden with regard to service delivery, capacity building, and political activism. Why do FBOs engage in the provision of social welfare, in capacity building, and in political activism? How do FBOs express their engagement in

these activities? Are FBOs in a process of taking over social responsibilities from a withdrawing welfare state, or do they just continue providing complementary support at the margin? Empirical studies in the context of the FACIT project, and related literature on the FBO phenomenon provide the basis of this research.²

REVITALISING FBOS IN TIMES OF WELFARE STATE RETRENCHMENT AND SECULARISM

Despite differences between the states, a recent comparative analysis of 27 European Union (EU) states found three common denominators: (1) although in varying degrees, the coverage of social risks is a matter of public interest; (2) the state is not solely responsible for the well-being of its citizens, but shares this duty with private and semi-private institutions, and individuals; (3) “all the main, traditional social risks are covered — the loss of income due to age, illness, disability and unemployment but also due to giving birth to a child.” Although the shared responsibilities are far from comprehensive, they are, “from a qualitative point of view (...) considerable” (Bazant and Schubert 2009, 513–514). However, in the process of welfare state restructuring and retrenchment, various providers of welfare provision other than the state are possible, e.g., a number of NGOs, and among these a number of FBOs.

The multi-cultural mixture associated with globalization and migration creates new religious landscapes (Molendijk, Beaumont, and Jedan 2010; Pickel and Müller 2009; Taylor 2007; Kosmin and Keyser 2007). Post-war value shifts in belief systems, commonly conceptualized as modernization and secularization, have been followed by a post-secular trend, making people rediscover religion, although in a more pluralist and less institutional form — as “patchwork religion” — i.e., religion becoming more “invisible,” but still remaining “a steady part of people’s lives” (Pickel and Müller 2009, 8). However, religion is not just a matter of evangelization, saving people’s souls, or individual and invisible belief. It also includes meeting people’s needs in a fundamental social sense, i.e., providing poor people with medical aid, food and shelter, or defending legal rights in the EU framework for urban policy “the long-term integration of economic, social and environmental policies at the local level should counter social exclusion and enhance urban livability and economic prosperity” (Kokx and Van Kempen 2010). At first sight, the shift downward of responsibilities to the local level of government may look

like a process in favor of a more decentralist and participatory style of politics. But this process is more complicated than that as it is also commonly accompanied by central state governed, neo-liberal practices, including decreasing central government grants, and severe fiscal stress on the local government budgets, thus making local governments dependent on cooperation with external partners such as private companies and voluntary organizations (Kokx and Van Kempen 2010; Andersen 2008; Granberg 2008; Elander and Montin 1990). Outright privatization is also increasingly applied in Europe, although not focused upon in this article (Elander and Fridolfsson 2011, 8–10; Brink et al. 2009; Werne 2010).

Leaving the causes of the downward policy shifts aside, their social consequences create space for FBOs and other NGOs to mobilize their resources and play a greater role than before as providers, or protectors, of social welfare. In some countries there have even been settled national agreements between the government and “organized civil society” about a kind of division of labor in the field of social welfare provision (ECAS 2010). Irrespective of such agreements FBOs and other NGOs have mobilized their members and professional workers to complement social service welfare provision in terms of, for example, shelter for homeless people or helping drug addicts to get rid of their drug dependency.

What are the potential roles in welfare provision that may be performed by FBOs? With a very broad categorization, three forms of FBO activities can be identified, i.e., *service delivery*, including relational as well as infra-structural service provision; *capacity building*, including resourcing and networking; and *political activism*, including advocacy and representation of marginalized groups, consultation, lobbying, and protest (Cloke, Williams, and Thomas 2009, 286). Although most of the activities performed by FBOs are officially sanctioned, or at least not illegal, FBOs at times also cross the line to illegal action, e.g., by helping undocumented people and refugees threatened with expulsion, or supporting medical staff providing health care to these groups of people.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT OF FBOS

FBOs were predecessors of the welfare state in many European countries. Institutions and programs initiated by religious actors were later incorporated or simply copied by the public authorities during the course of the last half of the 20th century (Elander and Fridolfsson 2011; Cloke, Williams,

and Thomas 2009; Walliser and Bartolomé 2009). The Nordic countries aside, welfare services in the rest of Europe are to a larger extent provided by family, for-profit organizations, FBOs, and other NGOs. Turkey, represents the other extreme where community based institutions such as family or the neighborhood provide the major social security. Few women work outside the home and instead have responsibility for children and elderly. Turkey became a secular republic in 1923, and religious organizations working with social issues are relatively rare, and lack all formal ties to the state (Sen, Aksular, and Samur 2009).

Thus, in many European countries, there is a mix of welfare producers where a large part of the providers of both publicly financed, but also voluntary services, have a religious profile. The Catholic Church was powerful also during the fascist rule in Spain, where no other religion was allowed until 1968. The Church also had a monopoly on education and welfare service production. Catholic congregations have traditionally practiced social work in the local neighborhoods, but national coordination of activities and policy work are now also carried out by organizations such as Caritas and CONFER. Although the Catholic inheritance still gives the religion a privileged position in Spain, now also protestant and Muslim organizations in the country work with issues pertaining to poverty and social exclusion, but from a rather marginal position (Walliser and Bartolomé 2009).

In Germany where Caritas once started more than 110 years ago, the FBOs survived both fascism and communism. Caritas is today Germany's largest employer and produces welfare services on a large scale in hospitals, Kindergartens, and other social institutions (Schartau 2010). Another large welfare producer in Germany is the German Evangelical Church (Diakonisches Werk der EKD), i.e., the protestant equivalence to the Catholic Caritas. There is also a Jewish organization delivering the same kind of non-statutory welfare services that are an integrated part of the welfare system in Germany.³ Despite the fact that several million people with a Muslim background reside in Germany, there are no Muslim FBOs officially recognized as a vital part of the welfare state. Nevertheless, there are 2,500 mosques carrying out social work more informally alongside their religious services (Friedrichs and Kloeckner 2009).

In the United Kingdom, FBOs play an essential role as welfare producers. There is a long tradition of faith-based social work, and Salvation Army is a giant on the public procurement market in the United Kingdom. Since the late 1970s, neo-conservative and neo-liberal politics have generated a space for market driven, non-profit, and other alternatives

to the state as producers of welfare services, something that has increased the base for FBOs in the United Kingdom (Cloke, Williams, and Thomas 2009). After these glimpses of FBO presence in some European countries we will now turn to our main focus of analysis, FBOs in Sweden and their role in the provision of social welfare.

FBO activities in Sweden run from highly institutionalized to political action taken in opposition to policy makers or public authorities. Most of the activities performed by FBOs are carried out within the statutory limits. Nevertheless, FBOs sometimes engage in illegal action, e.g., by helping undocumented people and refugees, or supporting doctors providing health care to these groups. Activities however also run along another dimension, from *direct* measures providing instant relief as in soup kitchens or overnight shelters, to *indirect* measures of targeting poverty and social exclusion by the FBOs. They range from family counseling sessions, and choir singing to Swedish language training workshops. These are sometimes pronounced preventive measures, directed at young people at risk or people with poor language skills, but more often they provide friendship and what the FBOs themselves often refer to as social capital. A third dimension stretches from activities with a highly religious content, as in offering religious ceremonies, to rather secular procedures governed by legal frameworks for public schools or health care. We here classify FBO activities in accordance with the categories in Table 1, where also examples of the work they carry out against poverty and social exclusion are listed in each category.

The three types of FBO activity listed in Table 1 will be developed further in the following sections. The material is largely based on research pursued in the context of the European Commission 7th Framework Programme FACIT (cf. Note 1), including a survey that was executed as structured face-to-face interviews with local and national FBOs.⁴ All interviewees had leading positions within their respective organization. We only included FBOs, which have an established role as welfare producers in terms of service delivery, capacity building or political activism. They are all located in Sweden's three major cities: Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. Secondary literature was used as a resource when appropriate. Examples are generated from three different religious families, the Lutheran Church of Sweden (i.e., the former State Church), the free churches, and the Muslim congregations (Mosques and basement mosques) and associations. The object is not to find differences between the FBOs in terms of their characteristics, but to identify the role of FBOs within the Swedish welfare state.⁵

Table 1. Swedish FBOs activities in welfare provision — Examples of functions by category

Service delivery	Capacity building	Political activism
Free schools	Choir singing	Networks hiding refugees
Tendering	Sports activities	Health care provision to undocumented
Diaconal work	Language courses	Ecumenical cooperation on policy changes
Homeless shelters	Computer courses	Consultative body

FBOS IN A SWEDISH CONTEXT

Since the 16th century, the history of Swedish FBOs has been the history of the Church of Sweden and its close relation to the state, although from the middle of the 19th century complemented by a large family of Christian free churches. The Church of Sweden originally had a demarcated mission to provide public welfare within the spiritual sphere and was integrated into the Swedish welfare system as a National Church all through the 20th century. On January 1, 2000, Church of Sweden separated with the state and received the same status as other faith-communities.⁶ It nevertheless still enjoys an incomparable position as an FBO in the Swedish society, not least by a notable physical presence with the 3,500 churches throughout the country.⁷

The Christian FBOs display a multi-faceted structure, including charity foundations, second hand shops, real estate companies, and other forms of organization. Aside from Church of Sweden with 7.6 million members,⁸ the Christian Churches also include the Free Church family (Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, etc. with about 375,000 members and attendants), the Roman Catholic Church (90,000 members and attendants), and the Orthodox Church Family (100,000 members and attendants).⁹ In addition, the United Islamic Congregations in Sweden organizes 54 local FBOs with about 110,000 members and attendants, whereas the Jewish congregations count about 9,000 members and attendants (SST 2010).¹⁰

Sweden was far into the 20th century considered culturally, ethnically, and religiously homogeneous,¹¹ but the past few decades’ globalization and immigration have transformed Sweden to a pluralist multiethnic society with implications in the range of faiths practiced in the country (Elander and Fridolfsson 2011). After World War II, refugees and other labor immigrants from Greece, the Baltic countries, Turkey, and former

Yugoslavia gave substantial input to the workforce in a flourishing Swedish industry and expanding public welfare apparatus. Since the 1990s, Sweden has received more asylum seekers than any other European country in relation to the size of its population (Migrationsverket 2010).¹² As argued by Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011, 38–39) the official Swedish policy toward immigrants says they are “free to maintain and develop their unique culture and religions, while on the other hand it relies on an implicit assumption that this should be done exclusively on Sweden’s secular terms,” i.e., a kind of “built-in double standard” with regard to freedom of religious choice.

As in other European countries, Church membership and attendance in Sweden is declining. When measuring the importance of religion in people’s lives, Sweden commonly ranks one of the least religious countries in the world (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 90; Gallup 2009). Nevertheless mixtures of secular and post-secular tendencies are found in most real-world contexts. An obvious example is the lingering Lutheran tradition manifested by public holidays such as Easter or Christmas and frequently also adhered to when celebrating family events (birth, marriage, burial). Furthermore, a growing interest in solidarity work, spiritual matters informally, and more broadly, and an influx of visible religious clothing, are also pointing towards a more complex picture (Elander and Fridolfsson 2011).

FBOS AS AN ALLY TO THE WELFARE STATE

Sweden differs from most other European countries with regard to the role of FBOs as producers of welfare. Thus, from the 1930s and onward the state (including local governments) took over services previously organized by third sector charities and popular movements in the social welfare domain, one example being the demands on public child care and care for elderly as advocated by the women’s movement (Bergqvist 1999). However, as articulated by Olsson et al. (2009, 164), the popular movements and related charities still kept somewhat of their “avant-garde” role for advocacy and innovation.

The extensive welfare functions provided by local government are largely a reflection of social-democratic and social-liberal ambitions with regard to health, education, pre-school child care, elderly care and other, broadly defined social matters. However, “strong local government capacities were already a hallmark of the Nordic democracies at the

emergence of the welfare state began to emerge. These capacities appear to have been a historical prerequisite for the emergence of the Social Democratic welfare state” (Sellers and Lidström 2007, 623). Thus, Sweden well illustrates the thesis that the development of the welfare state since 1945, “has tended to mark a process of decentralization rather than centralization of the modern democratic state” (Sharpe 1988, 369). This is an important observation to keep in mind when studying local government-FBO relations as the two categories are more or less intertwined when it comes to the formulation and implementation of social activities targeted at poor and otherwise vulnerable people.

Roughly speaking, after World War II the third sector movements willingly handed over much of their social responsibilities to the state, notably in its local form, keeping some commitments for special target groups such as drug addicts and homeless people, although commonly in some sort of co-arrangement together with local governments. In other words, in Swedish society, there is a historical, informal accord between the state, local governments, and civil society. In line with this accord, FBOs take action as providers of non-material welfare, as non-partisan advocates, and opinion-builders, as mediators representing people in relation to public authorities, and as deliverers of services that no-one else provides, i.e., carrying out tendered programs for reimbursement. Thus, on the whole, Swedish FBOs have a widespread trust in the public welfare system (cf. Bäckström and Davie 2009).

FBOS BETWEEN STATE AND MARKET

Given today’s vast responsibilities by local governments in Sweden FBO activities are typically carried out in fields where the public sector has “given up,” “failed” or not even acknowledged new needs and demands. The actions may be legal, and publicly financed such as the running of homeless shelters, but they may also be illegal as in the case of helping hidden refugees, or just incompatible with government responsibilities, e.g., helping and representing people that for one reason or another have experienced problems in their relations to the public authorities. Such action may even include appealing against public authority decisions, something the municipalities for obvious reasons are unable to do.

FBOs increasingly voice concerns about poverty and social exclusion to the media and the public — usually opposing local government welfare cut-downs. The Church of Sweden, for example, expresses its social

mission with the following words: “The church should be a voice for the vulnerable and the weak — in Sweden and abroad” (Church of Sweden 2010). As stated by an official responsible for diaconal concerns at the Central Church Office, the Church is “a complement to the public sector, an alternative and a critical voice,” in other words diaconal work is all about standing on the side of the unfortunate, giving them a voice to target responsible actors, e.g., local government officials. In line with this mission and without siding with any particular political party, the Church should be critical towards deteriorating public health and well-being (Hjalmarsson 2009). Strengthening the religious identity is hence also indirectly an instrument of improving the entire community, goes the reasoning.

FBOs are thus concerned in cases when local government does not take full responsibility, for example, in helping undocumented people in need of shelter and health care. Their largely non-party political position grants them possibilities to raise important questions in the media without compromising themselves. As mediators they can represent people that for one reason or another have problems in their relations to the authorities, thus guiding them through the maze of bureaucracy, i.e., as the ones needing public services the most may have greater difficulties to navigate in the system due to language or other barriers. Again, it is important to mention the widespread support for the universalistic Swedish welfare systems among FBOs, as they believe that public authorities have a general responsibility for social welfare. Many of our informants describe cut-downs in public welfare as being a problem, which also implicates increased burdens on the FBOs.

Today social secretaries working for the city are sometimes forced to tell people in need to turn to the church instead, because there is not enough money in the municipal budget to guarantee the basic rights anymore (Kyhström 2009).

Thus, the money of the FBOs should not be spent on things that ought to be financed by taxes. Similarly, another interviewee states:

Beneficiaries have confidence in the mosque and therefore turn to the mosque for support. This confidence is good, but we would also like the public welfare institutions to adapt to needs among new groups of citizens in order to safeguard also their constitutional rights (Salah 2009).

More often Swedish FBOs push the government to take responsibility for citizen rights, than argue themselves wanting to be the providers of

welfare services. "The state should provide welfare services such as schools, care for elderly, social workers and health care" (Andersson 2010),¹³ an informant typically states. Nevertheless, most FBOs with public contracts also argue a qualitative difference and an added value of their own targeted activities, in relation to other publicly financed service providers:

We believe that we can provide better welfare services than the state in certain areas, for example when it comes to addiction. We think that the spiritual is yet another factor to help people to a new life. The faith in Jesus Christ is a power that can help together with health care of course (Andersson 2010).

There is an added value, they (tax payers/beneficiaries/municipality) get something a little extra; we can hire more staff at the elderly care facilities for the same money. And this then means better nursing care here, as we are not commercial and do not need to give the chief executive offices all their millions (Enarsson 2009).

Many activities and programs run by the FBOs are financed by the municipality, such as housing for disabled people, day or night nurseries, and rehab clinics. Each student at the schools run by the Social Mission, the Stockholm City Mission, or the schools with a Muslim profile, renders a compensatory transfer-payment, a voucher, from the municipality. The local government also reimburses the cost for each overnight stay at the homeless shelters run by the FBOs. Public procurement has increased since the early 1990s, especially with the EU Directive 2004/18/EC, which opened a larger geographic territory for competition. As a consequence of this, competition has become more aggressive and new rules are being incorporated into Swedish law. One result of the tough competition in the public procurement market is that companies may be forced into potentially unsustainable under-bidding in order to win contracts (Liljeblad 2005).

Open tendering is not always greeted as something positive, as nearly every interviewed FBO with government contracts, spontaneously and without direct questions, expressed a fear of competition from for-profit companies. One informant tells us:

The danger is, since Sweden joined the EU, how large multinational corporations now are entering the Swedish market. First dumping the market, ridding of all the competition in the area, and then after a while they are dominating the market completely. They can have a price-tag of zero

SEK for the entire elderly care in a municipality, no NGO and FBO can compete with that (Wallin 2009).

Thus, FBOs seem to be suspicious that public authorities often use the tendering opportunity by favoring strictly financial calculations rather than looking for quality in service provision:

Of course they (for-profit organizations) also want to deliver quality. What makes me feel a bit uneasy, though, is that the private corporations see our competitive edge, and they implement it and do not need to bother whether it is in line with their ethics and policies or not (Markovits 2009).¹⁴

A potentially important change involving FBOs' work in the social arena in Sweden is an agreement between the Swedish Government, national idea-based organizations in the social sphere, and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. The Agreement (*Överenskommelsen*), as it is officially labeled, originated as an initiative taken by the coalition government¹⁵ in the fall of 2007, but has also gained support by the opposition parties (the Social Democratic Party, the Left Party, and the Green Party) in the Riksdag. From the government's point of view the rationale behind the agreement is to recognize, make visible and reinforce the indispensable role of the idea-based organizations in Swedish society. The fundamental values are autonomy and independence of the organizations in their role of articulating interests both with regard to the public sector and the business sector (Agreement 2008). Under the supervision of a Government representative a one-year dialogue with the idea-based organizations in the social sphere took place in different parts of the country, leading to the formulations in the final agreement. Thirteen out of the 44 idea-based organizations that had signed the Agreement by January 18, 2009, are faith-based (*Överenskommelsen* 2009). Many more have been part of the dialogue meetings leading up to the Agreement. According to the basic principles of the Agreement democracy and welfare should be developed, state and local government should be recurrently sensitive to the experience of civil society organizations, and the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities should participate in all phases of the Agreement's work, thus confirming the strong historical ties between the central state, the municipalities, and civil society. The national deliberative process will continue at the local level following the pattern of the initial dialogue process. Several agreements at the municipal level are hence underway.

Although so far the Agreement is mainly a statement of principle, its implications may be far-reaching depending on the outcomes of the local dialogues.

In one city, Örebro with 120,000 inhabitants, the local government in 2007 launched an interreligious advisory board comprising representatives from the local branches of Church of Sweden, the free churches, different Islamic groups, the Syrian Orthodox Church, and people representing the municipality. Among the latter was the Chairman of City Council, a Christian Democrat, who also became the chairman of the board. The stated aims of the board are to increase citizens' knowledge about different cultures and religions, stimulate interreligious/intercultural dialogue, support civil society in developing complementary social services, and support civil society work for creating an "integrated Örebro" (Kommun 2009).¹⁶ However, except for one of the municipal representatives the interreligious board is totally male dominated, something that was critically noticed by some women who decided to initiate a parallel women's intercultural network. The network, that was established within the United Nations UNIFEM framework and has some financial support from the central government, promptly started 10 working groups around specific topics such as women's health, violence against women in family, and safety in the street. Notably, the women's network is explicitly intercultural and not interreligious (ETC 2010).

The Agreement between the Swedish government, the municipalities and civil society, and the adjacent Government Bill (2009/2010) signify a rhetorical re-shift of welfare provision in the direction of civil society, although on part of the non-socialist governing coalition, the move toward privatization has been much more substantial than the devolution of social responsibilities to FBOs and other NGOs so far.¹⁷ However, this is not to deny the current and potential importance of FBOs as providers of social welfare. The Church of Sweden, through its diaconal work, is still an important provider of social services both in specific areas such as hospitals, prisons, and regiments as in everyday social matters more generally. FBOs like the City Missions as well as the Salvation Army and other Free Churches in Sweden, offer shelter to homeless people, help drug addicts, and offer a number of other social services. For the many immigrants having entered Swedish society, especially since the beginning of the 1990s, the big mosque in Central Stockholm and a growing number of mosques and cellar mosques in many cities offer social services in a broad sense. In the case of immigrants as well as asylum seekers and undocumented people nation-wide engagement from

religious and non-religious grassroots may bring these issues on the top of the policy agenda and become a strong counter voice to xenophobic and racist tendencies fostered by groups like the Sweden Democrats.

FBOS OUTSIDE STATE AND MARKET

Hiding refugees by organizing country wide networks, organizing study circles for various immigrant groups, language and civic courses at colleges for adult education (folkhögskolor) and home work support for immigrant children are only a few of the activities undertaken by local branches of FBOs and ecumenical networks. One interesting process of building up interreligious and secular support for undocumented and hidden asylum seekers in Sweden is the Easter Call (Påskuppropet).¹⁸ Around Easter time in 2005 the Christian Council of Sweden (Sveriges Kristna Råd), an ecumenical forum of churches in Sweden, came together in a joint protest against tougher policies making it more difficult for refugees to get residence permit. "The Easter Call" was using the following watch-words:

WE MOURN that the rights of the child is not given priority in decisions made about resident permits in our country.

WE WELCOME a court procedure that grants asylum seekers legal security.

WE URGE the Swedish Government to grant amnesty to all previously denied asylum.

WE DEMAND that the right to asylum is restored and broadens in a way worthy a humane society founded on the rule of law.

In total, 157,000 people heard the call and signed the petition that was later turned over to the Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy. The result from this was that 20,000 asylum seekers were granted residence permit in a second trial (*Livskraft* 2006).

Although the Easter Call was organizationally initiated by the ecumenical Christian Council of Sweden, it did not only gain support from most of the Christian congregations, but also from the Islamic Council of Sweden (Sveriges Muslimska Råd), and more than 60 non-religious NGOs and party organizations, e.g., the Green Party, the Young Left, the Centre Party Women, the Male Network, Reporters without Borders, the Borås Students, the Iran Music and Cultural Association, the National Association of Somalian People, etc. Notably, several organizations that

do not normally join manifestations like this one actively supported the Easter Call. For example, the coordinator of the 13 orthodox churches in the Christian Council of Sweden says that “the support was never questioned. The orthodox churches live close to the asylum seekers and the statement was self-evident.” The Islamic Council of Sweden supported the Call, although renaming it “the Refugee Call” (Qviström 2005, 208–209).¹⁹

However, what may in retrospect look like a top-down initiative by the Swedish Church and its Arch Bishop Karl Gunnar Hammar had a pre-history of local engagement and strong criticism of the Swedish Church for not acting on behalf of the asylum seekers. Professionals and volunteers in many parishes by their own initiative began hiding refugees, arguing “I simply had to” or “It had to be done.”²⁰ One priest in a parish in West Sweden says:

To me it is about preserving my freedom, my conscience, and my belief. One must be able to act and make such choices that one gets adversaries and ends up in minority. I don't see any difference between hiding Kosovo Albanians today or hiding Jews during World War II ... People have always done like this. Just as they have always loved, given birth to children, and died, they have hidden others if necessary. Josef and Maria were offered a place in the stable. And you can ask people in Jämtland and Värmland what they did during World War II (Qviström 2005, 100).²¹

Notably, most of the refugee hidiers said they did not see themselves as making politics, but merely did what they had to, as believers. Nevertheless, their engagement and the Easter Call as such, became a hot political issue, or, as formulated by one representative of the Swedish Christian Council: “We were timely on an issue when moral and political aspects converge, were on top of the agenda and deeply touched the soul of the people” (Qviström 2005, 233).²²

CONCLUSION: FBOS AND THE PROVISION OF WELFARE IN FUTURE SWEDEN

We will now return to and briefly answer the questions posed in the beginning of the article. First, why are religious organizations of interest in the context of welfare states under pressure? Our answer is that governments at the central and local levels turn to FBOs and other NGOs for complementary support when financial and economic problems pile up and put pressure on the public welfare provision commonly offered to the citizens. Thanks to their long diaconal tradition of helping people in need many

FBOs have a lot of motivation, competence and experience to offer, and in the case of asylum seekers and undocumented people there is very little, if any, support these people can get from governments. On the contrary, there are plenty of examples where FBOs, or individual members of FBOs, have to circumvent the legal system, hiding asylum seekers, and undocumented people in great need.

Second, the roles of FBOs include service delivery (relational as well as infrastructural service provision); capacity building (resourcing, networking, and faith-sector advocacy); and political activism (representing marginalized groups, consultation, lobbying, protest etc). Most of the activities performed by FBOs do not conflict with the interest of public authorities. However, FBOs do sometimes take illegal action, e.g., by helping undocumented people and refugees, or supporting doctors giving health care to these people.

Third, despite a growing need for private, non-profit engagement in welfare provision and non-public activities to counter social exclusion the development in Sweden is far from one where FBOs (and other NGOs) are in a process of taking over large parts of social responsibilities from a retiring welfare state. FBOs seem to have a general trust in public welfare provision, and expect central and local governments to take responsibility for poor families, vulnerable children, and elderly with bad health, drug addicts, homeless, and other people in great need. Swedish FBOs are content offering complementary care at the margin when public provision of welfare wavers.

Finally, Swedish FBOs have self-interest in engaging in the provision and protection of social welfare, but also see a risk that professionalization of their own organizations may dilute the motivations of their voluntary work, i.e. potentially weakening the religious core of engagement. On one hand they feel a pressure to develop business-like management structures in their organizations, on the other they have a fear that this might lead to betraying their basic value commitments for helping people in need. Two citations from our interviews with people from the Social Mission and the City Mission in Stockholm well illustrate these worries:

There is quite a lot administration surrounding this (public procurement), both the bidding and accounting, and one has to be scrupulous, since it involves a good deal of money (Redlund 2009).

The private companies are way ahead of us, with submitting tenders, calculating the price and think efficiency. We are only starting to learn how to

use our value-system to present a competitive alternative and to manage public sector outsourcing where we do not sell out our soul (Markovits 2009).

All in all, although the four-party, liberal-conservative coalition government in Sweden is very much in favor of, and initiates for-profit as well as non-profit privatization, the universalistic welfare approach of Social Democracy and social liberalism still makes a strong imprint on policy practice. However, the changes in policy also remind us of the non-linear development of social welfare, and also that no system can be all encompassing or complete in catering for those who suffer from poverty and social exclusion. There will always be a need for the competence, willingness and avant-garde role potentially provided by FBOs.

NOTES

1. This article is written on the basis of research pursued within the context of FACIT — Faith-Based Organizations and Exclusion in European Cities — a European research project funded by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme (Dierckx, Vranken, and Kerstens 2009).

2. An extensive documentation of our empirical research is given in a country-specific report (Elander and Fridolfsson 2011).

3. These publicly (and voluntarily) financed institutions are called *Wohlfahrtspflege*. There are also *Wohlfahrtspflege* with labor unions, social democratic organizations, and organizations without religious or political ties, e.g., Red Cross.

4. An identical questionnaire was translated into the language used by each of the countries participating in the FACIT-project in order to allow comparisons.

5. For a detailed report on the methodological underpinnings, see Elander and Fridolfsson (2011, Appendix II).

6. Nevertheless Church of Sweden still enjoys some public law privileges, such as being granted certain tax exemptions, responsibility of funerals as stated in the Burial Act, and continuous protection of heritage listed buildings.

7. Declining membership and attention at Church services have stirred a debate on the proper way to use church buildings. Due to legislation, and in contrast to many other European countries, alternative uses of church buildings face strong difficulties. In addition, a large majority of the Swedish population, religious as well as secular, consider these buildings of great historical value to preserve (Granberg, 2011).

8. The absolute majority of these became members by birth, while it was still part of the state. Exit requires active withdrawal.

9. Attendants are defined as people who participate without being formal members of a church or congregation. The figures reported are approximate.

10. The number of immigrants coming from a country with a Muslim regime and/or tradition is estimated by the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (Utbildningsradion) to be 300,000–350,000 (Utbildningsradion 2011). This number does not include second or third generation Swedish Muslims. Sweden has about 9 million inhabitants in total.

11. However, due to migration in the past there is a long-standing tradition of ethnical diversity in the country. Besides the indigenous Sami-population, there have been small populations of Roma, Tornedal, and Jewish minorities living in Sweden for centuries.

12. Figures for 2010–2011 show that the number of refugees going to Sweden is decreasing, although still almost 30 000 per year. On the other hand, the number of work force immigrants is increasing (Dagens Nyheter, 2011b).

13. Our translation. This note will not be repeated in the rest of the cases where we have translated interviews and citations from Swedish texts.

14. During November–December 2011 the biggest Swedish daily, Dagens Nyheter, revealed shocking conditions for elderly people in private care institutions coupled with enormous profits for the owner Carema Care, a huge multi-national company. Headlines like these became commonplace: “Carema — a formidable profit-making machine,” “Enormous profit for blown up care company,” “Employees urged to compete in saving money” (Dagens Nyheter, 2011a).

15. The four parties in the coalition government (2006-to the present) are the Conservative Party (Moderaterna), the Liberal Party (Folkpartiet), the Centre Party (Centerpartiet) and the Christian Democratic Party (Kristdemokraterna) with the first one as being the largest, also holding the Prime Minister position. The Swedish Riksdag election in September 2010 resulted in a situation where the governing four-party coalition does not have a decisive majority of their own but has to find support from at least one of the other parties, i.e. by finding an issue by issue working majority. The nationalistic, anti-immigration, strongly islamophobic Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna) entered the Riksdag for the first time winning 20 seats. All other parties represented in the Riksdag proclaim they will not seek support from them, although they may still, in practice, have the decisive vote from time to time.

16. Similar boards have been established or are on its way in Göteborg, Linköping, Malmö, and some other cities.

17. There is a strong tendency that big for-profit companies like Carema Care and Capio are taking over parts of social welfare (schools, social and health care), basically financed by tax money. The 15 biggest for-profit actors in this area gained a profit of two billion SEK (i.e., almost 200 million Euros) during 2009. This sum corresponds to salary costs for about 5000 full time employed nurses (Werne 2010; cf. Brink et al. 2009).

18. *Välgrundad fruktan. Om asyl, amnesti och rätten till trygghet* (Well-founded Fear. On asylum, amnesty and the right to security) is the title of a book published in 2005, based on articles and interviews under, and in the wake of the Easter Call process in spring 2005 (Qviström 2005). These texts are the empirical platform for the story briefly told here.

19. Following the homepage of the Easter Call 157,251 people, 64 secular organizations, the 25 member churches of Christian Council of Sweden, and three observers signed the call that was delivered to the government on May 16, 2005 (Christian Council of Sweden 2010a).

20. Indeed, this shows that, at least, a number of committed people in the Swedish Church satisfy the definitional criteria of these religious congregations being FBOs, i.e. something more than just proselytizing Christian congregations.

21. Jämtland and Värmland are two of 24 geographical provinces, or shires (landskap) in Sweden.

22. In March 2010, five years after the Easter Call, the Christian Council of Sweden sent an open letter to the government regarding the situation of people who have been expelled from the insurance system, raising demands for quick revisions of the rules in order to save individuals and households from “economic and social destruction” (Christian Council of Sweden 2010b).

REFERENCES

- Agreement. 2008. “Agreement between the Swedish Government, National Idea-Based Organizations in the Social Sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.” <http://www.overenskommelsen.se/pdf/agreementsocialvolsector.pdf> (Accessed on August 3, 2010).
- Andersen, Hans Thor. 2008. “The Emerging Danish Government Reform – Centralised Decentralisation.” *Urban Research & Practice* 1:3–17.
- Andersson, Eric. 2010. “Interview.” *Filadelfia, Stockholm*, 5 May.
- Bache Ian, and Matthew Flinders, eds. 2004. *Multi-level Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bäckström, Anders, and Grace Davie. 2009. “A Preliminary Conclusion: Gathering the Threads and Moving On.” In *Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe: Volume 1. Configuring the Connections*, eds., Bäckström Anders, and Grace Davie. Farnham: Ashgate.

- Bazant, Ursula, and Klaus Schubert. 2009. "European Welfare systems: Diversity Beyond Existing Categories." In *The Handbook of European Welfare Systems*, eds., Schubert Klaus, Simon Hegelich, and Ursula Bazant. London: Routledge, pp. 513–534.
- Bergqvist Christina, ed. 1999. *Equal Democracies? Gender and Politics in the Nordic Countries*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Brink, Josefin, Jens Ergon, Peter Gustavsson, and Kent Werne. 2009. *Sälj hela skiten! eller hur privatiseringarna raserar den gemensamma välfärden (Sell All that Shit! Or, How Privatizations Demolish the Common Welfare)*. Stockholm: Oxford.
- Christian Council of Sweden. 2010a. "Påskuppropet (The Easter Call)." http://www.skr.org/temp_paskupprop05_intro.htm (Accessed on May 10, 2010).
- Christian Council of Sweden. 2010b. "Öppet brev från SKR:s styrelse till regeringen om de utförsäkrades situation (Open Letter from the Christian Council of Sweden Governing Board to the Government Regarding the Situation of People who have been Xpelled from the Insurance System)." <http://www.skr.org/arkiv/pressarkiv/oppetbrevfranskrsstyrelsetillregeringenomdeutforsakradessituation.5.57a5b5b812e52e4174680009208.html> (Accessed on May 10, 2010).
- Church of Sweden. 2010. "Facts about the Church of Sweden." <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se> (Accessed on January 1, 2010).
- Cloke, Paul, Andrew Williams, and Samuel Thomas. 2009. "FBOs and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom." In *Faith-based Organisations and Social Exclusion in European Cities. National Context Reports*, eds., Dierckx Daniell, Jan Vranken, and Wendy Kerstens. Leuven/Den Haag: Acco, pp. 283–342.
- Cnaan, Ram. 2006. *The Other Philadelphia Story: How Local Congregations Support Quality of Life in Urban America*. Philadelphia, PA: Penn Press.
- Dagens, Nyheter (Daily News). 2011a. "Caremas ökande vinster hamnar i skatteparadis - Skandalen i äldreården. Kostnadsjakt går före kvalitet (Carema's Rising Profits Land in Tax Paradise – The Scandal in Elderly Care. Chasing Costs more Important than Quality)" November 9, Section 1, pp. 32–33.
- Dagens, Nyheter (Daily News). 2011b. "Trendbrott i Sverige — fler kommer hit för att arbeta (Trend Break in Sweden — More People Arriving for Work)." November 23, Section 1, p. 23.
- Dierckx, Danielle, Jan Vranken, and Wendy Kerstens, eds. 2009. *Faith-based Organisations and Social Exclusion in European Cities. National Context Reports*. Leuven/Den Haag: Acco.
- ECAS. 2010. "European Citizen Action Service: Enabling Your Voice to be Heard with EU." <http://www.ecas-citizens.eu/content/view/173/205> (Accessed on March 11, 2010).
- Elander, Ingemar, and Charlotte Fridolfsson. 2011. *Faith-based Organisations and Social Exclusion in Sweden*. Leuven/Den Haag: Acco.
- Elander, Ingemar, and Stig Montin. 1990. "Decentralization and Control: Central-local Government Relations in Sweden." *Policy and Politics* 18:165–180.
- Enarsson, Henrik. 2009. "Interview." *Göteborgs kyrkliga stadsmission, Göteborg*, 18 March.
- ETC. 2010. "Örebrokvinnor tar mer makt (Örebro Women Seize More Power)." *Örebro*, 14 February.
- Friedrichs, Jürgen, and Jennifer Kloeckner. 2009. "FBOs and Social Exclusion in Germany." In *Faith-based Organisations and Social Exclusion in European Cities*, eds., Dierckx Danielle, Jan Vranken, and Wendy Kerstens, eds. Leuven/Den Haag: Acco.
- Gallup. 2009. "What Alabamians and Iranians Have in Common." <http://www.gallup.com> (Accessed on February 2, 2010).

- Government Bill 2009/2010, Number 55. Politik för Civilsamhället (Policy for Civil Society). <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/12163/a/136226> (Accessed on September 18, 2012).
- Granberg, Gunnar. 2011. *Stora kyrkor och små församlingar. Nytänkande med idéer om framtiden (Big Churches and Small Congregations. Thinking New with Ideas about the Future)*. Uppsala: Votum.
- Granberg, Mikael. 2008. "Local Governance 'in Swedish'? Globalisation, Local Welfare Government and Beyond." *Local Government Studies* 34:363–377.
- Günes-Ayata, Ayse. 2008. "Challenges of Global Migration. EU and its Neighbourhood. Glomig Project Conference Proceedings." Ankara: METU and KORA.
- Hjalmarsson, Elisabet. 2009. "Interview." *Uppsala: Central Office Swedish Church*, 18 February.
- Jeavons, Thomas H. 2004. "Religious and Faith-Based Organizations: Do We Know One When We See One?" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 33:140–145.
- Kinnvall, Catarina & Paul Nesbitt-Larking. 2011. *The Political Psychology of Globalization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kokx, Anita, and Ronald Van Kempen. 2010. "Dutch Urban Governance: Multi-level or Multi-scalar?" *European Urban and Regional Studies* 17:355–369.
- Kommun 2009. "Örebro Kommuns interreligiösa/interkulturella råd (Örebro Municipality's Inter-Religious/Inter-Cultural Committee)." (Accessed on June 18, 2009).
- Kosmin Barry A. & Ariela Keysar, eds. 2007 *Secularism & Secularity. Contemporary International Perspectives*. Hartford, CT: Institute for the Study of Secularizations in Society and Culture.
- Kyhlström, Anette. 2009. "Interview." *The Whole Person/Healing the Man (Hela Människan)* Stockholm, 20 March.
- Liljeblad, Elin. 2005. *Begreppet onormalt lågt anbud i direktiv 2004/18/EG om offentlig upphandling: Om begreppets innebörd och konsekvenserna av att det saknas förbud mot att anta onormalt låga anbud (The concept of abnormally low tender and the directive 2004/18/EC on public procurement: About the significance of the concept of abnormally low tender, and consequences of the lack of prohibitive legislation)*. <http://liu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:20610> (Accessed on September 18, 2011).
- Livskraft. 2006. "Bättre kunskap krävs för bra asylbeslut (Better Knowledge Needed for Better Decisions in Asylum Matters)." No 3.
- Markovits, Marika. 2009. "Interview." *Stockholm City Mission (Stockholms stadsmission)* 15 April, 2009.
- Migrationsverket. 2010. "Migration 2000–2010." http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/start_en.html (Accessed on September 28, 2010).
- Molendijk, Ariel L., Justin Beaumont, and Christoph Jedan. 2010. *Exploring the Postsecular. The Religious, the Political and the Urban*. Leiden: Brill.
- Monsma, Stephen V. 2004. *Putting Faith in Partnerships. Welfare-to-Work in Four Cities*. MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olsson, Lars-Erik, Marie Nordfeldt, Ola Larsson, and Jeremy Kendall. 2009. "Sweden: When Strong Sector Historical Roots Meet EU Policy Processes." In: *Handbook on Third Sector Policy in Europe and Organised Civil Society*, ed., Kendall Jeremy. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 159–183.
- Överenskommelsen (The Agreement). 2009. <http://overenskommelsen.se/uppfoljning/anslutna-organisationer> (Accessed on August 3, 2010).

- Pickel, Gert & Olaf Müller. 2009. "Introduction — The Comparative Empirical View on Religion and Religiosity." In *Church and Religion in Contemporary Europe. Results from Empirical and Comparative Research*, eds., Pickel Gert, and Olaf Müller. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 7–12.
- Qviström, David, Ed. 2005. *Välgrundad fruktan. Om asyl, amnesti och rätten till trygghet. (Well Motivated Fear. On Asylum, Amesty and the Right to Security)* Örebro: Cordia.
- Redlund, Pia. 2009. "Interview." *Social Mission, Stockholm (Sociala Missionen)* 23 February.
- Rittersberger-Tilic, Helga, Aykan Erdemir, Ayca Ergun, and Hayriye Kahveci, eds. 2008. "Rethinking Global Migration: Practices, policies, and discourses in the European Neighbourhood." Glomig Project Conference Proceedings. Ankara: METU and KORA.
- Salah, Abdallah. 2009. "Cross-Evaluation." *Stockholm Mosque*, 14 September.
- Schartau, Mai-Brith. 2010. *Caritas — en organisation i förändring* (Caritas — An Organization in Transformation). Stockholm: Södertörn.
- Schubert, Klaus, Simon Hegelich, and Ursula Bazant, eds. 2009a. *The Handbook of European Welfare Systems*. London: Routledge.
- Schubert, Klaus, Simon Hegelich, and Ursula Bazant. 2009b. "European Welfare Systems: Current State of Research and Some Theoretical Considerations." In *The Handbook of European Welfare Systems*, eds., Schubert Klaus, Simon Hegelich, and Ursula Bazant. London: Routledge, pp. 3–28.
- Sellers, Jefferey M & Anders Lidström. 2007. "Decentralization, Local Government and the Welfare State." *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions* 204: 609–632.
- Sen, Mustafa, Arda Deniz Aksular & Zelal Ozdemir Samur. 2009. "FBOs and Social Exclusion in Turkey." In *Faith-based Organisations and Social Exclusion in European cities*, eds., Dierckx Danielle, Jan Vranken, and Wendy Kerstens. Leuven/Den Haag: Acco.
- Sharpe, Laurence James. 1988. "The Growth and Decentralization of the Modern Democratic State." *European Journal of Political Research* 16:365–380.
- SST. 2010. "Nämnden för Statligt Stöd till Trossamfund (Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities)." <http://www.sst.a.se> (Accessed on August 26, 2010).
- Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press.
- Utbildningsradion. 2011. *Muslimerna i Sverige (Muslims in Sweden)*. <http://www.ur.se/Ung/Amnen/SO/Religion/Islam/Islam-i-Sverige> (Accessed on August 7, 2011).
- Wallin, Örjan. 2009. "Interview." *Hela Människan, Stockholm (The Whole Person/Healing the Person)*, 20 March.
- Walliser, Andres & Vera Bartolomé. 2009. "FBOs and Social Exclusion in Spain." In *Faith-based Organisations and Social Exclusion in European Cities*, eds., Dierckx Danielle, Jan Vranken, and Wendy Kerstens. Leuven/Den Haag: Acco.
- Werne, Kent. 2010. "Jackpot i vård. Miljarder i vinst när välfärden privatiseras (Jackpot in Care. Billion Profits When Welfare is Privatized)." *Ordfront Magasin* 2010:12–16.