

Furtherance of Social Justice in Socially Disadvantaged Neighborhoods on Social Media: A Case Study of the Swedish Police

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Abstract

Millions of people are living in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods (SDNs), characterized by residents experiencing social injustice and high police presence. As social media is increasingly used by the police, this paper addresses the police use of social media for furtherance of social justice in SDNs. Analyzing documents, semi-structured interviews with police officers, and social media data through the lens of Scott's institutional theory, we show the tension between equality and equity perspectives, the officers striving for equity, while the police organization emphasizes equality. The findings call for police organizations to consider social justice issues and inclusion perspectives in guiding police communication on social media platforms. We also contribute to IS social justice research in terms of providing insights into how governmental organizations use social media to reach out to marginalized groups.

Keywords: police, social media, social justice, socially disadvantaged neighborhoods.

1. Introduction

It matters where you grow up. Across the globe, millions of people are living in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods (SDNs), characterized by high levels of crime rates, poverty, and marginalization (Hwang & Ding, 2020). Growing up in these neighborhoods considerably reduces the chances of graduating from

high school (Passaretta & Skopek, 2021), having a negative impact on future job prospects (Hwang & Ding, 2020).

High police presence in SDNs is a complex and multifaceted issue. While law enforcement is essential for maintaining public safety, it's equally crucial to recognize concerns about the police's increased presence, resulting in disproportionate and intrusive policing (Payne & Gainey, 2007). Increased police presence in SDNs also raises the issues of systemic discrimination and marginalization of minorities, resulting in erosion of trust between the residents and the police (Schuck et al., 2008) and hostility resulting from residents being surveilled (Weitzer, 2017).

People in SDNs face a range of social justice issues, such as systemic inequalities and challenges that hinder their access to equal opportunities and resources (Meerow et al., 2019), including structural inequalities, race, class discrimination, and health disparities (Izenberg & Fullilove, 2020). Social injustice results in SDNs' residents distrusting the police, exhibiting a cynical view of the law, and a lack of cooperation with the police in crime prevention (Schwarzenbach, 2020). While police promoting social justice is pivotal for giving hope and opportunity for the residents in SDNs to be kept from criminal activities (Schneider, 1998), the research raises concerns about police misconduct in SDNs (Kane, 2005), abuse of power (Goddard & Myers, 2017), and racial bias (Weitzer, 2017). It calls for more insights into how the police can become "agents of change," promoting social justice in SDNs.

Due to digitalization, contacts between the police and the public increasingly occur on social media platforms, easily accessible via smartphones, offering new opportunities for reaching out and influencing citizens with greater immediacy (Dekker et al., 2020). At this moment, IS research on social media use by the police in general, and in relation to social justice in particular, is in its infancy. Further, research on how the police use social media for furthering social justice in

SDNs has not been explored, which is surprising given the growing role mobile technology and social media play for minorities and marginalized groups (AbuJarour & Krasnova, 2017).

To this end, we ask the following research question:

How do the police use social media for furtherance of social justice in SDNs?

We answer this question by analyzing the case of the Swedish police's use of Instagram to reach out to the residents of SDNs through the theoretical lens of Scott's (2008) institutional theory. We combine the analysis of the documents, guiding the Swedish police as an organization, with semi-structured interviews with the police officers working with the official Instagram accounts and the digital trace data from police Instagram accounts, applying the computationally intensive theory construction (CITC) approach (Berente et al., 2019; Hsieh et al., 2008; Miranda et al., 2022). Through our research, we aim to contribute to the emerging conversation around digital technologies and social justice in IS research.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1. Social justice, social media, and police

Though there exists no established definition of social justice, it is perceived as a liberatory consciousness and an intentional awareness of systemic forces of oppression (Love, 2000), urging for addressing them (Watts, 2004); society responding to systemic inequalities that serve to marginalize groups of people (Vera & Speight, 2003), striving to achieve full and equal participation by all groups (Bell, 2016). The research emphasizes the need to address systemic inequalities, recognizing the intersecting dimensions of oppression faced by minorities (Hsieh et al., 2008) and raising the issues of equity and equality. In brief, equality refers to the fair distribution of resources, allocating the same amount to all people, while equity acknowledges that certain people may require additional resources to ensure they have the same opportunities for success as their peers (Evans & Davies, 2017). As prioritizing equity involves addressing oppression and discrimination and striving for social justice, the distribution of resources should be positively biased towards the members of the society with the greatest needs (Harvey, 1973). This means that additional resources are distributed to compensate for certain barriers or challenges (Schwinger, 1986).

While there is an ample body of research on social justice, research that focuses on how it is furthered in interactions between minorities, in our case, the residents of SDNs, and the organizations (the police) representing the majority groups of society on social

media is in its infancy (Linnér et al., 2022). Literature on police use of social media is predominantly centered around a general analysis of social media adoption by the police (Dekker et al., 2020) and police communication with citizens during a crisis (Akkaya et al., 2019), highlighting the importance of understanding the target groups for matching the police's message to the audience (Dai et al., 2017). Most studies are focused on investigating the police's strategies for informing and engaging the public, e.g., providing information, invitations to events, and asking for help in crime prevention, with a focus on public responsiveness (Beshears, 2017; Lieberman et al., 2013) and citizens' perceptions of the police (Jansen et al., 2018).

It has also been overlooked that the social media presence of the police has important implications for social justice. As social justice describes the condition that individuals participating in a social system have equal access to resources despite their economic or political situation, social justice offers individuals the possibility to fully participate in their respective society, combating discrimination and crime and leveraging economic growth (Tyler, 2000).

2.2. Institutional theory and social justice

We will analyze the police use of social media to further social justice through the lens of Scott's (2008) institutional theory in the context of police-resident contacts in SDNs (Scott, 2008). An institution comprises regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements, also referred to as 'institutional pillars,' which constitute the system of meanings, norms, values, beliefs, and rules. These pillars, which may enable or constrain the actions of police officers working with social media, are briefly presented below.

The regulative dimension refers to the formal rules, regulations, and laws that organizations must comply with. Regulative pressures come from external authorities, such as government agencies and regulatory bodies, that enforce compliance with established rules. Organizations adhere to regulative forces to ensure legal compliance, avoid sanctions, and maintain stability within the institutional environment.

The normative dimension encompasses obligations, binding expectations, core values, beliefs, goals, objectives, and strategies for achieving them. These elements are expressed in documents such as tutorials and guidelines developed by the organizational members, which serve as a framework guiding social media use and are influenced by the regulatory elements as well as the values and beliefs held by organizations in their respective contexts.

The cultural-cognitive dimension focuses on shared cognitive frameworks, symbols, and interpretations that

shape organizational behavior. It recognizes the importance of collective understandings, mental models, and taken-for-granted assumptions that guide decision-making and actions within organizations. These cognitive elements are influenced by broader cultural beliefs, historical legacies, and shared meanings. The cultural-cognitive dimension highlights the influence of culture on organizational behavior and the construction of meaning within institutional environments.

In our study, we are interested in how the system of rules, norms, values, and collective and individual perceptions interplay and operate within the police social media work in relation to the furtherance of social justice, namely the interplay between what *must* be done, presented in rules and regulations, what *should* be done, such as the guidelines for social media use developed by the police organization, what people, in our case the police officers working with social media *think* should be done, as expressed in the interviews and *what they are actually doing* by the analysis of communication on the police official social media accounts. Further, social justice practices are influenced by all three elements, which are internalized and manifested to varying degrees by different actors and within different contexts (Scott, 2008).

3. Methods

3.1. Research context

This study focuses on the Swedish police use of Instagram as the underlying research context. The Swedish police are very active on social media, with more than 250 social media accounts, with separate Instagram accounts to target SDNs, characterized by social issues and a criminal presence which has led to a widespread disinclination to participate in the judicial process and difficulties for the police to fulfill their mission (The National Operations Department, 2017).

Our choice of Instagram for this study is motivated by the following reasons. First, previous research states that the police use Instagram for engagement primarily with young residents (Hofmann & Feltes, 2020), who are a dominant group in the Swedish SDNs and are particularly distrustful toward the police (The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ), 2018). Second, as many residents in SDNs in Sweden are migrants (Oudin et al., 2016), often with limited Swedish language skills, visual communication via Instagram becomes the superior way of communication compared to textual one, e.g., via Twitter. Research suggests visual communication is a predominant way of communication nowadays (Romney & Johnson, 2020),

and sharing images can overcome language boundaries as well as (digital) illiteracy (Bäck-Wiklund, 2016).

Overall, the fact that the Swedish police use different Instagram accounts for various audience groups (i.e., residents of certain areas) creates an excellent opportunity to investigate police's communication with those audience groups in comparison to one another, particularly from a social justice perspective.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

An overview of the data used for this study is presented below:

Data	Source/description
the Police Act (1984:387)	The Swedish Government Offices (Regeringskansliet, 1984)
The Tutorial for the Police Use of Social Media ("Handledning polisen i sociala medier")	developed by and received from the Police Communications Department (Police Communications Department, 2016)
12 semi-structured interviews	police officers working with Instagram in SDNs (10) and non-SDNs (2)
Digital trace data from the Swedish police Instagram accounts	5 accounts from SDNs and 5 from non-SDNs

Table 1. Data overview.

The selected documents include the Police Act and The Tutorial for the Police Use of Social Media. The Police Act (1984:387) is the core police legislation document that governs the activities, organization, and powers of the police force in Sweden (Regeringskansliet, 1984). The key provisions and principles outlined in the Act are the purpose, organization, police powers, duties and responsibilities, human rights and legal standards, impartiality, accountability, and oversight as well as cooperation and collaboration.

The Tutorial for the Police Use of Social Media (Police Communications Department, 2016) is a set of guidelines to ensure that the police are perceived as

uniform and clear senders in social media and that legal requirements are followed.

We also conducted and audio recorded, upon the interviewee's consent, 12 semi-structured interviews with police officers (10 from SDNs and 2 from non-SDNs) responsible for the official Instagram accounts. While no specific questions were asked about social justice, which is a sensitive topic, to avoid social desirability bias (Grimm, 2010), the respondents were asked how they used social media to reach out to the residents in their areas, with a special focus on the marginalized groups. The total interview time is 416 minutes, and the mean time per interview is 42 min.

Finally, we selected 10 official Swedish police Instagram accounts, half targeting SDNs and half targeting non-SDNs. This data covers a total of 3,617 posts ($m = 361.7$; $SD = 226.67$) published between February 2017 and January 2022.

Turning to data analysis, the qualitative analysis of the documents was conducted, following (O'Leary, 2014). Two researchers assessed the documents independently, treating each document as an informant and exploring the texts for the issues in relation to social justice, focusing on how the documents addressed such issues as police tasks, the issues of inequality, and marginalized groups. The interviews were analyzed based on a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Urquhart et al., 2010) using NVivo 1.6. First, the transcripts were coded at a very fine granular level, and identified codes were gradually combined into higher-level categories until a meaningful level of abstraction was reached. If a statement could not be suitably coded into any of the existing categories, a new category was then added in an iterative process (open coding). Next, we diverged from grounded theory, using selective coding, which was conducted with a special focus on the strategies that police officers use to further social justice in relation to regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements of Scott's framework, adapted in our study (see Figure 1).

The digital trace data was analyzed using computational techniques and memo writing. We opted for open coding of post captions/texts using topic modeling, latent dirichlet allocation (LDA) in particular, which is a computational natural language processing technique (Andersen & Bogusz, 2019; Blei et al., 2003). The computational analysis of digital trace data was implemented in Python. We constructed a corpus for each account separately by listing the captions of all posts published by each account prior to topic modeling. This resulted in the creation of 10 corpora (i.e., 10 sets of documents, while a document is a post's caption). Note that the Instagram data were initially cleaned and prepared. First, we cleaned the texts from numbers, punctuations, special characters, URLs, emojis, and

hashtags. We then generated a document term matrix from each corpus by extracting the terms, bigrams, and trigrams in each text. This matrix was used as the input for LDA.

The analyses of the documents, the interviews, and digital trace data were fulfilled via parallel procedures and in an iterative manner by researchers who informed each other, triggered additional analysis after discussions, or validated emerging insights.

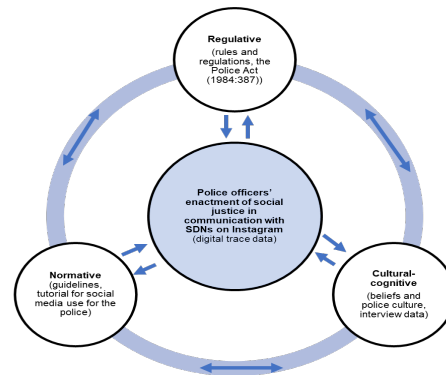


Figure 1. Elements that interact and influence (are influenced by) the police' actions for social justice in connection to institutional theory elements (Scott, 2008).

Combining computational and qualitative analyses of a phenomenon is especially appropriate if theoretical insights are lacking, priori hypotheses are missing, and the problem is multifaceted, including a number of nuances and relationships between concepts (Lindberg, 2020).

We constantly compared different statements or data excerpts that we collected through our four data sources; this is what Berente (2019) and Miranda (2022) referred to as using a lexicon to align the findings of both parallel procedures, which is an integral aspect of our investigation in the identification of the concepts and the relationships between them. Accordingly, both parallel analyses of data in this study were not constrained by the existing theoretical foundations in the initial iterations but were rather sensitized and contextualized through the lens of Scott's framework and of social justice halfway through our investigation.

4. Findings

Below, we provide the synthesis of findings in relation to each of the three elements of Scott's institutional theory to show how these elements impact police furthering social justice on Instagram. Presenting the findings in this manner, we show how all three

elements impact the furtherance of social justice, but at the same time, we realize that the linear presentation complicates showing the complexity and interconnections of these three elements, which will be addressed in the discussion section.

4.1. Regulatory elements

The Police Act states the police role is central to promoting justice and security in society. The police's work aims at maintaining public order and security, assuring the public of protection and other assistance. The tasks of the Police Authority include (1) preventing and detecting criminal activity and other disturbances of public order or safety; (2) monitoring public order and safety and intervening when disturbances have occurred; (3) investigating and prosecuting crimes subject to public prosecution; and (4) providing the public with protection, information, and other assistance.

Concerning safety and security, in the interviews, all police officers emphasize that actively and regularly posting on Instagram about their activities in the areas contributes to making citizens feel safe: *"Yes, the police are doing something in our area."* (P7). The officers from SDNs especially motivate the importance of sharing information about their presence for the residents to feel protected: *"The police helicopter shows up in [SDN], so people write [on Instagram]: 'Oh, what's going on?' And then we write a few lines, 'We've been looking for a guy who disappeared in the woods. He's been found,' and they think that's great, like. So, they ask for information, and we try to write about it"* (P1). As SDNs are marred by crime, the respondents consider it pivotal to communicate their actions about handling crimes, e.g., drug seizures, investigations, etc. This is also reflected in topic modeling results (Appendix A, Table 2), which reveal that roughly 14.9% of posts are potentially meant to show the residents what it takes to improve the safety and security of their area (TM03); for the SDNs, the share of TM03 is higher (19.1% compared to 13.1% in non-SDN accounts).

The police officers working in SDNs also witness that Instagram helps them in preventing criminal activities, as the criminals check police posts: *"In conversations with criminals, they tell us that [check our posts] where we are out, and then that makes them feel that 'Damn, they're on the streets, you are everywhere tonight,' although we may only be few cars. And that means that they're going to be, what do you call it, scared or that they're not going to get out and move, so there's a kind of psychological thing"* (P5).

The respondents also mention constantly sharing information about laws and regulations, facilitating knowledge building, e.g., *"A post could be about that in*

the springtime you shouldn't grill outside because the grass is dry" (P7), the Swedish laws about violence in close relationships, driving under the influence of drugs, disposal of drunk people, Covid-19 restriction updates, etc. This is also evident in the digital trace data, where we can see the posts for raising awareness on various topics, cases, and events (e.g., TM01 and TM12). Comparing SDNs and non-SDNs' Instagram accounts, TM12 shows that police officers were more active in holding campaigns and social events in SDNs to raise awareness among their residents.

4.2. Normative elements

The Tutorial for Police Use of Social Media, developed by the Police Communications Department, emphasizes the purpose of social media presence for (1) an increased dialogue with citizens, (2) sharing crime prevention information and tips to reduce crime, (3) increasing security and reaching out that the police want tips and witness information to solve crimes.

Starting with the purpose of dialoguing, the police officers working in SDNs consider being close to the citizens of their areas and creating arenas for police-citizen dialogue pivotal for creating the image of the police as positive, approachable, and trustworthy *"We want to show that you can come to us, you can talk to us. ... you should be able to trust us. We should really be [SDN]'s police, the citizens' police. They should know when we come what it's about"* (P8).

The police officers in SDNs also mention the need to make efforts to improve the perception of the police by the residents. Many people in SDNs, such as migrants and refugees, experienced police brutality in their home countries, which results in them distrusting and fearing police authority: *"In our areas, people fear the police, people do not want to testify because they are perhaps afraid of us, and [Instagram] helps to reach out to them"* (P4).

The police officers explain the hurdles that many migrants and refugees in SDNs have in their relationship with the Swedish police: *"If you've lived in a country where the police are corrupt, or you get beaten up if you don't like this or that, or you're arrested if you like that or that, it's clearly difficult to change your opinion overnight"* (P2). The respondents consider it essential to overcome residents' fear of approaching the police: *"some people are afraid, so they shy away when they bring their children to us. And maybe you should have a little respect [towards the police], but you should still be able to talk to us. As long as you haven't done anything criminal, you should be able to talk to us"* (P1).

To overcome residents' fear, the police officers from SDNs especially strive to show that they are open to contact, posting pictures with the residents. A police

officer from SDN comments that posting his picture and mentioning his name resulted in bridging the gap between the residents and himself: *“I’m completely open about my name, I’m very open about who I am. There have been a couple of times when people approached me on the street and said, ‘Well, you’re [officer’s name], I’ve heard about you and saw you [on Instagram], you’re good’. Then it’s easier to do the job if it’s the rumor they [the residents] have heard about you that you’re good”* (P3).

The police officers also mention the importance of regularly engaging with the followers and dialoguing online: *“We get a lot of direct messages, and we try to answer all of them or at least push a heart or something. If they send us a heart, we usually like it back. And we pretty much reply to every comment on every post that we get”* (P7).

In this regard, the topic modeling results show that TM7 (“Interaction with residents and supporting the local community”) stands for 3.4% of posts and is higher in SDNs (9.4%) compared to non-SDNs (0.9%).

Turning to the police’s tasks of increasing security and reaching out for tips, the police officers mention using Instagram for getting help in crime prevention: *“It’s very appreciated by many people, that you get feedback when you make a tip, for instance, that there’s a lot of running in that stairwell or people drive very fast there, and so on. And then we can reply: ‘Good, very interesting. We’ll take it to heart, thank you for helping us towards a better society’”* (P2). The police officers get tips about traffic, drugs, missing persons or animals, etc. One of the respondents in SDN describes how together with his colleagues he used Instagram to ask the local residents for help in crime investigation: *“There was a person a few years ago who was suspected of ... he shot at police officers, so he was suspected of attempted murder, and he stayed away. Then we put this on social media, and there was a whole different pressure. We chased and finally got him. He couldn’t take it anymore, because people said, ‘You go and give yourself up because we’re not going to do this anymore.’ I think this is great. Instead of ... we would chase him for months, it only took a day [after the Instagram post]”* (P7).

The police officers from SDNs consider involving residents in police work as pivotal for both crime prevention and residents’ inclusion in society. As the distance between the police and residents in many countries is larger than in Sweden, many migrants don’t even consider it possible to get involved in any investigation or influence the police’s work. A police officer from a [SDN] illustrates it: *“We [the police officers] wrote, ‘Where do you want us to have traffic control?’ And then the followers came up with maybe 20, 30 places in [the SDN] on Instagram, and then we*

chose to go to the places that they described, and then we wrote that: ‘This is where we’ve been. We’ve been standing here for a certain period of time, there’ve been two reported fines, for speed,’ or whatever. And people thought this was great because then they felt that they were included” (P8).

Turning to the topic modeling results, TM04 (6% of posts) shows that the police ask people to help them find a suspect or tip them off about anything suspicious they see, for instance. They encourage residents in their area to participate in crime prevention; TM04 also is higher in the accounts from SDNs compared to the non-SDNs (11.3% compared to 3.8%, respectively).

4.3. Cultural-cognitive elements

Cultural-cognitive elements such as the social context, traditions, culture, and personal interpretations of what is possible and ‘right’ influence the police officers’ decisions on how to communicate on Instagram and further social justice. The police officers from SDNs comment on considering the following aspects in their Instagram communication: (1) avoiding potentially sensitive topics; (2) adapting to their followers’ language competence; (3) reaching out to younger generations at higher risk of getting into crime; and (4) promoting the police profession.

4.3.1. Avoiding potentially sensitive topics. The police officers from SDNs mention avoiding writing about such issues as politics and religion as they can be perceived as offensive by some residents in culturally diverse neighborhoods: *“Then we can wish them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and Eid Mubarak. But otherwise, we try rather not to write much about religion and culture. In our area, we try not to put in those kinds of posts. We don’t want to highlight a particular group in our posts”* (P3).

Staying neutral and non-judgmental is also governed by the Tutorial (Section 8.4. Attitudes): *“we’re quite flat in our information, it’s kind of not ... we never ever mix in politics, or kind of other opinions”* (P2).

4.3.2. Adapting to their followers’ language competence. The police officers from SDNs also mention being aware of the fact that their Instagram posts are read by people of different linguistic backgrounds and non-native Swedish language speakers. Though according to the Tutorial (Section 8.3. Language), all police communication via social media is to be in Swedish, the police officers working in SDNs perceive it as not optimal for reaching out to the non-Swedish speaking immigrants, overrepresented in their areas. Some police officers consciously choose to post both in Swedish and in other languages, though the linguistic diversity in SDNs makes it complicated to

post in all languages: *“Sometimes I've actually written in Arabic and Somali, not that I'm very good at it, but I've used Google Translate. It turned out pretty well. We have a lot of foreign-born in this area of the city, so sometimes we actually do write in other languages as well. ...but of course, you can use Google Translate and change your post to Arabic, but those who speak Polish or those who speak ... well, it's difficult to reach out to everyone”* (P4). Further, as Instagram allows translating into other languages, the police officers emphasize using different languages in their posts primarily as a strategy for sending a positive signal, indicating police understanding, appreciation, and willingness to embrace and reflect the linguistic diversity in the areas in their Instagram communication.

Some respondents also mention writing in an easy-to-understand, a bit informal way to attract followers, which is not always considered positive and appreciated by the management, expecting a more formal way of presenting information, according to the Tutorial (Section 8.4. Attitudes): *“If we're going to write the way [management] wants me to write, it's just a duplication of polisen.se [the official site]. Instagram is the platform that has a target audience, and if we are going to reach this audience, we have to write in the way that this platform has. I was called to the manager, and they waved their fingers and said ‘Be careful, it's a governmental authority site!’”* (P10).

4.3.3. Reaching out to younger generations at higher risk of getting into crime. The respondents also emphasize that Instagram is especially useful in reaching out to younger generations, who are common users of social media *“On Instagram, I would say the majority is a younger audience. On Facebook, the audience is a little bit older and more mature”* (P2). The police officer from SDNs comments on reaching out to younger people via social media as pivotal for preventing them from getting involved in crimes: *“I'm very much in schools. I have one school that I'm the contact police for. There are crimes committed in the [name of school] school. We can't protect all young people, some become criminals, but I still try to make a good relationship with them. I don't write about it online, but I mention the contacts I have with them and our willingness to help them out.”* (P6).

Turning to the topic modeling results, TM6 (“Police’s special attention to the youth”) is slightly higher in SDNs (4.2%) compared to non-SDNs (3.7%) and shows the youth is under the police’s attention across the board.

4.3.4. Promoting the police profession. Inviting local residents to join the police force is another topic that all police officers comment on in relation to their Instagram communication. The officers working in SDNs mention many residents are not even considering

joining the Swedish police force, e.g., compared to Sweden, women are not commonly allowed to join the police force in some countries the residents in SDNs are coming from. The police officers mention making conscious attempts to encourage the residents to join the police force, showing that being a foreigner is not an obstacle: *“Our aim is to reach out to the citizens locally, we prefer to run our own recruitment or attraction campaigns in the hood [SDN]. We want to have a local police force that is visible so that you recognize yourself as well. You recognize the background ‘Yes, you can work there, and what fun. I want to be a policeman too.’ We think that many people we want to attract are those who could never imagine or have thought about becoming police officers. So that's kind of what we're working on now”* (P1).

According to our topic modeling results, the posts associated with TM02 (27% of all posts) notably touch on promoting the police profession, e.g., by presenting more personal lives of police officers or depicting them. The promotion of the police profession is done more in non-SDNs, though.

5. Discussion

This study investigates the police use of social media for furtherance of social justice in SDNs using the case of the Swedish police, motivated by the importance of social justice for maintaining peace and safety in SDNs (Stevens et al., 2016) and the increasing importance of communication between citizens and the police through social media channels (Dekker et al., 2020). The theoretical motivation is grounded on the overlooked role that social justice plays in the literature on police furtherance of social justice in social media in particular and governmental agencies in general. As a consequence, there is a lack of knowledge and critical analysis of how police communication on social media channels contributes to social justice. The question of cultural and social challenges is also seldom addressed. These reasons call for empirical and theoretical research in this area.

Our study, by using a combination of document analysis, grounded theory analysis of the interviews with the police officers working with Instagram, and computational techniques, inspired by CITC (Berente et al., 2019), uncovers how normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive elements of police as organization (Scott, 2008) jointly impact the furtherance of social justice by the police officers on Instagram.

The findings uncover the complexity of interplay among the regulative and normative elements from one side and the police officers considering cultural-cognitive elements in enacting social justice on Instagram in reaching out to the residents in SDNs. The

law emphasizes treating all citizens equally; the analyzed documents don't make any distinctions in how the residents in SDNs and non-SDNs should be approached. Thus, on a regulative and normative levels, the police officers should treat all Instagram users equally. On the contrary, our analysis shows the police officers working in SDNs are striving to ensure equity, sensing that the residents of SDNs have different needs compared to the general population. Comparing non-SDNs and SDNs data, the police officers further social justice by providing more information about safety and security and more information about police presence in SDNs, making the residents feel secure and encouraging more police-resident dialoguing to make the voices of the marginalized populations heard. In line with the previous research, dialoguing between police and residents is central on social media (Hofmann & Feltes, 2020); our findings also show that dialoguing is also more emphasized by the police officers in SDNs for overcoming the lack of trust/distrust some migrants and refugees in SDNs might have from their previous negative experiences with the police (Wästerfors & Burcar Alm, 2020).

The police officers also adapt their messages in terms of language, knowing that some migrant residents from linguistically and culturally diverse SDNs might experience challenges with understanding Swedish (Gozal, 2019). Though Swedish is the language to be used in social media according to the official documents, the police officers post messages in other languages, represented in migrant-dense SDNs, enhancing inclusion, which is an essential element of social justice (Hlalele & Alexander, 2012). Informal communication, which is against the official guidelines for communication in social media, is also sometimes adopted by the police officers in our study, which allows them to reach out and attract followers, especially among younger people. Further, in SDNs, compared to non-SDNs, more focus is also put on young people due to them being at higher risk of getting into criminal activities (Ceconi et al., 2022).

To sum up, the study clearly indicates the tension between regulative and normative elements, expectations of communication on social media from the police as an organization and institution, and the strategies the police officers use to reach out to the residents in SDNs. The police officers, guided by their experiences in working with people in SDNs, deviate from the expected equality approach presented in the documents and enact an equity approach, believing in this way to be able to make a difference to people living in SDNs. While our findings show that there might be positive effects of deviating from the protocols for furthering social justice, the unintended effects of police officers taking an equity approach should also be

considered. Apart from risking getting reprimands and disciplinary actions from the management, such potential consequences as eroding public trust and confidence in the police force, negative impacts on investigations, and legal consequences can be mentioned. Thus, the police officers face the challenge of upholding the law (equality) while treating individuals equitably in their communication on social media. While successfully managing these tasks can help to strengthen the police-resident relationship, it also requires careful consideration of not only own actions, but also their consequences on the police force as a whole.

The findings of this study are important for policymakers, police officers, and police administration. For policymakers, the study contributes to developing and maintaining effective social media policies that can help law enforcement agencies successfully implement social media in their work to ensure that social media improves rather than hurts police-citizen relationships. For police officers and police administration, our findings call for cultivating social justice awareness in police social media training to promote socially just communication in their work. Our findings also have implications for social inclusion, contributing to inclusive, sustainable societies and counteracting the establishment of parallel structures of society, alienation, and segregation.

6. Conclusions, limitations, and further research

Our research provides three contributions to the theory. First, we are kicking off a debate about socially just communication of governmental agencies on social media, which adds to the emerging literature on the societal impacts of digital technologies (AbuJarour & Krasnova, 2017; Chan et al., 2016; Hsieh et al., 2008) by showing how governmental agencies can use social media to reach out to socially vulnerable people and enact social justice. Social justice is a multidimensional and abstract concept that needs to be adapted to every context. By leaning on the need principles (Schwinger, 1986) that originated in Rawls's principles of social justice (Rawls, 1985), our findings show that while the police as a governmental organization advocate equality, the police officers strive to ensure equity in contacts with people from SDNs. In this vein, we emphasize the complexity of social justice that does not solely refer to equality in terms of providing the same information to everyone in the society but also to keeping in mind certain disadvantages that need to be overcome by modifying the content distribution that leads to successful relationship building, which is

especially important in communication with marginalized groups.

The study also makes a methodological contribution. Using CITC approach (Berente et al., 2019), our research adds to the conversation around employing CITC in IS field. Finally, with this research, we hope to pave the way for more debates about socially just communication on social media.

Turning to limitations, we investigated the police of Instagram in one country; future research can investigate the police use of social media in other countries to identify the strategies used in different cultural contexts or against the background of other

disadvantaged groups. Second, with our interviews, we relied on self-reports that can be influenced by social desirability bias.

Future research can also complement our organizational perspective by conducting more interviews, with both police officers and residents in SDNs, about perceived fairness when consuming content shared by the police on social media. In this regard, future research can test which measures of socially just communication actually lead to a higher degree of perceived fairness. Finally, image analysis would be a complement to the topic modeling results.

7. References

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Appendix. A

Topic code	Topic description	% in all data	% SDNs	% non-SDNs
TM01	Reporting and raising awareness about miscellaneous cases	30.9	19.9	35.6
TM02	What it takes to be a police and diversity of police work	27.0	17.3	31.2
TM03	What it takes to improve local safety and security	14.9	19.1	13.1
TM04	Residents' role in crime prevention and police work	6.1	11.3	3.8
TM05	Traffic and transportation specific reports	6.1	10.4	4.3
TM06	Police's special attention to the youth	3.8	4.2	3.7
TM07	Interaction with residents and supporting the local community	3.4	9.4	0.9
TM08	Helping and supporting the crime victims and those in need	2.1	3.4	1.5
TM09	Police's special operations for crime prevention	1.8	0.0	2.6
TM10	Dealing with crime against women and children	1.4	0.6	1.7
TM11	Reporting on theft and monetary specific crimes	1.2	0.0	1.7
TM12	Campaigns and activities for raising awareness	0.7	2.5	0.0
TM13	Police operations against narcotic activities	0.4	1.2	0.0

Table 2. Topic Modeling Results