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Corporate Social Responsibility in Social SMEs: Discourses of Prosocial Behavior in Individual, Organizational, and Societal Levels

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Abstract: The past decades have seen an increase in studies on social entrepreneurship, yet its theorization remains underdeveloped. This is especially the case for clarifying how the social mission inherent in social enterprises is related to the social responsibility of traditional businesses, usually understood through corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. The relation between social entrepreneurship and CSR is not unequivocal, as from a theoretical perspective these constructs should be distinct, yet their boundaries both in theory and in practice are still unclear. The literature suggests that it is their social mission that defines social enterprises whereas, for other types of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), CSR activities would be instrumental and motivated by profit maximization. Until now, it has been unclear what the role of CSR in activities and behavior in social enterprises is, which is a notable research gap since social entrepreneurship is an emerging domain of study in business research and practice. This study contributes by illustrating how CSR manifests through prosocial behavior across different levels in social SMEs, thus shedding light on how social entrepreneurs view their motivations towards others-oriented behavior in SMEs. We study the discourses of entrepreneurs who manage mission-driven businesses and social enterprises in Finland, Sweden, Estonia, and Latvia. The perspective can also have implications for SMEs and their strategic positioning of social entrepreneurship and CSR. Viewing social entrepreneurship, CSR, and prosocial motivation as sociopsychological and contextual, constructivist processes sheds light on the multifaceted nature of these phenomena. This discourse study presents a model of how individual, group, organization and societal prosocial motivations co-exist.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; SME; corporate social responsibility; discourse analysis; SME internationalization; Finland

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1. Introduction

Responsibility and sustainability are increasingly important concepts for conducting business globally. While they encompass a large variety of activities and behaviors among organizations and individuals, in business they are generally seen through two alternative lenses: by existing businesses engaging in increasingly responsible and sustainable behavior through corporate social responsibility (CSR), and by new types of businesses and entrepreneurship emerging to seize the new entrepreneurial opportunities around responsibility and sustainability. One of the main forms of the latter phenomenon is the emergence of social entrepreneurship, which is growing in importance [1]. There is no universally accepted definition or delimitations of the concepts of social enterprise, social entrepreneur, or social entrepreneurship [2] (p. 611) [3] (p. 372) [4]. For example, the European Commission has defined social enterprises as entities in which the main objective is to deliver social impact rather than profits to their owners and other stakeholders.

The lenses of social entrepreneurship and CSR are particularly interlinked in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), where social responsibility is a distinct phenomenon [5] and SMEs often emphasize holistic social values and build shared goals aligned with their partners, which is essential in social enterprises [6]. However, extant research on SMEs has tended to assess CSR and social entrepreneurship separately, and thus to date there is no clear picture of the role of CSR in social SMEs. Social SMEs encompass social entrepreneurship at the organizational level since they can be defined as private organizations that operate in the public business domain yet simultaneously pursue goals beyond profits. The lack of research on CSR in social SMEs is a notable omission in the literature, since social entrepreneurship is key to fostering inclusive growth and institutional change [4], and thus social responsibility can be argued to be a key component of social enterprises in general.

Some of the theories suggest that it is their social mission that defines social enterprises while CSR activities would be instrumental or motivated by profit maximization goals. Research on social enterprises has emphasized the intrinsic role of social missions in social enterprises [7]. Indeed, SMEs can operate in a prosocial way in diverse ways and are motivated to do so by different internal or external factors. In sum, the academic literature assumes social entrepreneurship to be motivated by prosocial motives [8]. Therefore, the present study seeks to clarify the role of CSR in social entrepreneurship by illustrating how social enterprise SMEs (i.e., social SMEs) make sense of responsibility in general and of CSR in particular.

In doing so, the present study outlines the views of social SMEs, analyzes them with discourse analysis and interprets the results with social entrepreneurship definitions and their relations to CSR. Both theoretical lenses have connections, but they lack understanding of individual-level social processes and motivators. Both the social entrepreneurship and CSR domains under study have a wide variety of approaches and levels of analysis, and micro-foundations of these phenomena have rarely been studied with qualitative methods. Multilevel analysis studies focusing on CSR have been called for in earlier studies [9]. A qualitative, interpretative study also offers views to understand phenomena in a way that social entrepreneurs describe their motivations and behaviors, and a discourse analysis approach allows for a rich focus on multiple levels: individual, enterprise-level, and societal-level.

This paper continues as follows. Section 2 outlines the literature on social entrepreneurship and CSR pertaining to SMEs from a sustainability perspective. That is followed by a description of the employed research methodology. The data and analysis methods are outlined, after which the findings and our interpretation of them are described. The paper concludes by discussing the merits of the findings for theory and practice as pertains to sustainability in SMEs, as well as limitations of the present study and arising avenues for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Entrepreneurship

In the research, the concept of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship has been approached in many ways. Social entrepreneurship is recognized as a distinct form of entrepreneurship compared to economically oriented entrepreneurship [10] and, social enterprises are "deeply rooted in the social, economic, political and cultural contexts in which such dynamics take place". [11] (p. 13). Social entrepreneurship has a distinct research tradition in the North American context [11], especially in the United States, where philanthropy has been taken to mean addressing social needs of general interest with philanthropy associations often linked to industrial operators funding [12]. The European research tradition in comparison conceptualizes social enterprises as being affected also by the history of the co-operative movement and associations that were built in co-operative principles of participatory decision-making and a wide variety of European enterprises that work for social purposes [11,12].

Different schools of thought on social entrepreneurship have several commonalities, and the different approaches note that common for social enterprises is that they exist for a social mission. In the social entrepreneurship literature, this is a widely shared view [4,13–15]. This is a key distinction between the concepts of social enterprises and CSR. Social enterprises also take entrepreneurial risks to serve others and all social enterprises are characterized by their orientation to change that they address with their social enterprise [12]. Social challenges represent a business opportunity, and social entrepreneurs innovatively and entrepreneurially respond to the social needs of a group of people. The fourth joint element in the definitions of social entrepreneurship is that social entrepreneurs are seen to operate in the market economy, and not for example in the public service economy.

Social enterprises are responsible for the resources, whereas the funding may come from the social activities or other complementary activities planned and implemented by a social enterprise [12]. On the other hand, there is a growing number of different forms of public-private partnerships and hybrid forms of enterprises. Lastly, the social dimension is built into the organizational structure of a social enterprise, by having democratic decision-making, or otherwise involving stakeholders and reinvesting the majority of the surplus to enhance the social mission [12].

On the other hand, social entrepreneurs are emotionally attached to the organizations that they have built [16]. A recent review study on social entrepreneurship [4] notes that there is a lack of theoretical constructions at the individual, organizational and institutional levels.

Studies on social entrepreneurship have often focused on the qualities of social entrepreneurs which however offers a very limited perspective [17]. Little is known about individual-level processes in initiating a social enterprise. It has been suggested that social entrepreneurs have a prosocial personality or prosocial emotions that would predict the initiation of a social enterprise [4]. Studies have suggested that social enterprises address target groups where purely commercially oriented enterprises lack incentives [4]. Prosocial motives are a condition for such social initiatives where there are no financial incentives [18]. Drawing from earlier work, scholars [4] have recommended studying social entrepreneurship as a multilevel phenomenon. A discourse study can study speech, which can address diverse levels. This study aims to seek an answer to the following research question:

> *How do social entrepreneurs describe prosocial motivation in the context of their enterprise or socially responsible activities?*

The study is a data-driven, iterative project that aims to understand the views of social entrepreneurs on this topic and then reflect it with theoretical discourses.

2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility

Scholars agree that the concept of CSR is complex [19]. Initially, CSR theories on individual ethics [20]. Many corporate social responsibility definitions focus on a firm-level and view a firm's corporate social responsibility in relation to stakeholders or to wider society. In the broadest sense definitions view that CSR refers to a firm's social mission, however, they emphasize philanthropic [20]. In this category, one way to define CSR is as "*a firm's set of discretionary activities for the promotion of positive social changes beyond the immediate interests of the company or compliance with the law*" [21]. On the other hand, CSR can be defined also from the managerial point of view: a recent study [21] (p. 6) refers to Barnett's [22] definition of CSR "*as managerial practices focused on welfare creation*". One of the perspectives used for CSR is to view it from a macro perspective, explaining the interaction between businesses and their surrounding society [21].

Another recent definition for CSR is "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance". [23] (p. 855). For this study, this latter definition is adopted, since it offers a view that accounts for both the human side of CSR and for the fact that CSR is developed by individuals in an organizational and societal context. CSR is always based on a context and rooted in individuals, consumers, and other stakeholders' norms and values [24]. The literature suggests that CSR activities are

supplementary, and usually not strategic operations of enterprises. Statistically, SMEs engage in CSR activities when they have operated in the market for a longer period or when they grow bigger [16].

Reference [20] identifies four phases in the conceptual evolution of CSR. Their analysis concluded that ethical and normative conception was prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s when CSR was first conceptualized. In the 1970s, CSR theorizing developed towards a more pragmatic and managerial point of view; however, CSR's main theoretical discourse was about firms responding to external market or non-market pressures. In the analysis, the next evolution phase was introduced by corporate social performance approaches in the 1980s and 1990s. CSR was viewed from economic, legal, ethical and discretionary perspectives. Discretionary perspectives represent standards that firms set for themselves [20]. Furthermore, CSR theorizing has developed to recognize multiple interfaces of CSR and its functionalist, sociopolitical, cultural and constructivist functions [20].

Burger-Helmchen's and Siegel's analysis takes a wide perspective on the evolution of the concept and underlines how evolution phases in the conceptualization have been driven by external forces, whereas the role of a firm, especially SMEs, has been loaded with expectations but little space for space taking part in academic definitions of CSR from an SME's perspective. Carroll's framework for understanding CSR within four levels illustrates the underlying assumptions for CSR. The starting point for being a responsible firm is economic responsibility as this secures the overall existence of a firm [25]. In the framework, this is followed by obeying laws and regulations, only after which the level of ethical responsibility occurs [25]. This view also can create a discourse for motivation and emotion culture which [26] describes as a shared cognitive model. In CSR, theorizing gives a certain presentation of a company and how it should organize prosociality.

CSR theorizing sheds only a little light on understanding motivational processes. Explanations for the prosocial behavior of companies can include utilitarian philanthropy or philanthropy stemming from altruistic motives. On the other hand, companies can also pursue philanthropy from altruistic motives [27]. CSR in SMEs can occur by SMEs allocating resources to local communities [16]. Commonly, the CSR literature suggests that firms engage in CSR activities motivated by external pressures from stakeholders, who can be shareholders, consumers, the media, the local community, or interest groups [9]. Engaging in CSR activities can be self-interest-driven, based on caring relationships, or based on ethical standards and moral principles [28].

While many common approaches to CSR are firm-level investigations, there are some studies that consider the micro-foundations of CSR [9,20,21]. Aguinis and Glavas [9] use the term *micro-foundations of CSR* to refer to interactions of individuals related to CSR. They call for more studies, as there are many unanswered questions about motivation, behavior, and contextual conditions. CSR can be argued to be a linguistic and psycho-social process where people make sense of meanings. Earlier research [28] has noted that compared to business ethics, owner-managers of small businesses viewed CSR as more "external, more theoretical, more opportunistic, and more businesslike than business ethics . . . " In other words, people may categorize CSR behaviors in many ways, or not label all prosocial behaviors as corporate social responsibility activities.

2.3. Connections of Social Entrepreneurship and CSR

Both social enterprises and CSR programs aim to solve social problems. Social entrepreneurship and CSR have a shared orientation, but they appear in multiple purposes and structures [28]. However, whereas CSR refers to "*business decisions to sustain social causes*", social enterprise refers to a "*business that wants to offer solutions to social problems*" [29] (p. 13).

The European Commission views CSR broadly as the societal responsibility of enterprises for their impact, but social enterprises also exhibit CSR, or, put another way, social responsibility is at the core of social enterprises. Since having a social mission at the heart of an enterprise is the most prevalent attribute in different definitions of social enterprise, the literature and discussion on CSR social entrepreneurship are interrelated both by defi-

nition and in practice. Though the concepts of social entrepreneurship and CSR have some unclear connections, many scholars share the consensus on the different orientations that they have. The distinction between CSR and social entrepreneurship can be made through the motivations explaining the activities: CSR furthers social good beyond the internal interests of the firm, and beyond the requirements of the law, but CSR is motivated by profit-maximizing and shareholder value appropriation [4]. One of the main assumptions behind the concept of CSR is whether its acts have entrepreneurial or innovative elements. CSR activities are not necessarily linked to "entrepreneurial activities" or "innovation activities", but instead CSR activities are implied for strengthening societal engagement, for instance by funding a sports club or by donating to social organizations [30].

2.4. Prosocial Motivation in the Context of Social Entrepreneurship and CSR

Prosocial motivations have been studied in the context of CSR and in the context of social entrepreneurship separately, but not by combining both conceptual traditions. Social entrepreneurs emphasize it as a primary reason for initiating a social venture to create social value or to help others or society [10]. Ryan and Deci [31] view that people are naturally prosocial if their own psychological basic needs have been fulfilled. Grant [32] (p. 49) defines prosocial motivation as "*a more temporary psychological state . . . involves a momentary focus on the goal of protecting and promoting the welfare of other people*". On the other hand, there are more definitions that emphasize societal and socio-psychological contexts for prosocial motivation and behavior.

Batson et al. [33] suggest that there are four forms of prosocial motivation. Altruism, benefiting others as a goal, is one of them. Another motivation form for helping others is motivated by potential self-benefits. Thirdly, they suggest that prosocial motivation can be related to collectivism, which they view as an individual's orientation to a group's wellbeing or norms. Fourthly, they suggest that prosocial motivation can spring from moral principles. This is when principles *have "value in their own right and not simply as instrumental self-serving aims"* [33] (p. 117).

Renko's [34] study was the first to apply prosocial motivation theory in empirical entrepreneurship research. The study focused on social entrepreneurs, defining them as entrepreneurs who initiate their business primarily for social purposes. Renko [34] summarizes studies on prosocial motivation: employees may want to help because they feel it is the right thing to do, and prosocial behavior helps them to gain a valued group membership in a community. Notably, prosocial behavior can also have personal or social rewards. However, prosocial motivation and self-interest are not opposites, they are independent and can also correlate positively with each other [35].

Whereas the social entrepreneurship literature has identified prosocial motivations essential in initiating a social enterprise, the corporate social responsibility literature has approached prosocial behavior from a different angle. In their study, Tao et al. [36] focus on managerial implications for empowering employee prosocial involvement.

Prosocial motivation has different institutional and societal contexts depending on whether it is a social enterprise or a CSR project. Prosocial motivation has been studied in CSR contexts from the perspectives of employees [36] and from the perspective of consumer engagement [37]. Most scholars view phenomena related to CSR as motivated by outsider expectations whereas some scholars emphasize firms' inner motivations in social entrepreneurship. Many scholars view corporate social responsibility acts as an instrument for gaining a company's reputation while the societal impact is not a primary aim in CSR [38].

In this study, the focus is on behavioral aspects of social entrepreneurship and CSR, as spoken language is part of behavior where meaning systems and discourses are constructed. One way to understand the connections of the concepts is by seeing that CSR should be understood by explicating the business ethics and psychology of personal values and prosocial behavior [36]. There are individual differences in how people are motivated prosocially, yet on the other hand, it is also known that there are environmental forces that

influence whether individuals engage in prosocial behavior, such as experiencing autonomy, social relatedness, and competence [39,40]. Organization-specific helping identity could give another perspective to CSR as well.

Acting socially entrepreneurially in a corporation is not limited to CSR schemes, but instead, prosocial behavior can be defined broadly as encompassing any form of interpersonal support or narrowly defined as actions that intend to help somebody [41]. Bierhoff [42] (p. 9) has viewed altruism as a form of prosociality, where the "helper's motivation is characterized by perspective-taking and empathy".

Both social entrepreneurs and CSR projects can be driven by prosocial motivation. Scholars agree that prosocial motivation encourages social entrepreneurial intentions [43]. The role of prosocial motivation in these contexts still has many unanswered questions. It could be assumed that interaction creates social norms, as prosocial interactions can become a norm that is expected from a social entrepreneur. Prosocial motivation can still lead to "suboptimal development traps", in which a social enterprise may sacrifice value, institutionalize its operations as an entitled operator in the field and preclude market entry for newcomers or other enterprises in the market [43]. Kibler et al. [44] shed light also on the dark side of the prosocial motivation of entrepreneurs and argue that prosocial motivation can also influence an entrepreneur's subjective well-being negatively, suggesting that broad attention to others' concerns can disturb entrepreneurs' focus on venture goals. On the other hand, in this study, prosociality is at the heart of venture strategic goals and is not a discretionary part.

Another paradigm for considering prosocial can be found in social identity research. Prosociality is then motivated and formed based on having an emotionally and cognitively significant membership in an organization. Farmer and Van Dyne [45] (p. 770) introduce the concept of "organization-specific helping identity", which they define as "a prosocial helping identity directed specifically at beneficiaries associated with a particular organization".

3. Method

This study is a qualitative case study that uses discourse analysis as an analysis method. The data were collected in an international educational European Union (EU) project titled "*iSEE—Innovating Social Entrepreneurship Education*". The project was funded by the Central Baltic program. The dataset used in this study consists of six interviews of social SMEs. The social enterprises interviewed are enterprises in Finland, Sweden, Latvia, and Estonia who themselves identify that their primary purpose for doing business is their social mission. The selection criteria for the companies were twofold: they had to identify themselves as social enterprises and be generally accepted as such in their home countries. The interviewed social enterprises operated in different sectors, such as in the textile industry and consulting, and had specific legal company forms (limited liability company, co-operative). They operated with differing business models, some of them in business-to-business markets, others selling their products directly to customers. The interviewed enterprises are well known and valued as socially responsibly operating social enterprises in their countries. They are not financed by governments and receive their incomes from the market. The interviews were semi-structured theme interviews with open-ended questions. The data collection aimed to hear social entrepreneurs' views related to their entrepreneurship, social mission and social responsibility.

Potter [46] (p. 791) views discourses as "*a vital medium for action*". Furthermore, spoken language is behavior. Though speech is always located, situated micro knowledge, speakers still make many choices when they speak. Reed [47] views discourses as means for constructing agency and structures for agency as well. By studying spoken language, this study aims to understand how social entrepreneurs discursively organize their motivations, agency, subject positions, and action orientation. Agency in analysis refers to how an entrepreneur as a social actor is presented, and what the relations are to other social actors. The analysis builds on the assumption that possible motivations, including prosocial motivation, cannot be understood without social actors, may it be an individual, a group,

or an organization. Another term that is considered in the analysis is subject positioning. In this analysis, subject positioning refers to how speakers locate themselves and others in their speech and how subjects and objects are processed. Davies and Harré [48] (p. 48) view positioning as a process where subjects and objects are located in conversations. An interview is a conversation as well, and speakers refer to themselves and others while telling their stories. The analysis applies concepts from the traditions of sociolinguistic, discursive psychology and critical discourse analysis. Speakers locate themself, and in this study their enterprise, in the social world while manifesting different identities [49]. The first round of analysis examines the role of self and others in speech, and how speakers explain the orientation of activities in their enterprise. The next stage focuses on subject and object positions and how the agency and interrelations are being described. In speech, people represent an agency of social actors in relation to each other. Prosocial aims are also represented in a social system. One way to interpret agency is to "*determine it by thing's explicit relationship to a verb*" [50] (p. 4). Interpreting how the speaker views the subjects and objects of processes related to the social mission or corporate social responsibility unveils a new understanding of the social processes related to this phenomenon. *Subjects* can be interpreted from the speech by interpreting the "*flow of information, word orders and importance in a sentence*" [49] (p. 4). At this phase of analysis, prosocial motivation is seen to be constructed as an individual, as a team, as a company and as wider, more abstract and general societal levels. The next round of analysis reads speech related to motivation again, prosocial motivation, social mission, social responsibility and other possible themes that speakers speak about. The analysis aims to understand the contents and logic of sentences. The final round of analysis seeks to identify how things are spoken and what kind of emotions are being expressed. Discourse analysis focuses on how speakers view the role of prosociality in the context of their social entrepreneurship.

As a result, the analysis interprets three distinct levels of discourses where prosociality is being described. Social entrepreneurs speak at a personal level or group level, company level and societal level, and each of these dimensions has differing, and partly overlapping, prosocial elements. When interpreting results, we notice that each of these discourse systems represents prosociality in a different manner. The descriptives of the case companies are illustrated below in Table 1.

Table 1. The background data of the informants in this study.

Legal Status	Employees	The Position of the Interviewee	Industry	Home Country
Limited company	30	Managing Director and owner	Textile industry	Finland
Limited company	4	Managing Director and owner	Consulting	Finland
Limited company	11–50	Manager	Information and communication	Latvia
Limited liability	8	Manager	Design and Consulting	Latvia
Limited company	25	Manager	ICT	Sweden
Social, non-profit company	24	Manager	Education and social work	Sweden
Foundation	25	Manager	Lifestyle and sports	Estonia
Limited company	60	Manager and owner	Social work and handicraft	Estonia

4. Findings

In the discourse analysis, we aim to understand how social entrepreneurs describe their prosocial behavior related to their social mission, and how this could be interpreted from a CSR perspective. We group discourses into three levels: individual prosocial behavior, company level prosocial behavior and prosociality towards society, and the intended impact on society. These discourses also overlap with each other and are often interrelated. In speech, the interviewees describe how personal motivations meet external needs, and while concepts in their social enterprises have originality, they also refer to widely shared concepts.

4.1. Discourses on Personal and Team-Based Prosocial Intentions

This discourse category describes prosocial aims at the individual level related to self. The agency is very clear when the speakers describe what one desires. When the speaker uses personal phonomimes, such as "I", motivations are often strongly and well-articulated. The speech is future-oriented and solves challenges to help others. The enterprise is seen as an instrument to commit to solving a social problem in the long term:

> *"Especially sparsely populated areas have always been close to my hear, and when I was thinking, based on the experiences and the information these challenges, and I started developing this concept to solve these challenges . . . it was natural that as an enterprise this should be developed, had to think of the future . . . " (Social entrepreneur a, Finland).*

In the speech, self-interest and prosocial motivation are not opposed, but they complete each other. Speech refers to concepts such as "I", "myself", or "my goal", and is still strongly engaged in the social mission of an enterprise and orientation to others:

> *"I knew I wanted to build a social company . . . that was my goal". (Social entrepreneur, Sweden)*

> *" . . . it is important to me that when you start up something you need to do something you are good at, it's something that is your passion, and you want to do it very much". (Social entrepreneur, Sweden)*

Personal level descriptions of initiating or developing a social enterprise also contain emotional vocabularies, such as identifying unjustness, feeling sad and feeling compassionate, and understanding the logic and needs of many other individuals or groups.

> *" . . . I thought that was sad . . . we have a lot of companies that say we have lack of skilled labor as a challenge, we need more kids to be understanding the opportunities in our companies, to be motivated in school, to go to education so that we can employ them. And then I thought the why don't you tell kids about that . . . and those companies express their frustration they could employ a lot more if they just had more skilled people to employ. And then just across the street you have kids living in the areas of high unemployment . . . the kids have never been to office . . . they have never been told that they are welcome. They haven't come to understand this. So I thought that was very sad". (Social entrepreneur, Sweden)*

Furthermore, a team can be a prosocial unit, and some social enterprises are initiated by a team of people who share the same ideas and goals. Prosociality can be presented as an individual attribute or a team's shared attribute such as a team's character or team members' shared values or shared mindsets. Often, speakers express that entrepreneurial team members have had similar prosocial values which have also driven the process of spotting entrepreneurial opportunities and establishing an enterprise. The following sentence describes prosocial values that all entrepreneurial team members share.

> *"So, you (the entrepreneurial team) kind of share some values?" (Interviewer)*

> *"Yes, related to sparsely populated areas, communities, sustainability" (Social entrepreneur b, Finland)*

Furthermore, descriptions attached to the team level have strong motivation links, "*we want . . . *". The following sentence first speaks of prosociality as an individual attribute and then, in the next sentence, as a group quality. It can be interpreted from the speaker's definition of who they are as a group wether their professional competencies and prosocial community orientations have significance.

> *"We are a group of people who want to do societal good. We are an internationalization professional, co-operative and community professional, an architect, a technician . . . (. . .) and a person who calls himself a benefactor. Of course, this group, at its heart, wants to do good for others". (Social entrepreneur b, Finland)*

(Name of the foundation) itself was launched by me and some of my friends and colleagues who are likeminded people. (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

4.2. Discourses of a Prosocial Company

In this discourse category, the interviewees describe prosocial values at a company level. The company-level discourses are constructed in the interaction with the company unit which can be "we" or "our social enterprise", and interviewees describe their goals or a mission as a company:

" . . . the goal (in the solution) is specifically solving societal challenges, so it was natural that we focus on solving societal challenges also as an enterprise (social entrepreneur b, Finland)

We are saying that we are a "healthy lifestyle social enterprise" in the field of healthy lifestyle or active and healthy lifestyle (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

Social enterprises can be established by a team, and the company-level speech is also used to describe the initiation process. The social mission is shared by the founders:

It's a big challenge. The health challenge is one of the two big challenges globally. And this is the reason why we are in this field. We started (our foundation) as a social . . . As sport volunteers' movement, we identified that the problem in the field of sport sector broadly is nobody's dealing with the volunteers (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

Social enterprises evolve and are developed in connection with stakeholders. Interviewees describe company-level speeches on strategic decision making, developing business, and balancing social mission and business activities.

And the third business line: we are currently developing a service which is matching coaches and sport mentors to their clients . . . (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

Interviewees also position social activities and business orientation in their speech in many ways. They have choices as a company where they focus, and this is how they construct their prosocial behavior targeting their choices:

So, we can see cross-linkages between our social activities and more business-like activities that we have. And this is making it a social enterprise. Because some activities are more like social and generating income a little, and the others are more scalable, more business-alike, but still linked to this particular field of sport and active lifestyle, which is the focus of our organization. (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

Prosocial behavior connects with the social aim of an enterprise. A social mission is not stable, but a dynamic whole that requires competence as well. Being prosocial towards social entrepreneurs target also requires updating of competencies:

But at the same time, we try to bring in practical experiences and knowledge externally. What might work . . . (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

Being prosocial can orientate towards a group of customers, many groups or a local community. The prosocial unit that creates strategies, learns and develops can be seen as an entrepreneurial team when an interviewee refers to "by ourselves", and refers to localizing, which can refer to a local community in the development process:

Some of that business logic we can copy, but the rest should be done by ourselves in order to localize it . . . (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

The company-level processes are connected to individual-level processes, and to wider interaction with stakeholders. The discourses express the need for leadership, too, related to governing. The discourses describe the aims and ideals, and the build the role of an entrepreneur in building participatory elements:

I'd say that it's democratic in a way that we need to understand our clients, we need to understand out partners, we need to understand their interests, etc. But on the other

hand being in early stage of activities you have to have entrepreneurial mindset and drive because if I'm not doing the thing—nobody does it. Meaning that you have to lead at least, you can't give directions, you know, if many people work voluntarily for you, you can't give out directions and . . . You have to sell firstly idea of what you do and how you do it, and once they bought the idea they come on board. So I would say that it's more of a leadership question than a management issue. (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

On the other hand, prosocial motives do not take sustainable business for granted. Interviewees also generally position social enterprises in their speech; one of the interviewees holds the view that there is a need for social enterprises, but social enterprises lack the ability to grow:

"Even investors are looking at companies . . . They are demanding from companies before investing that the company is socially responsible. So, meaning that overall entities are getting more socially responsible. But in case of social enterprises, I think it's a long way to go in order to really make . . . To have big amount of self-sustainable and growing social enterprises, I think there is a lot of work to do". (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

4.3. Discourses of Prosocial Aims at a Societal Level

One discourse system consists of speech on the prosocial aims at the societal level, the audiences, the beneficiaries, "collective good", or societal or global megatrends. The interviewees' own work is positioned in a societal context. In the data, this is evident when interviewees refer to "common good", and that the models they create are based on sustainable ideas, or they improve the position of customers, or in general, they contribute to the social, environmental, and/or economic sustainability; "This is societal work that we are doing . . . ". (Social entrepreneur b, Finland).

The impact is seen also as wider than just a direct target group, the product or service itself could be scaled up and benefit the society, or the activities can have an indirect positive impact on the society. In this discourse group, the interviewees describe the value creation that goes beyond a target group or communities that the interviewees can name, and the social impact is expected to go beyond the direct outcomes. For instance, an interviewee connects the initiation of an enterprise to knowledge that social values are megatrends and are appreciated by society:

" . . . globally we have two big challenges: one is the climate related challenges; environment related challenges and the others are inactivity related challenges". (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)

The data also suggested some entrepreneurs acted as a team that bought an enterprise and created that enterprise as "a social enterprise", by also applying *a "nationally awarded social enterprise mark*" to do so. They were aware that producing locally is desirable for many people, which also matched their own values. In other words, the societal values matched their own values:

"We knew that domesticity and responsibility are on the rise, this is something that goes on a megatrend, so therefore we went for this, to be involved in this". (Social entrepreneur b, Finland)

Social entrepreneurs explain and construct the priorities of their societal aims when speaking about their enterprise. Companies can be established to address several societal aims at the same time, and many combine social and environmental aims:

"When we started the company, it was because we wanted two things in the company. First, we wanted to do something for the environment . . . . . and then the other part was empowering women. The goal was also to employ some of these women. So, it was both the environment and the social part of it". (Social entrepreneur, Sweden)

Societal change that social entrepreneurs seek to create can be a wider vision for the future in a specific area of operation, such as "bringing textile industry back to home country"

or "employing as many people with Asperger as we can". In social entrepreneurs' speech, the societal dimension has boundaries, too; when the interviewees spoke about societal goals, they referred to specific limited geographical areas of operation—internationalization and locality are two of the dilemmas of social enterprises. In their speech, social entrepreneurs explain and construct choices of where and how they want to create impact. In doing so, they expressed the intent to benefit others, but they also express the need to make choices:

> *"Well, there is a slight tradeoff, the more you want to be international, the less you can focus locally. But if you only focus locally, you can't really make a wider impact and you can't find enough income in order to do your activities. And in our case our visibility . . . I mean in Europe we are known as a social enterprise". (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)*

The concept of "social enterprise" follows the societal mission, and many interviewees describe that the social mission existed before they knew the concept of social enterprise. "Social enterprise" is a concept they learn and realize that this is what they are doing in their business. In their speech, the interviewees also described the engagement of the enterprise to their societal-level mission and the interaction between the enterprise and the societal level. National social enterprise marks, which are available in some nations in each country with their given criteria—and enterprises can get awarded them—are one way to communicate about social entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, many social entrepreneurs expressed that the communicative role of societal work is not a priority; instead, the societal work can be interpreted as integrated into a company's operations. As one of the interviewees notes: *"The societal work had started a long before we knew that there was a social enterprise mark existing". (Social entrepreneur b, Finland)* The societal mark is of course a feedback loop, as the interviewee also describes how gaining a status of social enterprise creates a reputation that you as an enterprise much engage with, and you as an enterprise can communicate about social entrepreneurship in a socially recognizable way:

> *"With the social enterprise—mark we want to show that our goal is societal change, and we engage in that, of course it has a communicative role also". (Social entrepreneur b, Finland)*

The level of attachment, motivation and ambition can be also interpreted from how some entrepreneurs position themselves with their wider industry context: "We are kind of renewing this industry". (Social entrepreneurs b, Finland) The enterprises engage with a societal mission, but their societal mission is also a dynamic system. The social entrepreneurs spoke about how their social mission evolves and adapts in line with the changing entrepreneurship environment and societal needs. Prosocial motivation, i.e., thinking of the benefits to others—a societal perspective—is carried on in many ways in the decisions of directions taken. In many social enterprises, the societal perspectives and individual beneficiary perspectives do not conflict with each other but support each other. An interviewee describes the process of developing a societal mission:

> *"Well (our goals) have been re-designed and re-constructed, originally, we aimed to respond to the challenges of sparsely populated areas. The greatest challenges there are the aging population, and population declining, and of course we aim to contribute to the vitality (of territories) by increasing occupancy. Then we also went for developing sustainable housing, it just happened, it is the sustainable housing solutions where you create economically reasonable results. It is simply reasonable for society". (Social entrepreneur a, Finland)*

Social entrepreneurs themselves are aware of CSR ideas, and expectations that citizens or consumers have towards businesses. Social entrepreneurs express that they also pioneer mission-driven business for other businesses. As an interviewee noted:

> *"I think that there are more and more people who are believing in certain social missions. So we are not just for earning money, but they would like to do something good as well.*

> *And even if they are working for certain companies, they expect that the companies are not, you know, ruining the environment, using child labor or whatever. So ordinary businesses are getting more socially responsible because their employees and the clients are more socially responsible. (Social entrepreneur, Estonia)*

4.4. Findings across the Levels of Discourse Summarized

In summary, the qualitative empirical analysis identified three discourses comprising three diverse meaning systems of speaking about the prosociality in a social enterprise and the ways in which orientation towards the target of prosocial behavior is described. One discourse system describes personal motivations and self-interest for the social mission. The interviewees use words such as "I" and "my". They describe both prosocial and self-interest motivations in initiating a social enterprise. Clear division can not be interpreted between motivation related to self or other-directed motivations. In speech, the relations between self-motivation and others-directed motivation are overlapping.

This discourse group also illustrates the idea of a social enterprise being seen as a natural choice that fitted prosocial motivation. Some of the interviewees describe that social enterprise was not an alternative to a commercially oriented enterprise, but was the only option suitable for their ideas. This discourse could lead to a suggestion that people get motivated for social entrepreneurship for different motivations than in other forms of entrepreneurship. A prosocial unit can also be a team who established an enterprise. In these discourses, speakers emphasize that prosociality is often a precondition for entering a team or an anchor value uniting an entrepreneurial team together for establishing a social enterprise. An adjective prosocial can be an individual's attribute but also a team's attribute. In the interpreted discourse system, the motivations for establishing a company are related to a desire to help a certain group of people or communities in a certain geographic area related to a certain topic. Notably, prosocial motivation is objected towards something, and boundaries are constructed in speech in many ways. In other words, in this discourse, prosocial motivation is not a static quality.

Another distinct discourse system describes building prosocial values, practices, business, or relations at a company level. This is where interviewees describe systematizing the social mission within their company, their shared values, ownership, and the company's relations with their employees or stakeholders. When the speaker refers to the company as a unit, it can refer to the company's inner processes but also to relations between well-defined customers or more generally in relation to wider reference groups such as market, industry or society. Prosocial motivation can be heard at the company level, as well as a company's inner processes, company's prosocial approaches, products, services and operation models with customers or other stakeholders, and as a prosocial way of renewing their industry. Thirdly, we interpret a discourse system where prosocial values address societal level challenges and describe the intended societal level impact. The intended impact goes beyond the beneficiaries or customers or other direct stakeholders of a social enterprise. In this discourse system, the interviewees describe their wider societal meaning, audiences, and wider goals which cannot be accomplished alone as a company. The concepts are also more general. Though macrolevel concepts may have a little less motivation in describing attributes, there are some descriptions. Speakers express awareness of macro-level issues which they contribute to with their own solutions. We interpret that interviewed social entrepreneurs in discourses also express feelings of responsibility for societal-level problems.

On the other hand, discourses reveal that social entrepreneurs think that society expects certain behavior from their firms. The summary of the findings through the three distinct levels of discourse and their respective representations of prosociality are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of the findings across the levels of discourse and representation of prosociality.

Discourse	Representative Quote	Speaker	Representation of Prosociality
Individual-level	*"I knew I wanted to build a social company . . . that was my goal".*	Social entrepreneur, Sweden	Prosociality is seen as a personal orientation and shared team-level orientation
	" . . . it is important to me that when "you start up something you need to do something you are good at, it's something that is your passion, and you want to do it very much".	Social entrepreneur, Sweden	
Firm-level	*" . . . the goal (in the solution) is specifically solving societal challenges, so it was natural that we focus on solving societal challenges also as an enterprise"*	Social entrepreneur b, Finland	Prosociality is seen as a firm character that is being developed into interaction, procedures and the structure of the firm
	We are saying that we are a "healthy lifestyle social enterprise"	Social entrepreneur, Estonia	
Societal level	*"With the social enterprise -mark we want to show that our goal is societal change, and we engage in that".*	Social entrepreneur b, Finland	Prosociality oriented towards helping others or preserving environment in a societal level, ownership towards societal problems
	" . . . globally we have two big challenges: one is the climate related challenges; environment related challenges and the others are inactivity related challenges."	Social entrepreneur, Estonia	

5. Discussion

The concepts of social enterprise or social entrepreneurship and CSR are related to each other, but there has been a lack of theoretical understanding of how these concepts are interrelated in different contexts and on distinct levels. As CSR scholars and social entrepreneurship scholars have noted, both concepts are fragmented in the levels of analysis. While the social entrepreneurship literature often views that social enterprises primarily exist for their social purpose [4,11,14,15], the CSR literature suggests that firms engage in CSR activities motivated by external pressures from stakeholders, who can be shareholders, consumers, the media, the local community, or interest groups [23]. The present study has focused on social SMEs and their social mission as reflected through their CSR. CSR is primarily studied from the organizational or institutional level [9], whereas social entrepreneurship studies have focused on the individual level. Saebi et al. [4] have noted that social entrepreneurship has been studied too little across its main three levels of individual or group, organizational, and institutional levels [4]. In this study, the unit of analysis was individual social entrepreneurs' speech. In a discourse study, it is possible to study discourses at all levels spoken.

The main contribution of this study is in providing a multi-level analysis at the self, group, company, and organizational levels in the same study. A discourse study can address prosociality as a personal attribute but also as a group or organization identity-based phenomenon. An empirical analysis identifies these discursive levels of speech and interprets that prosociality has many multifaceted, complex, nuanced meaning systems. The personal level may have stronger motivational speech and the team level may also have strong motivational speech. At the personal and team level, emotions, values, and personal traits are expressed. The company level may become a discursively more rational system and less emotional system, but prosocial values may operate independently as individuals aim to construct them in processes and structures of a company. At the company level, targets of prosocial behavior are defined as a company. In other words, in speech, company-level prosocial motivation is constructed differently than at the personal level. Prosocial elements are also spoken, addressing societal-level and more general concepts. Discourses still express experiences of responsibility and ownership towards problems. What is common at all levels is that speakers speak of prosociality in multiple ways, but

prosociality is not a limitless trait or endless motivational force; prosociality is defined via discourses. Whereas Farmer and Van Dyne [45] define organization-specific prosocial identity as a helping identity that is directed specifically at beneficiaries associated with a particular organization, this study examines the discourses on how social entrepreneurs speak of creating such an organization identity in their enterprise. In other words, the focus shifts to the creation process of an organization-level prosocial identity. Prosocial motivation and behavior have a subject and an object or a target, and the object group's agency is attempted to be improved. This study supports studies that emphasize the dialogic nature of motivation processes and opens avenues for understanding prosociality in social enterprises as a multilevel phenomenon. The resulting framework is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

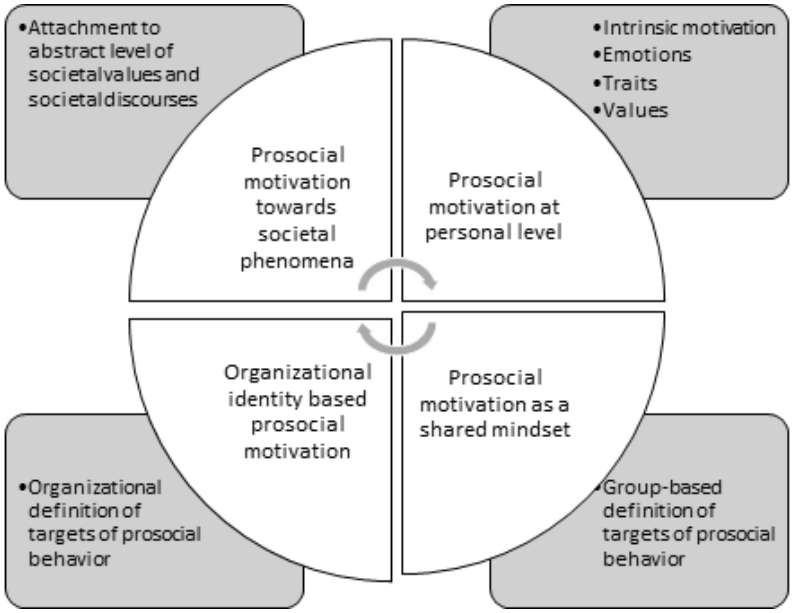

Figure 1. Prosocial motivation and behavior are multilevel phenomena and constructed differently in each level.

An important notion in this study is that this study views prosocial motivation and prosocial behavior from a constructionist perspective. Personal, group, and organization prosocial motivations co-exist, though they are theoretically explained from different research traditions. In this study, the discourse analysis focused on linguistic practices which are part of the micro-foundations where prosocial motives and prosocial behavior are constructed. Prosocial motivation is suggested to be an essential motivation in social entrepreneurship [18] and it is expected to create value in communities [51,52]. With this case study, we aim to understand how prosocial motivation orientations are constructed in speech. This study views prosocial motivation as a multifaceted, contextual value-bound phenomenon that can be oriented toward different targets. The current theorizing on prosociality in the context of social enterprises or CSR does not pay attention much to prosociality as an interactive, highly contextual side. However, social processes and both individual and group or organizational processes may determine and form prosocial motivation and prosocial behavior in the context of social entrepreneurship as well as CSR projects. Further, prosocial motivation dynamics should be studied more in detail in relation to the goals and targets it pursues, and the psychological attachment of participants towards these goals.

This study suggests entrepreneurs via discourses explain and construct logic behind their prosocial motivation. Prosociality is motivated differently at personal, group, and organizational levels, and the logic of how the targets of prosocial behavior are defined are different at these levels. On other hand, personal level and socially motivated prosociality

processes intertwine. The orientation to others and self-motivation linguistically are fully interconnected and inseparable. This supports the literature which does not contradict intrinsic motivation and other-directed, prosocial motivation with each other, and views that they can be also positively related [35].

Our findings on how social entrepreneurs describe discourses of prosocial motivations are in line with and help extend the theoretical views of a social enterprise that emphasize the primacy of a social mission in a social enterprise [4,11,14,15]. Social enterprises may have a unique position compared to other enterprises as their venture goals are aligned with their prosocial-motivated mission. Firm-level discourses reveal the aim to build prosocial values into the company's procedures and structure. The discourses particularly at the company level also aim to build inclusive governance practices, such as shared ownership or other participatory elements in decision-making. The inclusive governance aspect is included in the EMES definition of social enterprise [11].

This study emphasizes the socially constructed—and socio-psychological—side of social entrepreneurship and CSR. It could be possible that social entrepreneurs use or borrow from a CSR lens for their prosocial projects, as well. However, in this study social entrepreneurs clearly identified themselves as social enterprises and did not refer to corporate responsibility activities anyhow. Notably, these concepts are so distinct from the point of view of practitioners. Firstly, social entrepreneurs emphasized their own personal prosocial motivation but secondly, there is also a need to build prosocial processes at a firm level. Whereas Farmer and Van Dyne (2017) define organization-specific helping identity in an existing organization, this study views microfoundations of creating organization-specific identity and organizational reality for supporting prosociality. In other words, the nascent SMEs or constantly changing SMEs, which are also social enterprises in this study, work tp create a prosocial identity and structure and procedures for supporting prosocial behavior. Prosociality is part of the opportunity recognition or creation, but also an essential part of developing an enterprise and enterprising. Thirdly, they also attached their prosocial motivations to societal level challenges. From the point of view of the impact on sustainability, large corporations have the greatest power in creating change [53]. From the point of view of the impact, a CSR project and that of the social enterprise could have a similar effect. However, our empirical findings indicate that in discourses, social entrepreneurs devote their entrepreneurial activities towards the social mission, build it into their organizational structure, and aim to contribute to the societal level. In this case study, entrepreneurs' prosocial motivations in discourses are spoken at individual, firm, and societal levels.

Prosociality seems to be essential in social enterprises as they focus primarily on a social mission. As prosociality can be a representative attribute of social enterprises, the motivational aspect could also be included in social entrepreneurship definitions. Currently, different definitions emphasize the primacy of a social mission [4,13–15] but it could be argued that social enterprises have a *prosocial mission*. Socially responsible behavior is built into the strategy of an enterprise. In addition, from the view of the EMES definition, social enterprises should invest a majority of their profits into their social mission [11], which also highlights the view social enterprises are not developed for the interest of shareholders or economic self-interest. If a social enterprise has a democratic or inclusive governance model, prosociality is included in the decision-making processes. On the other hand, though the CSR literature and business CSR activities are not originally built into the organization's aims, it is still possible that the enterprise aims to a strategic approach related to social responsibility and builds in an organizational culture that supports prosocial values. Understanding individual motivations are crucial in aligning them with organizational level aims regarding CSR [54]. They emphasize that organizations should represent their motives authentically and interact with individuals of the organization from their points of view [54]. We interpret that in social enterprises, social responsibility is built into an enterprise's core aims from the early phases of the entrepreneurial journey. On the other hand, we interpret from the discourses that express that the social mission evolves, as

well. Therefore, social enterprises need to process their social mission as a company in a constantly changing business environment.

The study also responds to the call by Aguinis and Glavas [9] by adopting a multi-level approach to explain phenomena related to social entrepreneurship, and by applying a relatively seldom used microfoundational level analysis to study social entrepreneurship. We argue that discourse analysis studies can provide a valuable yet underapplied empirical method through which to study the multiple levels in such a way, as speech addresses all distinct levels: speech on an individual level about "I" or "me" and personal level intentions or behaviors as well as team-level, firm-level and wider network or societal-level behaviors. The present study contributes to this effect by outlining how discourses can provide a valuable tool with which to gain an understanding of social enterprises in their contexts. A discourse study reveals situational, subjective processes of how social entrepreneurs construct their prosocial motivation by addressing how it will affect the following: beneficiaries or customers, their enterprise as a prosocial unit, and the societal impact that they aim to achieve.

CSR and social entrepreneurship concepts have been studied separately, with CSR often having been illustrated from perspectives derived from external pressures and obligations [24]. In comparison, the literature on social entrepreneurship is seen more from an internally motivated lens, and therefore incorporating it with the CSR literature as the present study has sought to do provides a novel lens through which to explain the phenomenon. The interpretation of the discourses supports the existence of discourse of prosocial motivation and also of founders and managers of social enterprises in case social SMEs.

This study applies the concept of social SMEs to describe small and medium-sized social enterprises. The case enterprises are to different extents grow-oriented, and they are doing business for a social purpose, but are also clearly business-oriented. Some of the interviewed social SMEs have work integration activities, and some of them have roles of volunteers, but in addition to these, they have multiple social aims. They also invest more than half of their profits in their social cause for the future of their company.

Another important notion is that in this iterative, data-driven analysis, we approach concepts of social entrepreneurship and CSR from a positive perspective. However, it is widely known that scholars and practitioners have also recognized the dark side of CSR. The CSR concept has been criticized for its superficial use, and for providing a concept for "greenwashing" [20]. In this discourse study, interviewees expressed prosocial motivations, but this study does not assume that all social entrepreneurs or CSR projects would be driven by prosocial motivations.

The study also provides several managerial and policy implications. Firstly, motivational aspects are important in all social responsibility projects, whether they are maybe more intrinsically motivated entrepreneurs or driven by more external factors which seem to be the case according to the CSR literature. On the other hand, an organization-specific helping identity can be an important source of prosocial motivation, and this social identity can be led by an organization. For nascent enterprises or nascent or evolving social enterprises, strategic choices in identity creation and what kind of prosociality is integrated into identity, structure, or company procedures are important choices. Prosociality is a holistic phenomenon with individual, group-based, organizational and societal aspects. Motivational aspects should be considered in managerial contexts and policy contexts. Especially in the context of SMEs entrepreneurs have limited resources and CSR policies should be planned to support SMEs entrepreneurs and employees' motivational processes. How can entrepreneurs build policy initiatives that support intrinsic prosocial motivation as well as facilitate prosocial identities of groups and organizations?

Social enterprises and their position are debated in the social and economic policy landscape. In some countries, social enterprises are less known ways of doing business. Prosociality is a phenomenon that might be common for different social enterprises in different sectors, business models, and areas. Another practical conclusion of the study is the notion of prosociality being part of an entrepreneurial mission clearly. Understanding

motivations—and whether they are personal, group-based, organizational, or more general, societal citizenship motivations—could give an understanding of the nature of social enterprises or CRS projects. Personal level motivation is an essential source of motivation, and also organization-specific helping motivation can support prosocial projects. Motivation factors may also be an important factor in determining innovative and entrepreneurial elements of prosocial projects—and eventually also may correlate with their intended, positive social impact.

Finally, our study also naturally comes with several limitations and arising future research avenues. The empirical data used in this study consisted of eight social enterprises from four European countries. The sample includes different company forms, such as limited liability companies, an association, and a co-operative enterprise. The dataset does not, however, represent the variety of social enterprises in these countries. In this study, we aim to understand discourses explaining prosocial behavior but do not aim to generalize the views. Language can be seen as an instrument in constructing realities [55], and language has a relation to "reality", but this study does aim to understand subjective discourses. The study produces situated, local knowledge instead of generalizable knowledge.

This study focused on social entrepreneurs but did not include a comparison group of CSR projects of the so-called commercially oriented enterprises. In this study, we reflect on the concept of CSR on a theoretical level only. Understanding the motivations, time scope, and organization of corporate social responsibility projects would be important as well. Hemingway [36] uses the term CSR to describe behavior that is entrepreneurial in a socially responsible manner. On the other hand, Shepherd and Patzelt [56] (p. 143) view that CSR activities may not have entrepreneurial or innovative elements. Future studies could shed light on comparing social entrepreneurial elements in the context of initiating, managing, and growing an enterprise and in the context of social entrepreneurial behaviors or corporate social responsibility projects in existing institutions. Could prosocial behaviors in an institutional setting be seen as social entrepreneurship, or corporate social entrepreneurship, as Hemingway [41] suggested?

Social entrepreneurs in this study also constructed discourses to address societal aims and expressed responsibility for societal problems. While the focus of this study was on discourses, and we can interpret that social entrepreneurs relate to societal level issues, there would be a need for further studies understanding both the motivational side and the impact side. For instance, it would be essential to explain if entrepreneurs and CSR leaders experience similar prosocial motivations and whether prosocial motivations correlate with a positive impact on society.

This study focused on speech but did not study deeper their context. Everyday practices can be studied further in connection with their wider macro-sociological contexts [57]. Future studies could address the interplay of micro-social processes and macro-level processes related to the sensemaking of social mission and corporate social responsibility, how individuals or groups initiate social enterprises or CSR projects and how values, motivations, and overall context effects the process.

In the existing literature, the growth challenges and internationalization of social SMEs are understudied areas. This study contributes to shedding light on the discourses on how social entrepreneurs explain their motivations. As a discourse study, we do not assume it to describe reality as such, but instead, the findings are interpreted discourses, situational and located knowledge, but they do reflect how meanings are constructed. Social entrepreneurs address a specific group of people with their business idea, but they also connect their business idea (mentally) with wider societal impact. The prosocial nature of business has a target, and in growth and international contexts, this should be studied more closely. This study did not make any cross-country nor cross-cultural comparisons, but this would also be an important field of study and contribute to the understanding of social entrepreneurship in different countries and cultural contexts.

6. Conclusions

Understanding the individual, company-level, and societal level processes and the interconnections between them are important areas of study for both social entrepreneurship and CSR studies. This study approached the phenomenon by studying discourses of social entrepreneurs in social SMEs, interpreting distinct orientations for their social mission, as well as on the ways in which their social mission and entrepreneurial processes are intertwined. This study argues that prosocial motivation is a more nuanced multilevel phenomenon. The analysis in this study suggests prosociality can be viewed as an individual, team, organizational attribute, character, or value and on the other hand, prosociality can be directed towards macro-level social challenges. This study calls for further studies on both relations of self and others in prosocial motivation and how via sociopsychological processes are "the others" defined in others-directed motivation. Furthermore, broader sociocultural contexts and emotional cultures would require more attention to understand individuals' and organizations' processes of initiating and engaging in social ventures or social projects in an institutional context. It should be noted that motivation is a systemic phenomenon, and prosocial motivation should be studied further. As such, the present study serves as a foundation for future studies to integrate the CSR and social entrepreneurship literature through a variety of research methods and approaches. We encourage scholars to continue shedding light on the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship from a discursive view.

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