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“Those who agree to play on our terms will be taken in” : a qualitative study on the perceptions of public authorities and NGO representatives regarding self-organizing fourth-sector activity.

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**“THOSE WHO AGREE TO PLAY ON OUR TERMS WILL BE
TAKEN IN”: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE
PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND NGO
REPRESENTATIVES REGARDING SELF-ORGANIZING
FOURTH-SECTOR ACTIVITY**

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ABSTRACT

Interest is growing in the role of spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizens groups in safety and security functions. This study connects those actors to the broad concept of the self-organizing fourth sector and analyzes the opinions of more than 200 Finnish representatives of public- and the third-sector organizations gathered through interviews and small group discussion on the tensions related to fourth-sector activity. The study reveals a strong desire to control the fourth sector, a desire that dominates any associated desire to enable it. The tension between enabling and controlling can be tamed by moving the fourth-sector actors under the control of the third sector. However, the role of the fourth sector is then reduced to being merely an extra pair of hands, and its self-organizing and emergent nature is subsumed. The debate over the paradox of spontaneous volunteering needs to be resolved before the fourth sector becomes a normal and acknowledged part of the security and safety functions.

Keywords: fourth sector, spontaneous volunteers, emergent citizen groups, self-organization, public sector; third sector

INTRODUCTION

As a response to the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York, a volunteer organization emerged to deliver supplies to ground zero workers (Voorhees, 2008). Rising to the challenges of hurricane Katrina in 2005, emergent citizen groups such as the *Robin Hood Looters* came to the aid of fellow citizens (Rodríguez, Trainor, & Quarantelli, 2006). During the 2011 Norway terror attacks, unaffiliated volunteers emerged to rescue the victims who were swimming from the island of Utøya (Gjerland et al., 2015). In the refugee crises of 2015, public authorities all over Europe were overwhelmed by the informal self-organized responses of citizens in providing support, such as shelter and provisions, for refugees (Lorenz, Schulze, & Voss, 2018). Occurrences such as those above are not exceptional, but are natural actions in various crisis situations (Twigg & Mosel, 2017).

In Finland, it has been suggested that such self-organizing emergent civic activity should be incorporated into the conception of the *fourth sector* (see Jalava et al., 2017). For example, the Advisory Board on Civil Society Policy (known as KANE), that operates in conjunction with the Finnish Ministry of Justice mentions the fourth sector in its action plans for 2017–2021, and considers it to encompass individual citizens, informal associations of citizens, loose social networks, and households (KANE, 2017). In the growing Finnish research literature on the topic, the fourth sector is seen as being occupied with temporary project-type activities that carry no obligation to become a member of an association and where participation is formed around changing themes of interest rather than organizations. In this expanding self-organizing civic activity, social networking services, such as Facebook and Twitter, play a key role (see Mäenpää & Faehnle, 2017; Faehnle et al., 2017).

This study has two distinct purposes. The first relates to the observation that the literatures on the fourth sector and on spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizens groups in safety and security functions share very similar characteristics. However, these two areas of literature have not previously been integrated in academic studies. Linking these two research areas could help

integrate spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizens' groups in safety and security functions into a separate fourth sector, making a clear distinction in relation to the traditional third sector, encompassing not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations. In addition, the fourth-sector literature that has focused more on cultural practices, urban planning, and sustainable development (e.g., Böse, Busch, & Sestic, 2006; Mäenpää & Faehnle, 2017) could be expanded to include activities promoting safety and security (for a discussion on the definitions of safety and security, see Boholm, Möller, & Hansson 2016).

The *main purpose* of this study is, however, to explore tensions between fourth-sector type activity and public- and third-sector organizations. Harris et al. (2017: 353) call this “the paradox of spontaneous volunteering” (involvement/exclusion paradox) defining it as “helpers wanting to be involved, juxtaposed with pressures for managers to exclude them.” McLennan et al. (2017) raise the same issue in their risk-benefit framework for alternative strategic options for non-traditional emergency volunteers. Similarly, Strandh and Eklund (2018) state that further research opportunities exist on the question of whether public authorities, instead of striving to control spontaneous citizen volunteering, could learn to be flexible and feel safe in collaborating with the volunteers.

In this study, these tensions are analyzed in-depth through the perceptions of representatives of public- and third-sector organizations. The study is based on a 2017 research project *The Role of the Third Sector in Supporting Public Authorities' Security Functions* funded under the Finnish Government's Analysis, Assessment and Research activities. The project gathered the perspectives of more than 200 respondents via interviews and small group discussions (in the guise of so-called security cafés). Although the project primarily addresses the role of the third sector, the data gathering activity spurred considerable debate on the growing role of the fourth sector and the resulting tensions, and it is that segment of the accumulated data this particular study focuses upon. The focus is then not so much on the fourth sector as a distinct phenomenon, but more on the perceptions of the public authorities and the NGO representatives

of it. The two purposes of the study form the following research questions:

1. *How are fourth-sector type activity and the tensions related to it perceived by the representatives of public- and third-sector organizations?*
2. *How does the concept of the fourth sector elucidate self-organizing and emergent civic activity in the domains of safety and security?*

To accomplish the main objective of this study, it is important to first integrate the literature on self-organizing and emergent civic activity in safety and security into fourth sector literature. To this end, the article begins with (1) a review of the fourth sector literature, (2) implications for safety and security, and (3) a definition. Thereafter, (4) the article continues to establish how, theoretically, the fourth sector should be appraised – to inform further our analysis of perceptions of the fourth sector. Once this is established, (5) the study moves on to its main focus: tensions between traditional emergency responders and non-traditional emergency volunteers. After (6) presenting the methods, (7) the perceptions of Finnish public authorities and third-sector representatives on the fourth sector and related tensions are analyzed. Finally, (8) a discussion section binds these results to the theoretical framework of the article, and in (9) the conclusion section, further potential research questions are outlined.

SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS AND EMERGENT GROUPS AS ACTORS IN THE FOURTH SECTOR

Society can be divided structurally into four distinct sectors (Smith, Stebbins, & Dover, 2006). The first, the public sector, is traditionally seen as consisting of governmental services, whereas the second, or for-profit sector, consists of privately-run businesses. The third sector is considered the non-profit sector, and the fourth sector a sector containing families and households. In reality, however, the boundaries are not clear (Brandsen, van de Donk, & Putters, 2005). The definitions of sectors change constantly, particularly with regard to the third sector, which

seems to embrace an increasing number of actors and activities (see Corry, 2010; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016). Given the growth of the literature on the fourth sector, and to avoid the third sector becoming “a residual category” (Corry, 2010: 11) where all the actors that do not sit comfortably in the public or private sector groups are lumped together, it is worth looking more closely at the content of the fourth sector. Can it offer a theoretical home base for self-organizing and emergent civic activity, so that the fourth sector is not merely subsumed into the third sector?

Strands in the fourth-sector literature

Although the literature on the fourth sector is expanding, there is as yet no shared understanding of its definition. Harju (2003) suggests the activities of the fourth sector are often based on family, kinship, neighborhood, and acquaintanceship relations. Traditional fourth-sector activity would therefore include friends or neighbors helping one another. Harju (2003) also clarifies that the third sector is a concept that is widely-understood and utilized in Finland, and that it can be distinguished from the fourth sector by the presence of organized actors such as associations and foundations. Similarly, Williams (2002; 2008) notes that whereas third-sector volunteering is channeled through formal groups or organizations, fourth-sector volunteering consists of informal micro-level one-to-one aid. Such informal and spontaneous one-to-one volunteering can then be considered the *first strand* of the fourth-sector literature.

The *second strand* in the literature relates to the blurring of the boundaries of different sectors, that is, the fourth sector is seen as an evolving hybrid of public-, private-, and non-profit sectors (Sinuany-Stern & Sherman, 2014). Sabeti (2009) identifies two primary attributes: a social purpose and a business method (see also Alessandrini, 2010). Social purpose refers to an organization having “a core commitment to social purpose embedded in its organizational structure,” and a business method refers to the organization conducting “any lawful business activity that is consistent with its social purpose and stakeholder responsibilities” (Sabeti, 2009: 5). Examples of such organizations include sustainable enterprises, social enterprises, and blended value organizations.

In a *third strand* of the fourth-sector literature, Mäenpää and Faehnle (2017) associate the concept of the fourth sector with urban civic activism and specified the fourth sector as “the area of civil society that, with its quick, lightly-organised, proactive and activity-centred nature, is structured outside of the third sector, or the field of non-governmental organisations” (Mäenpää & Faehnle, 2017: 78; see also Rantanen & Faehnle, 2017; Faehnle et al. 2017). The definition highlights a do-it-yourself spirit, a yes-in-my-backyard attitude, and the heavy utilization of the Internet and social media. Examples are local movements, peer-to-peer trade and services, social peer support, and hacktivism. To agile fourth-sector actors, third-sector organizations may appear slow, rigid, and old-fashioned (Mäenpää, Faehnle, & Schulman, 2017). Böse, Busch, and Sestic (2006) share similar views in writing about the fourth sector in the context of the cultural sphere. They stated that self-organized cultural activity has emancipated itself from the third sector and can be identified by its transitory, subversive, and fluid nature (ibid).

Rask et al. (2018: 46), acknowledge each of the above three strands and attempted to formulate a coherent definition of the fourth sector, concluding that, “[the] fourth sector is an emerging field, composed of actors or actor groups whose foundational logic is not in the representation of established interests, but rather, in the idea of social cooperation through hybrid networking.” Instead of the stakeholder involvement that often characterizes third-sector organizations, the fourth sector is then more about the direct involvement of citizens. Next, as an attempt of convergence, building on this existing literature on the fourth sector and on spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizens groups in safety and security functions, four interrelated but distinct characteristics of the fourth sector are presented (see Jalava et al., 2017).

Characteristics of the fourth sector in the safety and security functions

Self-organization

In their 1985 article *Emergent Citizen Groups and Emergency Management*, Stallings and Quarentelli stated that

emergent citizen groups were likely to become even more prominent in the future than they were at the time. Similarly, Lorenz, Schulze, and Voss (2018) consider that the debate surrounding unaffiliated citizen responders will become ever more relevant. This progress is frequently viewed as particularly influenced by two factors. The first is the technological upheaval, that is, the advances made in information and communications technologies. Today, technology enables continuous, real-time, and place-independent communication, which manifests, for example, in social media groups emerging around topical issues. Various new ways of informal digitally-enabled emergent volunteering are being created. The second factor is the changing nature of volunteering. Instead of traditional volunteering based on committing their time to third-sector organizations, individuals desire more autonomy, are prepared for an episodic style of volunteering, and develop more loyalty to causes important to them than to a specific organization. Spontaneous activities are becoming more commonplace (see Grönlund, 2016; McLennan, Whittaker, and Handmer, 2016).

The aforementioned two factors reflect the self-organizing nature of the fourth sector (e.g., Rantanen & Faehnle, 2017). Mitleton-Kelly (2003: 43) describes self-organization as “the spontaneous coming together of a group to perform a task (or for some other purpose); the group decides what to do, how and when to do it; and no one outside the group directs those activities.” During the process of self-organization “novel and coherent structures, patterns and properties” arise (Goldstein, 1999: 49). This is called emergence, which Herbert Mead portrayed as: “When things get together, there then arises something that was not there before, and that character is something that cannot be stated in terms of the elements which go to make up the combination” (quoted in Mihata, 1997: 30). Both self-organization and emergence, central to fourth-sector type activity, are also present in the definitions of the spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups in disaster settings.

Twigg and Mosel (2017: 3) defined emergent citizen groups as “individual citizens coming together to deal collectively with disasters, forming new and informal groups to do so.” The literature reports that these groups have no pre-existing internal

structure or functions (Stalling & Quarantelli, 1985). They are also characterized by a flat hierarchy, operating with only a few simple rules and a highly fluid leadership structure (Voorhees, 2008). In such groups, emergent norms are emphasized over bureaucratic ones (Neal, 1995; Strandh & Eklund, 2018). Majchrzak, Jarvenpaa, and Hollingshead (2007) note that, emergent response groups more closely resemble the actions of a swarm (i.e., collective behavior that is highly decentralized and self-organized) than any traditional groups. Additionally, these groups are often very short-lived; in that they tend to form and disband rather suddenly (Twigg & Mosel, 2017). In addition, spontaneous micro-level forms of one-to-one aid often function alongside emergent citizen groups. The scenario involves individuals isolated from each other and acting independently, but addressing the same problem (Stallings & Quarantelli, 1985).

Task diversity

The fourth sector performs diverse tasks in preventive work, in acute situations, and in post-crisis recovery (Jalava et al., 2017; cf. Wolensky, 1979). In terms of preventive work, spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups can be found raising awareness of hazards, opposing initiatives they believe increase security risks, and helping to develop regional emergency planning (Stallings & Quarantelli, 1985; Twigg & Mosel, 2017). Preventive work also encompasses all the fourth-sector activities aiming to build community resilience and social capital, such as city events (e.g., block parties and restaurant days), local movements, and social peer support (Mäenpää & Faehnle, 2017). Fourth-sector activity in the realm of acute situations includes search and rescue, providing food, drink, and shelter, and collecting and distributing relief supplies (Twigg & Mosel, 2017; McLennan et al., 2017). Spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups involved in post-crisis recovery might contribute to rebuilding efforts, raise funds for victims, and lobby to safeguard against future disasters (Stallings & Quarantelli, 1985; McLennan et al., 2017; Wolensky, 1979). In addition, groups might be involved in justice-oriented activities where, for example, groups mobilize “in an effort to hold law enforcement agencies accountable for post-disaster arrest activities, especially those

practices that were perceived as racist or classist in nature” (David, 2006: 248; see also Böse, Busch, & Sestic 2006) or to reinforce the implementation of laws that might prevent or hinder future disaster or aid in the recovery phase (Wolensky, 1979).

Spontaneous volunteering does not take place only on the ground, but also in virtual spaces (McLennan, Whittaker, & Handmer, 2016). The difference between these two domains has been defined as follows: “Virtual Emergent Groups originate in the Internet and mainly carry out their activities online, whereas real Emergent Groups use the Internet as a potential supportive resource among many others” (Reuter, Heger, & Pipek, 2012: 1). Examples of virtual volunteering include monitoring and coordinating social media traffic, crisis mapping via web-based mapping services, and citizen journalism. Mäenpää and Faehnle (2017) highlight the role of fourth-sector digital activism, such as organizing open data hackathons. Whittaker, McLennan and Handmer (2015) suggested that because virtual volunteerism does not require volunteers to commit long periods of time or even to be close to the disaster site, it is likely to become more widespread in the future. The same study also points out that virtual spaces increase the level of volunteering spanning national borders.

Contextuality

Fourth-sector activities are neither good nor bad per se. McLennan et al. (2017: 24) point out that, “overall, most risks and benefits [related to non-traditional emergency volunteers] are time and context sensitive.” Van der Land (2014: 424) examined the phenomenon of Dutch citizen watches and concluded they, “cannot be evaluated as simply good or bad; rather, ‘it depends’”. It is, for example, important to have contextual information about the motives behind the actions of spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups. As an example, Mäenpää, Faehnle, and Schulman (2017) consider that the Finnish *Soldiers of Odin* citizen watch movement should not be considered an example of a positive proactive urban fourth-sector activism because its activity is directed against certain ethnic groups.

How we assess the value of the fourth sector depends on the situation and the perspective of the individual (see Jalava et al. 2017). One person might find the fourth sector useful and

desirable while another views it as harmful and undesirable. Public authorities and spontaneous volunteers may see the need for the fourth sector in specific situations in very different ways, hence causing an involvement/exclusion paradox as recently reported in research (see Harris et al., 2017; cf. Wolensky, 1979). Interestingly, Rodríguez, Trainor, and Quarantelli (2006: 98) also raise the question of the legality of emergent behavior. They consider that even though such behavior is not always legal, it can still be prosocial. The study offers the example of “the emergent stealing of ‘necessities’,” where stolen supplies are shared with others in need (ibid).

Hybridity

The fourth sector is subject to a similar blurring of borders as affects other sectors (see Sabeti, 2009). For example, the emergent qualities that characterize emergent citizen groups might erode as time passes. A more structured division of labor and a more detailed set of objectives can begin to appear, and eventually, these groups can start to resemble traditional third-sector organizations (Guarantelli & Stallings, 1985). It is also possible that the emergent and non-formal activities of the fourth sector lead to the establishment of actual third-sector organizations or business entities (Mäenpää, Faehnle, & Schulman, 2017; see also Campbell, 2010).

Most often, emergent fourth sector groups tend to fall apart after the immediate need for the common effort diminishes, or the crisis passes (e.g., Whittaker et al., 2015; Twigg & Mosel, 2017). This is not a problem of the fourth sector per se, but mainly a property describing the phenomenon. Its temporary, dynamic, and changing nature makes it difficult to define the fourth sector as a sector in its own right. It is in the nature of fourth sector not to have clear cut boundaries and universal properties at all times and in all places.

Additionally, McLennan, Whittaker, and Handmer (2016) mention greater private sector involvement and the role of spontaneous employee and skills-based volunteering as an aspect in the changing landscape of disaster volunteering. Sometimes groups with latent knowledge emerge; and such groups have been described as, “fully emergent groups with no previous knowledge

of each other performing non-regular tasks, but sharing the common characteristic of being trained in emergency responses” (Hughes et al., 2017: 325). It is also likely that spontaneously volunteering to assist in response to a disaster will prompt longer-term involvement, for example, through registering as a volunteer with formal emergency organizations without the necessity of becoming an official member of any of those organizations (McLennan et al., 2016). Ultimately, it is often difficult to define to which sector each activity actually belongs.

A tentative definition of the fourth sector in security and safety functions

As noted above, there are clear points of convergence in the literatures on the fourth sector and on the spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups. Fourth-sector type activities have been studied for a long time in the context of safety and security functions, and it is possible to construe the fourth sector as offering a theoretical home for such self-organizing and emergent civic activity. From the convergence of these two literatures, the following tentative definition of the fourth sector in safety and security functions emerges:

The fourth sector is composed of self-organized actors or actor groups who are not affiliated with any formal organizations and who engage in emergent short-term activities. Fourth-sector activities are neither good nor bad per se, but are determined by complex situational dynamics. The fourth sector can become active in all phases of a crisis or disaster by taking on diverse tasks and roles. Resilient and agile fourth-sector actors adapt to the actions of formal actors according to circumstances. Over time, the actors in the fourth sector often disappear, although it is possible that they merge, for example, with a third-sector organization.

THE TENSIONS BETWEEN FOURTH-SECTOR TYPE ACTIVITIES AND PUBLIC- AND THIRD-SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS

Studies have shown that the fourth sector, in the form of spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups, becomes active in times of crisis (see Whittaker, McLennan, & Handmer, 2015). The deeper the crisis, the greater is the likelihood of self-organized volunteer activity (e.g., David, 2006). However, the relationship between fourth-sector and public- and third-sector organizations seems to be rather controversial. Harris et al. (2017), for example, point out the involvement/exclusion paradox in spontaneous volunteering in crisis situations. The level of involvement of fourth-sector actors varies owing to differences in operating culture, management approach, task allocation, and the context of volunteering. Harnessing the potential of the fourth sector seems to be a balancing act between the inherent self-organization and the external governance.

The assumption made in this study is that these tensions are connected to the way actors in public- and third-sector organizations subjectively appraise fourth-sector activity, thus making it important to examine this issue of appreciation in more detail.

Appreciation of fourth-sector activity in security and safety functions

The potential of the fourth sector can be addressed through three broad themes. The first is the provision of an additional surge capacity (Whittaker, McLennan, & Handmer, 2015). Issues such as urban development and climate change mean the amount and scale of disasters is likely to grow in the future, making it imperative to try to harness the available unaffiliated local skills and resources. Secondly, McLennan et al. (2016) highlight increased community resilience as a potential benefit (see also Harris et al., 2017). Non-traditional volunteering could encourage more individuals to get involved; empowering both individuals and communities. The third theme is about the adaptability and agility of the fourth sector. As Stallings and Quarantelli (1985) note, group emergence is one way in which

communities adapt to the uncertainties of a complex operating environment (see also Gardner, 2013). Accordingly, the fourth sector could support public authorities facing sudden changes (Mäenpää, Faehnle, & Schulman, 2017). The activities of spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups are based on improvisation and creativity, making them capable of acting more flexibly than official emergency management organizations, whose actions are limited by various regulations and norms (Harris et al., 2017: 365-367). Often fourth-sector volunteers are taking action while the public authorities are still developing the required situational awareness and deciding how to proceed (e.g., Gjerland et al., 2017; Hanén, 2017).

In the literature, the risks of fourth-sector activity are mainly seen not as inescapable, but as amenable to being addressed with better planning and preparation. For example, Twigg and Mosel (2017: 10) found the core problem to be, “that emergency planners and plans rarely take emergent groups and spontaneous volunteering into account.” There are several possible reasons for that oversight, such as when a bureaucratic command-and-control approach to emergency management (see Neal, 1995) is prevalent, or when a belief in disaster myths portraying a false image of civilian populations in disaster situations prevails (Harris et al., 2017; Lorenz, Schulze, & Voss, 2018). This is problematic as better planning could address some of the challenges related to spontaneous volunteering and emergent citizen groups, such as the uncertainty over the legal liability of unaffiliated volunteers (Schmidt et al., 2018) and the risk of spontaneous responders causing harm to themselves or to other people (McLennan et al., 2016). Overall, better planning could ensure official responders are better prepared for the arrival of a large number of spontaneous volunteers and for the challenges it presents, such as causing congestion and even obstructing formal emergency responses (Harris et al., 2017; Twigg & Mosel, 2017).

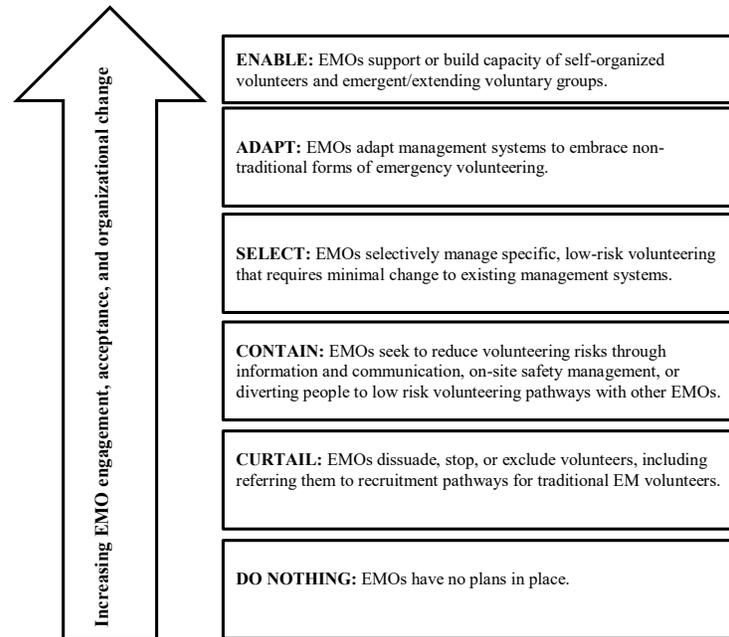
Enabling or controlling fourth-sector activity?

Tensions between traditional emergency responders and non-traditional emergency volunteers are explicit, for example, in the framework formulated by McLennan et al. (2017). This risk-

benefit framework includes six strategic options for emergency management organizations to plan for non-traditional emergency volunteering (see Figure 1). These options are *Do Nothing*, *Curtail*, *Contain*, *Select*, *Adapt*, and *Enable*. The *Select* and *Adapt* strategies entail non-traditional emergency volunteers, such as spontaneous volunteers, being directly managed by traditional emergency responders. The *Curtail*, *Contain*, and *Enable* strategies are essentially about communicating with actual and prospective non-traditional volunteers. The option of enabling may also include various capacity-building initiatives. Examples of such initiatives can be understood, for example, as the management of legitimacy of emergent citizen groups, such as permitting the emergent groups to occupy the space they require or providing them with access to the crisis site (see Voorhees, 2008). Similarly, Mäenpää, Faehnle, and Schulman (2017) state that the role of public authorities varies from one situation to another; in terms of the fourth sector, public authorities might be adversaries, insignificant actors, possible supporters or, for example, authorizers of actions.

From the point of view of self-organization, the challenge is that the *Enable* strategy is the most difficult for emergency management organizations to accept. McLennan et al. (2017: 5) suggest, “self-organised volunteers that are not affiliated with, or overseen by, an [emergency management organization] are widely viewed from within the established emergency management system as extremely risky, undesirable and a potential threat.” The situation is a double-edged sword, where self-organization can both produce significant benefits (that are often not adequately recognized by traditional emergency responders) and also lead to the excessive integration of informal volunteers into formal systems, which “risks diminishing the flexibility and serendipity that make these [emergent citizen] initiatives so effective in turbulent disaster situations” (Schmidt et al., 2018: 345; see also Harris et al., 2017; Whittaker, McLennan, & Handmer, 2015). Research has also warned that spontaneous volunteers may not want to be accepted by formal actors (McLennan et al., 2017: 24).

Figure 1
Strategic options for emergency management organizations (EMO) to plan for non-traditional emergency volunteering (McLennan et al., 2017: 15).



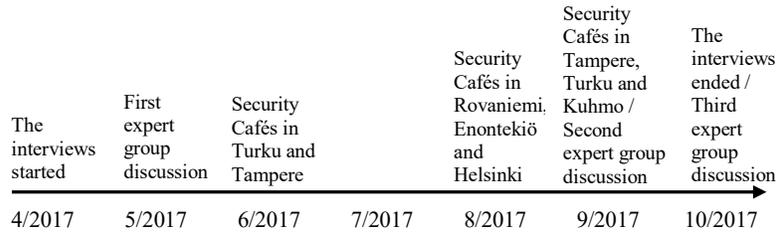
A review of the literature presents various activities that could balance the enabling and controlling of self-organization in the fourth sector, and thus reduce the tensions experienced. One such activity is disaster and crisis communication. Public authorities could communicate explicitly whether they welcome public involvement, and if so, what is expected of the volunteers. If there is no need for volunteers from the authorities' point of view (i.e., the preferred strategy is either *Curtail* or *Contain*, see Figure 1), it is important to justify the decision; perhaps the situation demands highly specialized expertise and equipment, for example (see Scanlon, Helsloot, & Groenendaal, 2014). Informative communication can reduce tension, especially that arising from the disappointment and frustration felt by volunteers prevented from getting involved (Cottrell, 2010). In addition to

planning and communicating, education and training play an important role. Conducting realistic exercises enables official emergency responders to gain more confidence in working with spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups (Scanlon, Helsloot, & Groenendaal, 2014; Lorenz, Schulze, & Voss, 2018). There would also seem to be a role for Internet platforms, such as the Australian EV CREW model (Emergency Volunteering - Community Response to Extreme Weather) (see McLennan et al., 2016) or the Dutch Ready2Help platform (see Schmidt et al., 2018). Such platforms can serve as “a bridge between a response organization and (online) emergent citizen groups [and spontaneous volunteers]” (Schmidt et al., 2018: 344).

METHODS

This study is based on a research project analyzing the role of the third sector in supporting public authorities' security functions. The project was funded as a part of the Finnish Government's Analysis, Assessment and Research Activities and was conducted between February and December 2017. The research group consisted of three organizations and eight researchers. The project focused on the activities under the control of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense, and examined perspectives on the functionality of cooperation between third-sector actors and public authorities; the financing of the third sector; the extent and competence of third-sector actors; and the emergence of the fourth sector. A large group of public authorities and representatives of third-sector organizations at the national, regional, and local levels contributed to the research, as is described below. The aim of the research project was to form a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of volunteering as part of the public authorities' security functions, hence multifaceted data were required. The time span of the data collection is presented in Figure 2, and the phases of the data collection overlapped.

Figure 2
The time span of the data collection



Interviews

The interview material used in this article consists of 27 interviews. Four of the interview sessions included two interviewees, making a total of 31 individuals interviewed. Of those, 15 were from public authorities and 16 from third-sector organizations. All but one of the interviewees represented national-level organizations. The interviewees represented the organizations' executive leadership and were representatives of key public and third-sector organizations involved in safety and security functions. The interviews lasted for an average of an hour and a half and were conducted between April and October of 2017. They were recorded, and detailed notes were made during the interviews. The interviews encompassed six themes, one of which was the fourth sector. More specifically, this particular theme explored an open-ended question on the current role of the fourth sector in the domains of safety and security. The interview material relevant to the fourth sector was identified from the recordings by the use of notes and, if needed (e.g., because of insufficient notes), by listening to the recordings for the whole duration. This material was then transcribed verbatim to generate 38 pages of text (Times New Roman 12p, line spacing 1.5).

Expert group discussions

The research project was supported by an expert group comprising 14 representatives of public and third-sector organizations, eight of whom were also among the interviewees. The task of the group was to support the research team in the identification and acquisition of essential materials and to act as

fact-checkers after each analytical phase. The group met three times. At the second meeting, in September 2017, attended by ten group members, the group discussed three themes: the financing of the third sector, the overlapping structures of third-sector actors, and the governance of the fourth sector. For the discussions, the group was divided into two smaller groups, each of which included two researchers to function as a facilitator and a scribe. Group discussions lasted for one hour. The sections related to the fourth sector were identified from the recordings by means of detailed notes and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions produced eight pages of text (Times New Roman 12p, line spacing 1.5).

Security cafés

The research project included establishing eight *security cafés* in both large cities and small towns in Finland. Those security cafés reflect the ideals of deliberative democracy (see Carson & Hartz-Karp, 2005). Security café can be understood as combination of the more traditional Citizens' Jury and World Café methods and as such, can be positioned between the intermediate and expansive definitions of deliberative mini-publics (see Ryan & Smith 2014). In a previous project, security café method was used to involve 'ordinary' citizens in various deliberations on issues related to the domains of safety and security (see Raisio et al., 2017). In this study, the aim was to harvest specifically the viewpoints of local and regional public authorities and third-sector representatives.

Public authorities were asked to nominate representatives for the security cafés, and third-sector representatives were approached through key persons such as the heads of preparedness of the Finnish Red Cross and via associations' websites and social media channels. The aim was to achieve a heterogeneous group (e.g., by age and gender) of 25 participants for each security café. If in the course of the registration process it appeared that, for example, women did not sign up, we asked the contact persons to convey the invitation especially to women. Despite this, the number of women in the security cafés was far lower than that of men. Young people were also under-represented. For the total number of participants, the target of 25 (or close to 25)

participants was achieved in seven security cafés. The exception was the smallest municipality in terms of population (Enontekiö in northern Lapland, population less than 2 000). The composition of the security cafés was engineered so that the third-sector actors represented approximately two-thirds of the 188 participants (see Table 1).

Table 1
The composition of the security cafés

	SC 1	SC 2	SC 3	SC 4	SC 5	SC 6	SC 7	SC 8	In total
Participants	26	23	25	15	25	27	22	25	188
Women	9	7	11	4	8	8	4	10	61
Men	17	16	14	11	17	19	18	15	127
Age* <20									
20–34	2	1	1		3	3		1	8
35–49	10	4	7	3	7	10	3	6	49
50–64	12	5	11	6	11	10	10	10	75
>65	1	4	2	3	2	2	2		16
Public authorities	10	6	7	7	8	9	6	8	61
Third-sector actors	16	17	15	8	17	18	15	17	123
Other**	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	4

* Only people who reported their year of birth were included.
** Representatives of a congregation, university, or polytechnic.

The security cafés convened on weekday evenings and for three hours. Following the preliminaries, the participants were briefed on the theme of the evening. The participants were split in advance into three or four heterogeneous groups. Each group had a facilitator who sought to ensure that no single participant dominated the discussions and that everyone was heard. Small group discussions focusing on the themes of the research project lasted for two hours. One of these themes was the fourth sector. In the spirit of deliberative democracy, deliberations were not guided by too specific questions (cf. focus groups). Each security café recorded its collective perspective on *idea rating sheets* (see Zhang, Wang, & Hanks, 2016). Each of the 31 small group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Qualitative content analysis was applied to identify instances from the transcripts that related to the theme of the fourth sector. These instances produced 215 pages of text (Times New Roman 12p, line spacing 1.5).

Analysis

The data described above were analyzed by directed qualitative content analysis (e.g., Hsieh & Shannon 2015; Assarroudi et al. 2018). This is an appropriate approach when researchers have access to theory or prior research on the phenomenon, but understanding is still, “incomplete or would benefit from further description” (Hsieh & Shannon 2015: 1281). As stated in the theoretical part of the article, the research on the fourth sector and on spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups in safety and security functions has progressed along two different paths. Existing theory is therefore incomplete and diverse in this respect. In addition, it was argued that prior research would have benefited from further discussion on the question of whether public authorities, instead of striving to control spontaneous citizen volunteering, could learn to be flexible and feel safe in collaborating with the volunteers (see Strandh & Eklund, 2018). The aim of the study was both to validate and conceptually extend the above described theoretical framework, and hence directed qualitative content analysis was chosen as the guiding principle of analysis.

Based on the theoretical framework of the study, the main categories for the coding process were formed around the four characteristics of the fourth sector in the safety and security functions and the six strategic options for emergency management organizations to plan for non-traditional emergency volunteering. Using NVivo 11 qualitative data analysis software, the qualitative material was coded under these particular categories. Subsequently, each category was divided into subcategories as required. Moreover, in accordance with the principles of theory directed qualitative content analysis, the prior research was used to guide the discussion of findings.

The participants in the study agreed to the interviews and discussions being recorded, but their anonymity is preserved in the direct interview excerpts, which are only attributed to interviewees, members of the expert group, or participants in a security café and are qualified by attaching a public authority or an NGO label. In section below, for reasons of clarity, the findings from interviews, expert group discussions, and security cafés are

presented together. All quoted material from the study has been translated from Finnish into English.

RESULTS

What kind of phenomenon is the fourth sector?

The question on the concept of the fourth sector above triggered a wide-ranging discussion. The informants pondered over the distinction between the third and the fourth sector in particular. The discussion ranged across whether the nature of the fourth sector would change if it were to receive funding from another sector, and specifically if it would become more organized. The informants also considered whether a person registering as an ad hoc volunteer with a formal emergency organization should be treated as part of the fourth sector or as a representative of the host organization. A more fundamental question raised by the study participants was if the other sectors began to control the fourth sector and train its supporters, would it still be considered the fourth sector, because it would no longer be undertaking unconstrained self-organizing civic activity. This tension was clearly related to the *hybridity* of the fourth sector, and is conveyed in the two following comments:

Perhaps they are the fourth sector, because even though they receive training, they will come as untrained individual volunteers (NGO, interview).

If [the fourth sector] is of any use, then its benefits should be managed [by the third sector] and then it becomes included in the third sector (NGO, security café).

The informants implicitly referred to the *self-organizing nature* of the fourth sector. Such fourth-sector activity was predicted to increase and “*it is not going to disappear, even if we do not like it*” (NGO, security café), that is, “*it is a phenomenon which is probably here to stay, and likely to develop further*” (Public authority, interview). The changes in the volunteer culture and the growing role of technology were seen as the underlying factors in that growth. The study participants considered the spirit of the times reflected in the fact that people no longer want to commit themselves for long periods of time, but prefer to

participate in self-organizing pop-up style activities. One security café participant explicitly stated that essentially the fourth sector is not a new phenomenon, but the development of technology has increased its significance remarkably. As another participant explained, “*people go to Facebook or to some other instant messaging groups and they organize themselves there. ...No organized association coordinates these activities*” (NGO, security café).

When discussing about *task diversity*, study participants referred to various activities they associated with the fourth sector. Many of the informants had taken part in search and rescue operations for missing persons and had witnessed spontaneous volunteers converging at the search sites and the emergence of unofficial search groups. The topic of the European refugee crisis of 2015 was also frequently raised: “*This fourth sector activated during the refugee flood*” (NGO, Security café). Reference was also made to unaffiliated volunteers who helped during the 2011 Norway terror attacks as well as during the 2017 Turku stabbing incident. More generally, the fourth sector was seen as embodying the traditional Finnish neighborly spirit. The study respondents also recalled international issues, such as volunteers using digital means to investigate the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 tragedy.

However, the informants did distinguish between small-scale search and rescue activities and responses to large-scale crises. The respondents noted that Finland has only really witnessed the scalability of the fourth sector twice: the first time was in relation to the evacuation of Finnish Karelia during the Second World War, and the second time was in relation to the aforementioned refugee crisis. The informants thought such situations demonstrated the potential significance of the fourth sector. Future scenarios, such as a major oil spill occurring in the Gulf of Finland or a powerful storm causing widespread power outages, were mentioned. As one of the study participants stated:

Yes, [the fourth sector] certainly is the future to some extent, and I am pretty convinced, that as quite a long time has passed since the beginning of the Second World War, sooner or later Finland will be facing [a significant crisis again]. It may be an epidemic where no vaccine or medicine is immediately found. It might be a natural

disaster, a terrorist attack, or a state of war. I bet I will yet see such a situation, if I will, God willing, live many years. Then, in such situations, the fourth sector is of the utmost importance (NGO, security café).

Appreciation and contextuality of the fourth sector

The informants aiding the current study emphasized the *contextuality* of the fourth sector. This can be illustrated by statements such as, “*civic activity as a phenomenon is welcome, but what kind of forms it takes is a different matter*” (Public authority, security café). As one study participant stated, one determining issue is whether the activities are considered to be civic activism or civil disobedience. A shared understanding was that the emerging activity of the fourth sector should be directed in the right direction and the focus should be on those fourth-sector actors who respect the common ground rules. The contextuality of the fourth-sector activity was also taken into account when it was pointed out in one of the security café small groups that although they themselves considered the Soldiers of Odin citizen watch movement an undesirable entity, someone else might consider it to be positive and desirable.

Strong contextuality makes the appreciation of the fourth sector challenging. With regard to positive views, the informants’ views appeared to be very similar to those mentioned in previous literature on the theme. Study participants, for example, highlighted the agility of the fourth sector as well as the increased surge capacity it provides. It was noted that fourth-sector actors were the first to accommodate asylum seekers in the fall of 2015, and also that without all the spontaneous volunteers the refugee reception centers could not have been established in the fashion they were. Similarly, in relation to the incident on the island of Utøya, “*when the police were still launching their boats, volunteers, specifically the fourth sector, organized and began to seek out kids in the water and the beach and delivered them ashore*” (Public authority, security café). Study participants also reflected on the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, where Finnish scuba diving business owners, in addition to organizing help locally, began collating Finnish survivors’ names and sending them to Finland. This was done while the official

crisis communication floundered. As one study participant stated of the fourth-sector actors: “*They get the job done just like that. And when the same is done by public authorities, it takes forever to get things organized the same way*” (Public authority, security café). In relation to the communication, study participants also raised the issue of the fourth sector aiding public authorities in constructing situational awareness by acting as extra ears and eyes or even by refining information from social media for the use of the authorities.

Respondents stated that the fourth sector is activated, for example, when people do not feel safe, that is, when the feeling is that formal actors are not going to help, or if they are, the help will be delayed. In cases like that, people may think it is better to take matters into their own hands, especially if the issue in question affects sparsely populated areas and if the populace believe that country-wide public services may not be available to address a future threat. The scenario was seen as connected to resilience, to the capacity of individuals and communities to act in crisis situations and to overcome them. Fundamentally, the activity of the fourth sector could be viewed as directed toward building a resilient culture of safety.

In opposition to the previous literature, the negative aspects related to the fourth sector were seen as more fundamental (i.e., of an inescapable nature), as well as rather prejudiced. When asked about the negative aspects of the self-organizing behavior of the fourth sector, the informants mentioned overly emotional actions in particular. The concern was that if emotions and excess enthusiasm predominate, skills and knowledge are pushed into the background. As one study participant commented, “*people are then being foolish with good intentions*” (NGO, interview). At its worst, these actions can lead to breaches of law. Some respondents felt that the actors in the fourth sector do not necessarily understand the boundaries and in their enthusiasm go beyond what they can do within the law. Fourth-sector actors may even believe that good intentions justify breaching the law. A strong emotional influence was also seen as detrimental if fourth-sector actors take offense when the public authorities do not court their involvement in crisis situations. Such a situation had occurred and prompted media coverage that had in turn stirred widespread discussion of

public authorities' operating models and the role of communication. It was also considered an issue that despite their enthusiasm, the actors in the fourth sector do not want to engage in action in the long-term: *"I believe that quite a few of these 'wild and free' are those who have a strong desire to help, but who do not want to commit themselves to anything"* (NGO, security café).

The actions of the fourth sector can cause harm both to its own actors and to others. There was concern that *"the [spontaneous] rescuer will himself become the one who needs to be rescued"* (Public authority, interview). This viewpoint reflects a perception that fourth-sector actors, in contrast to their counterparts from the third sector, do not necessarily have enough relevant training. As one study participant perceived, *"I as a volunteer act in the third sector and I consider the training to be quite important"* (NGO, security café). On the other hand, the participants emphasized the importance of finding the middle way, that is, the balance between ever increasing training requirements and the option for more spontaneous action. Both public authorities and NGO representatives were, however, concerned with issues of liability: *"If something happens, for example [a spontaneous volunteer] gets hurt or even dies, then who is accountable?"* (NGO, security café). One traditional issue restated by the study participants relates to spontaneous search parties, which one informant described as *"going searching like they were wild horses"* (NGO, security café), inferring that spontaneous volunteers at best compromise tracks. The security issues related to uncontrolled drones used in search and rescue situations were mentioned as a new phenomenon.

When questioned about present challenges, the respondents highlighted the issue of disinformation, in that it is possible that some party could intentionally manipulate fourth-sector actors to direct them in an unhelpful direction: *"how much can they create disorder, if they put false information into place in the fourth sector"* (Public authority, expert group). A more serious scenario envisaged malignant individuals infiltrating emergent citizen groups to deliberately fracture the social capital and cohesion generated by fourth-sector activities. The interviews and small group discussions also revealed a degree of distrust in the endurance and intentions of the spontaneous volunteers. Some

informants were wary that the fourth-sector actors' enthusiasm could rapidly evaporate: "*When they have scraped oil from the shore for one day, they may come to think they don't need to come back on another day*" (NGO, security café). With regard to the intentions of spontaneous volunteers, some respondents were wary of volunteers seeking to sell photographs from crisis situations to the press.

However, in relation to these critical views, some informants raised the question of whether they were too critical and prejudiced. As one study participant noted, "*actually the examples that we are now using of the fourth sector are those where some victim is on the street and people gather around to take photos with camera phones*" (NGO, expert group).

Perceptions on the tensions related to fourth-sector activity

An appreciation and the contextuality of fourth-sector activity described above clearly framed the way the study participants related to the management of the fourth sector. In relation to enabling the self-organization of the fourth sector, only a few entirely favorable comments emerged in the research material. In one of the interviews with a pair of NGO representatives, the interviewees considered that conditions and opportunities should be created to encourage fourth-sector activity. The same informants also viewed excessive guidance and regulation as a threat to spontaneous action. One of the interviewees then pointed out that instead of controlling these activities, the fourth sector should be about "*unorganized voluntary activity, which really begins with the conditions and terms defined by the actors themselves. And we should not begin to steer it, but, above all, we should enable such activity and support it*" (NGO, interview). Another interview with NGO staff elicited a rather similar viewpoint, which was also reflected in the comments of one public official who participated in a security café. The NGO representative considered that NGOs and fourth-sector actors should not compete for living space, but in crisis situations NGOs should try to contact fourth-sector actors and ask if they could be assisted somehow. One public official wondered if the public authorities could "*nudge*" (Public authority, security

café) civil society to ensure that the fourth-sector becomes active when it is required.

Essentially, the study participants mainly spoke about controlling the fourth sector. A common perspective is represented by the following excerpt: *“the fourth sector can be a good asset, as long as it is administered in a controlled manner. As an unmanaged activity it may just be a disadvantage”* (NGO, interview). Similarly, a common perspective delivered was that it should be the third sector that is responsible for the management of the fourth sector. Public authorities were not seen as possessing the required resources. Participants suggested that if the spontaneous volunteers’ desire to help could be channeled through third-sector organizations, they would then not burden public authorities, but would instead become an important resource. Nevertheless, the views on the ideal relationship between the third and fourth sector actors varied. Some informants’ views were represented by ideas like: *“the most efficient structure would be created if NGOs would host fourth-sector activities”* (NGO, expert group), that is, third-sector organizations would enable spontaneous civic activity within their own structures, while some other interviewees considered that the priority should be to ensure that fourth-sector actors joined third-sector organizations as actual members: *“If there are people who really want to help[in the fourth sector], then they should be able to find a suitable NGO for them from the third sector”* (Public authority, interview).

Training was suggested as a key activity to control the convergence of spontaneous volunteers and as a way to mitigate tensions around the issue. For example, a one-hour-long training course explaining precautions and leadership structures might on occasion be sufficient to integrate spontaneous volunteers into the official system. The study respondents also raised the possibility of using spontaneous volunteers alongside trained NGO actors, thus enabling the former to learn by doing. However, participants stressed that any such usage of fourth sector actors should apply only to those who accept the rules, regulations, and leadership of the official actors: *“Those who agree to play on our terms will be taken in [...]. Those who don’t agree to play on our terms, those who in practice only make a mess, for them it is necessary to create an administrative procedure to prevent them from messing*

up the tracks or using drones and causing risks. There are certain rules you have to follow” (NGO, interview). Adopting fourth sector actors into the official system would not only ensure insurance requirements were met, but also offer volunteers emotional support when needed. As one study participant said, *“one begins to act on a willingness to help, but it gets an awful [emotional] burden to bear”* (Public authority, security café). Additionally, the informants considered the role of prior registration, which could spur people to indicate their availability, without them needing to invest much time.

The feedback from the study participants suggests that the governance of the self-organization of the fourth sector necessitates official actors both training and acquiring new skills, including leadership skills to manage, support, and enable fourth-sector activity. Training for and with the fourth-sector actors prevents a situation being completely surprising and novel, in other words there should be at least some kind of pre-planned operating model capable of adaptation to any situation. Otherwise, learning can occur during the actual crisis situation, as one of the study participants had found: *“It was an interesting learning process for me on how to work with this kind of group, that was not led and not asked for, but which emerged on the scene.”* (Public authority, security café). Growing fourth-sector activity also challenges disaster and crisis communication. Study participants felt that official actors should explicitly communicate what is happening at the scene, and state clearly whether volunteers are needed, and if so, where they should go. If no help is needed, then the reasoning should be conveyed.

Study participants saw risks in trying to fully suppress the fourth sector or in ignoring its emergence. Suppression could lead to increased tensions and fourth sector activity *“discharging in such ways that we do not know nor understand”* (Public authority, interview). Similarly, the interviewees were concerned that if the fourth sector were ignored, the positive opportunity to influence and direct its emergence would be missed. Three study participants from separate security cafés also raised the possibility of misleading the fourth sector actors as an alternative course of action. An example was presented in the context of a search and

rescue mission where fourth sector actors had deliberately been directed to an area that had already been searched.

DISCUSSION

Combining the two literatures used in this study seems wise. Study participants recognized the fourth sector as a distinct societal sector and an existing phenomenon, and predicted its activity would only increase. The incorporation of spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizen groups in safety and security functions into the fourth sector offers a clear distinction to the organized activity of the third sector. It aids in taking better account of the specific features of the fourth sector and thereby also clarifies its role and, ideally, would reduce tensions between the different sectors. Correspondingly, the literature on self-organizing civic activity around safety and security functions adds a new dimension to the existing fourth-sector literature. Of the different characteristics of the fourth sector in the safety and security functions, the hybridity aspect in particular merits further reflection, as the study participants confirmed. While the line between the third and fourth sectors is very often a fine one, at some points it becomes almost indistinguishable (e.g., a person registering as an ad hoc volunteer) and would benefit from detailed examination.

The paradox of spontaneous volunteering, to include or to exclude and to enable or to control, (Harris et al., 2017) emerged clearly from the empirical data gathered. Similarly, the risk-benefit framework for alternative strategic options for non-traditional emergency volunteers, created by McLennan et al. (2017), responded fairly well to the experiences related by the study participants. This study deepens the understanding of the related tensions, helps to understand how difficult it is to activate the *enable* option, and shows how appreciation of the fourth sector and experience of fourth-sector activity inevitably influence the choice of the strategic option. This may be even more so in a small country like Finland, where the citizens' trust in public security authorities and their functions is well-established, and the third sector holds a strong and prestigious position alongside the public and private sectors. In a context like that, fourth-sector actions and

actors could be seen as disturbing the status quo, and hence as reinforcing tensions.

Interestingly, the study participants' views on the fourth sector were very similar, regardless of whether the respondents represented public authorities or third-sector organizations, or were local-, regional-, or national-level actors. However, there were some differences between actors in the large cities and sparsely populated areas. Fourth-sector activity was seen as more natural in sparsely populated areas, where traditional EMO resources are scarcer and help may be delayed.

The respondents expressed a strong view that self-organization of the fourth sector must be controlled. This perspective was evident, for example, in the operational models related to the governance of the fourth sector, such as offering crash courses to fourth-sector actors, and selecting only those demonstrating an ability to adapt to existing operating rules, and even suggesting misleading fourth-sector actor. Both public authorities and NGO representatives placed the responsibility for the governance of the fourth sector firmly on third-sector organizations. In relation to the strategic options for EMOs to plan for non-traditional emergency volunteering, the most often mentioned strategies were the *select*, *contain*, and *curtail* variants (see Figure 1). The *do-nothing* option was seen as one to be avoided in the future, for example, by having relevant planning in place and providing training. The *adapt* strategy clearly appealed to some NGO representatives, because their comments questioned whether NGOs could become more dynamic and begin to host fourth-sector activity. *Enabling* as a strategic option was almost completely ignored.

The tension between enabling and controlling becomes tamed when it is approached by just moving the fourth-sector actors under the control of those from the third sector. It is also inconsistent with respect to how the study participants valued the fourth-sector activity. Control reduces precisely the value the respondents raised in the interviews and small groups, that is, agility and adaptivity (e.g., Gjerland et al., 2017; Hanén, 2017). The fourth sector is then reduced to merely offering extra pairs of hands, and is stripped of its self-organizing and emergent nature. By taming the emergent activity with too many guidelines and

excessive control, there is a risk of suppressing spontaneous volunteering all together. The debate over the paradox of spontaneous volunteering could prove to be the one that needs to be resolved before the variety of self-organizing fourth-sector activities become a normal and acknowledged part of security and safety functions or operations.

It is important to note the Finnish context in these research results. Previous research has confirmed that the deeper the crisis, the greater the likelihood of self-organized volunteer activity (e.g., David, 2006). Finland has not faced large-scale disasters since the end of the Second World War. However, the study participants noted that the European refugee crisis of 2015 had provided an idea of the scalability of the self-organizing fourth sector. Negative views may then be due to the lack of multifaceted experience of the actors in the fourth sector (e.g., Lorenz, Schulze, & Voss, 2018). Study participants examined fourth-sector activity mainly from the point of view of individual search and rescue missions, where the fourth-sector actors were seen as personnel to be controlled, not enabled. The material drawn from the interviews and small group sessions also highlights acute situations rather than preventive work and post-crisis recovery. Acute situations can impose tighter preconditions on fourth-sector activity, whereas in preventive work and post-crisis-recovery, risks are lower and thus activities more likely to be permitted, or even enabled. However, as Scanlon, Helsloot, and Groenendaal (2014: 60) note, “the role of ordinary citizens might be questioned if disaster response was a complex task, but this is often not the case.” There are then activities that require highly specialized expertise and equipment, but there are also less complex actions that, “can be done by many members of the population (ibid.).”

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that the core questions when developing the division of labor and operability of safety and security functions seem to be 1) what part of safety and security is most efficiently produced by the third and fourth sectors, and what part should reside with public officials? 2) what parts of the functions, if any, can rest (solely) on self-organizing

civic activity? and 3) how can such activity best be supported? (see also Tallberg 2017). It would seem that at the present stage this requires both ongoing research activities to collect more empirical data on the phenomenon and more direct contact between the different sectors in real-life operations and cases. The division of labor also forms a basis for tensions as expressed in the control versus enable debate, and relating to the resolution of the question of whether spontaneous, self-organizing, emergent volunteers are to be included and accepted in, or excluded from actual situations.

The data indicate that future research on fourth-sector activity in the realm of safety and security functions could beneficially focus on preventive work rather than confining itself to acute situations. Such research might for example investigate the role of all those fourth-sector activities that ideally build community resilience and social capital, such as city events, local movements, and social peer support (e.g., Mäenpää & Faehnle, 2017). The research theme seems particularly appropriate given the statement from the Finnish Government Resolution on the Internal Security Strategy (2017: 30) that, “Inequalities and social exclusion are the most important background factors for conventional security threats, including crime and becoming a victim of crime,” which implies that self-organizing, prosocial civic activity could serve to encourage more inclusive, safer, and more secure societies.

Second, the role of disinformation and the possibility that someone intentionally directs fourth-sector actors into a potentially harmful direction merits more attention, especially considering the increasing polarization of western societies. As Böse, Busch, and Sestic (2006: 148) have noted, fourth-sector activity can “easily be directed towards nationalism and hatred, similar to ‘football fan scenes’.”

Third, the significance of psychological support should be examined more thoroughly. Evidence from both the current and prior research suggests spontaneous volunteers may need more psychological help than professionals, because they are exposed to “circumstances outside their usual experience” (Gjerland et al., 2015: 7), which might encompass witnessing injuries, death, and despair. In addition, new forms of fourth-sector activity, such as

spontaneous volunteers using uncontrolled drones and virtual volunteering, for example in the form of virtual emergent groups, could be studied further, as these forms seem most likely to be growing trends.

Fourth, a large number of public authorities and NGO representatives participated in this study. Qualitative data enabled an in-depth understanding on the topic of self-organizing fourth sector in safety and security functions. However, as one of the main limitations of this study, the perspective of fourth sector actors themselves was missing. In the future, fourth sector actors should not only be interviewed (e.g. Harris et al., 2017) or surveyed (e.g. Gjerland et al., 2015), but also involved in joint deliberations together with public authorities and NGO representatives, for example by using security café method.

Finally, it is important for scholars of the fourth-sector to identify existing literature that has not been labeled fourth-sector literature, but which nevertheless studies similar phenomena. In addition to the literature on spontaneous volunteers and emergent citizens groups in safety and security functions, there might be useful knowledge within existing literature on social movements, for example (e.g., Fuchs 2006; Polanska & Chimiak, 2016).

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