Toward a Theory of Fourth Sector Involvement

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1. Introduction

Urban activism is a phenomenon with far reaching consequences for economy, society and politics. More and more often, we hear news about active citizen groups, who have rolled up their sleeves and addressed issues that have either abruptly emerged, or irritated in their living environments perhaps for years, but where local or state authorities have been powerless to act. Instances of urban activism abound. A prominent example is the emergence of volunteer organizations, who helped to deliver supplies to Ground Zero workers after the 2001 World Trade Center Attack (Voorhees 2008). Another remarkable example is the *Let's Do It!* civic led mass movement, which began in Estonia during 2008 when 50,000 people gathered to clean up the entire country in just five hours; a movement which later became a network of 134 countries involving more than 18 million volunteers (Sömersalu 2014).

The examples of urban activism represent new ways, in which societies address wicked problems, how people express themselves and take part in societal and political processes. An important aspect is that such activities fall outside more traditional sectors of society, including, firstly, the *public sector* that consist of governmental services, secondly, the *private sector* that consists of privately run for-profit businesses, and thirdly, the *social sector* that usually denotes not-for-profit organisations (Avidar 2017; Brandsen, van de Donk, and Putters 2005). To indicate new types of societal activities that do not neatly fall into the more traditional social sectors, the concept of *fourth sector* has therefore been introduced in different streams of academic research (Corry 2010).

Given the increasing societal prevalence and academic interest toward the fourth sector, we will explore in this paper how this concept has been understood in different streams of research. How has it been defined in different research contexts, and has the understanding evolved over time? What are the paradigmatic examples? What kinds of societal benefits and threats are attached to it? What kinds of governance issues and options emerge along the fourth sector?

The fourth sector is not a new concept, but it has not acquired a broadly shared definition. Attempts to define it span a range focusing on informal volunteering and especially one-to-one aid (Williams 2002; 2008), organizations that have the dominant value of altruism combined with dominant means for profit (Alessandrini 2010), through to spontaneous and proactive urban civic activism (Mäenpää, Faehnle, and Schulman 2017).

The main purpose of this paper is to elaborate toward a 'working model' of fourth sector involvement. Such a model will include a) a definition of the fourth sector that will acknowledge the different academic traditions analysing this phenomenon, b) an interpretation of the main characteristics and driving forces of this phenomenon, and c) identification of the main governance issues and challenges emerging with fourth sector involvement. We argue that such a 'working model' is necessary, since strategies for fourth sector involvement have become more common in recent years,[1] and an appropriate understanding of the nature of this phenomenon can help prepare better involvement strategies and manage complex networks and interactions.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section two we will analyse how the phenomenon of 'fourth sector' has been conceptualized in academic studies focusing particularly on the following three streams of activity: 1) micro level one-to-one aid, 2) self-organizing civic activism, and 3) hybrid organizations. Resulting from the analysis, in Section three, we will elaborate toward a 'working model' and definition of the fourth sector that acknowledges the key insights from these studies. In the final section we will discuss the governance implications of this study: what types of activities should be included in the 'fourth sector', what are its driving forces and key characteristics, and what the key governance issues are.

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[1] Finnish municipalities, for example, have adopted an understanding that the fourth sector equals with proactive urban activism and related strategies are being prepared (https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/blogi/2017/neljas-sektori-murtaa-ja-rakentaa-kuntien-hallintoa). Another example, again from Finland, is that national safety and security authorities are preparing fourth sector strategies by systematically thinking approaches how to engage volunteers and emergent citizens groups in safety and security functions (Raisio et al., forthcoming).

2. What do we mean by fourth sector?

Three different strands can be observed in the fourth-sector literature (Raisio et al., forthcoming). 1) The first strand centres around the notion of *one-to-one aid*. As the writings of Williams (2002, 2003, 2008) suggest, the focus of this discussion is about how individuals can, and often do, help their

fellow citizens on the basis of *informal volunteering* (fourth sector) rather than through voluntary groups (third sector). The authors in this stream of research suggest (Harju 2003; Williams ibid) that the role and significance of the fourth sector has not been sufficiently acknowledged, particularly by governments, who unfoundedly favour the third sector participation in their community participation strategies. 2) The second strand of the fourth-sector literature centres around *self-organizing civic activism*. Mäenpää, and Faehnle (2017: 78), who represent this strand, understand the fourth sector as urban civic activism, which they characterize as an "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." That 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. *Self-organization* is often mentioned as the key feature of the fourth sector, which is in line with Böse, Busch and Sesic's (2006, 148) characterization of the fourth sector as "a form of social practices in everyday life, which are not and should not be controlled by anyone but the community." 3) The third strand focuses on *hybrid organizations*. Fourth sector, in this literature, is perceived as resulting from the hybridization of public, private, and non-profit sector organizations (Sinuany-Stern and Sherman 2014.) Sabeti (2009), for example, identified two primary attributes in such organizations: *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 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.

Each of these streams have their own definitions and emphases that may superficially seem contradictory, as for example, the emphasis on *self-organization* (civic activism) vs. *organization* (hybrid organization). Rask et al. (2018, 46) acknowledged 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." Some previous studies have aimed to systematically identify the key characteristic of the fourth sector in some specific sectors (e.g., Raisio et al. forthcoming, in the context of security and safety management; Sabeti et al. 2009, in the context of hybrid organizations). Yet, none of the previous studies have engaged in a broader literature review that analyses, compares and builds a synthesis of the understanding of the fourth sector in different academic discussions, which is the

main objective and contribution of this paper. In the following sub-sections 2.1 – 2.3 we will therefore first provide a synthesis on the discussions in the three strands of research just described, followed by sub-section 2.4, where we will review some residual studies.

2.1 Micro-level one-to-one aid

As part of the, predominantly British, research stream in volunteerism, 'fourth sector' is most often understood as synonymous to micro-level one-to-one aid (e.g., Williams 2002, 2004a, 2000b, 2008, 2009). This informal micro-level one-to-one aid is then contrasted with more formal, organization based 'third sector' approach (ibid; cf. Wilson 2012: 177; see also Rochester 2006; Rask et al. 2018: 46). Third sector is traditionally defined as something between the public and private sectors, consisting of formal organizations established on voluntary basis to pursue social and community goals (Corry 2010; Williams 2004b and 2009). Fourth sector would then contain the informal community participation and activity, the micro-level one-to-one acts between individuals that have no formal organization (Williams 2004a: 730).

The often-cited definition for volunteering refers to "any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organisation" (Wilson 2000: 215; also Stukas et al. 2015; Whittaker et al. 2015). One-to-one aid could hence be understood as a form of volunteering, where an activity is focused at benefiting, or aiding, another person. It has been debated whether one-to-one aid should be understood as helping one's immediate family or kin members (Corry 2010; cf. Williams 2004b, 2009) or if it only refers to activities directed to households other than one's own, such as friends, neighbours, acquaintances or even persons previously unknown to the helper (Williams 2004b, 2009). Williams (2004b: 31) differentiates one-to-one aid from unpaid domestic work provided by household members for themselves or for other members of their household. One-to-one aid also differs from the so-called community self-help that has an institutional character, still being independent of the state, self-governing and involving the element of volunteering (ibid). Community self-help would therefore be closer to the traditional understanding of volunteering as third sector activity than the emerging definition of 'fourth sector'. It also resembles the definitions of self-organizing civic activism, a topic which will be covered in the following sub-section.

The social psychological roots of one-to-one aid stem from the study of prosocial behaviour, which has been said to be an antecedent of volunteering (Stukas et al. 2015; Dovidio et al. 2010; also Wolensky 1979). Pro-social behaviour in general is described as any activity "beneficial to other people and the ongoing political system" (Dovidio et al. 2010: 21).One-to-one aid as prosocial

behaviour may be analysed from micro, meso or macro levels. Micro level deals with psychological or social psychological determinants of helping behaviour, trying to generate theories and models to understand why people are so prone to help, or volunteer, at the individual level. At the meso level, the question has often been why people *do not* help, giving more footing to situational and contextual factors. Finally, macro level brings in the organizational context, where interpersonal helping turns into volunteering. (Penner et al. 2005; Dovidio et al 2010; Stukas et al. 2015.)

According to Penner et al. (2005: 375) volunteering "involves prosocial action in an organizational context, which is planned and continues for an extended period." Snyder and Omodo (2008: 2-3) distinguish six characteristics of volunteering: 1) the actions must be voluntary, performed by basis of the actor's free will, without bonds of obligation or coercion, 2) the acts of volunteering involve deliberation and decision making, they are not acts of assistance or 'emergency helping', 3) volunteer activities must be delivered over a period of time, 4) decision to volunteer must be based entirely on the person's own goals without expectation of reward or punishment, 5) volunteering involves serving people or causes who desire help, and 6) volunteerism is performed on behalf of people or causes, commonly through agencies or organizations. The core idea is that volunteering is differentiated from informal 'neighbouring' or ad hoc emergency helping. Volunteering is formal, extends over long periods of time and involves deliberate decision making to volunteer for any given cause. (See also, Wilson 2000 and 2012.) This definition of volunteering contrasts some of the core ideas of the fourth sector and one-to-one aid.

One-to-one aid does not necessarily happen over an extended time period, it may be an ad hoc emergency helping event, or one-time act of neighbourly help. It is not based on agencies or organizations, but is emergent and self-organizing. (Rask et al. 2018; Williams 2002, 2004a and b, 2009.) As of now, it would seem that the essence of the fourth sector does not fulfill the 'criteria' of volunteering, yet we treat it as a new form of volunteering. If volunteerism is restricted to activities only undertaken through formal organizations, we do miss an enormous amount of work done by people outside formal non-governmental organizations (e.g., Whittaker et al. 2015). This is also in contrast with the rise of episodic volunteering, which has been recognized as being one of the 'new waves' of volunteering. *Episodic volunteering* bares resemblance with the notions of one-to-one aid and fourth sector in general. People volunteer for only a short time, for one-time cause and then move on. They do not become part of formal organizations or agencies, they never enlist to anything, but act upon their perceived needs of help by fellow people. (Snyder & Omodo 2008; Stukas 2015; Whittaker et al. 2015; Wilson 2008.) The term 'spontaneous volunteering' has been used to describe

this kind of action (Harris et al. 2017). The differences between traditional volunteering and one-to-one aid are summarised in Table 2.1.

	Traditional volunteering	**One-to-one aid**
Organization	Organized through formal agencies or organizations	Emergent, self-organizing, no formal organization, spontaneous
Time span	Long periods of time	One time acts, episodic, ad hoc
Motivational basis	Prosocial behaviour, no explicit expectation of reward	Prosocial behaviour, no explicit expectation of reward
Aim	To benefit and serve people and causes that desire help	Community participation, to serve those in immediate need of help and aid
Form of activity	Organized activities to benefit those desiring help	Emergency helping, neighbourly help, does not require an explicit 'desire' to be helped by the receiver
Governance implications	Acknowledged as part of social organization of societies, a sector in itself, often at least partly controlled by the authorities, predictable	Often not acknowledged as part of the social organization of societies, informal, outside the control of authorities, unpredictable and emergent

Table 2.1 *A comparison of the characteristics of traditional volunteering and one-to-one aid*

Micro-level one-to-one aid, or fourth sector, is a specific form of the social organization of society. As such it also has governance implications, or more precisely it often has been neglected by the policy makers or governance agencies. (Williams 2002, 2004a and b, 2008, 2009; also Harris et al. 2017; Whittaker et al. 2015.) It is by far simpler to integrate the formal, third sector -type of volunteering into the official government programmes and policies than to actively promote one-to-one aid, spontaneous volunteering or the yet mostly undefined concept of fourth sector. Governments and agencies have the tendency to want to control the volunteer efforts and this does not fit well with the emergent, self-organizing nature of micro level one-to-one aid. The reason behind the need to control may be purely pragmatic, since fostering, or governing, formal voluntary groups or organizations is relatively straightforward (ibid.), compared to the self-governing and emergent 'fourth sector'. Yet, the fourth sector seems to be taking a larger role alongside traditional formal volunteering.

2.2 Self-organizing civic activism

In Finland, the use of the concept of fourth sector has increased in recent years. This is particularly evident at regional and municipal level, for example in regional programs and municipal strategy work. However, the understanding of fourth sector differs from the definitions given in sub-sections 2.1 and 2.3. In Finnish context, the fourth sector is understood to a growing extent as *urban civic activism*. Mäenpää and Faehnle (2017: 78) define the activity in question as follows: "By the fourth sector, we refer to 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." (see also Aaltonen & Juntunen 2018.) This definition highlights a Do-It-Yourself spirit, a Yes-In-My-Backyard attitude, and the heavy utilization of the internet and social media. Digitalization is essentially seen as one of the key reasons for the rise of the fourth sector activity (Mäenpää, Faehnle & Schulman 2017). Today, technology enables continuous, real-time, and place-independent communication, which manifests, for example, in social media groups emerging around topical issues. As Faehnle et al. (2017) state, "[t]hrough digitalization, citizens are now better empowered than ever to take developments into their own hands". Based on their "Urban civic activism as a resource" research project, Mäenpää and Faehnle (2017: 79) give following examples of fourth sector activity:

- Sharing/platform/peer-to-peer/citizen economy services
- Community activism, or activism that emphasises community, mutual help, or the environment
- Space-related activism, or modifying spaces for short-term or long-term use, directly or through planning
- Digital activism or activism that develops the use of information technology
- Activism support, or activism that supports other forms of activism

The above Finnish interpretation of the content of the fourth sector is supported to some extent by Böse, Busch and Sesic (2006). Based on our literature review, Böse et al. were the first researchers to link the concept of the fourth sector to self-organized civic activism. In their research on the cultural sphere in Vienna and Belgrade, they highlighted cultural practices that are emancipated from the activities of the third sector and which are located outside commercial and governmental realm. For Böse, Busch and Sesic (ibid.) such fourth sector cultural practices are identified by their transitory, subversive and fluid nature. These have then a strong project-character, a counter-hegemonic position and a dynamic nodal structure. One of the main differences between the definition of the Finnish fourth sector (Mäenpää, Faehnle & Schulman 2017) and the definition of Böse, Busch and Secic (ibid.) is then that while the former emphasises the constructive nature of the fourth sector, in the

latter the subversive aspect of the activity is highlighted. In addition, Böse, Busch and Sesic (2006: 149) went on to underline fourth sector consisting especially of "people who are excluded from the first and third sector, and who do not have much opportunity to participate in the consumer culture offered by the second sector [e.g. migrant and refugee populations], therefore having to find a way of self-organization".

It is also important to be aware of existing study of self-organizing civic activism that is not explicitly linked to the concept of the fourth sector. Dominika Polanska provides a good example of such research. In her study of informal Polish social and urban activism, she argues that local level self-organized activism, which is characterized by spontaneity, flexibility, anti-institutional orientation and community building, is definitely flourishing (see Polanska & Chimiak 2016; Polanska 2018). Both, Polanska (2018: 6) and Mäenpää, Faehnle and Schulman (2017: 254) have tried to identify differences between formal and informal civic society practices (see, Table 2.2). Again, the difference related to the constructive vs. subversive nature of fourth sector practices emerges. Also, Mäenpää, Faehnle and Schulman (2017) emphasize the role of social media more explicitly.

Comparison of ideal types of civic society practices (Mäenpää, Faehnle & Schulman, 2017: 254)		Binary oppositions associated with formal and informal organizations (Polanska, 2018: 6)	
Traditional NGOs	*Fourth sector type practices*	*Formal*	*Informal*
Organization: NGO	Organization: e.g. only social media group	Hierarchical	Horizontal
Social media as an aid	Social media essential	Rules	Norms
Impact through influencing preparation and decision-making	Hacker attitude to influence	Bureaucracy	Pleasure
Influence (formal)	Events, activities, DIY	Dependency	Independency
Municipality as a partner	Community	Constraining	Liberating
Representativeness	Networking, companies	Conformity	Challenging and opposing
Continuity	Openness, sharing	Instrumental	Ideational
Advocacy	Visibility	Structure	Interpersonal relationships
Controlled overall development	Short duration	Responsibility	Creativity
Hierarchical	Avoiding hierarchies		
Let's do as before	Passion for action, innovating		

Also resistance, NIMBY	Proactivity, YIMBY		

Table 2.2 *Differences between the formal (NGOs) and informal (fourth sector) civic society practices.*

Despite minor differences, the above three perspectives have a core connecting factor that is *self-organization*. While Böse, Busch & Sesic (2006) and Polanska (2018) write about self-organization on a more general level, Rantanen and Faehnle (2017) connect it explicitly to *complexity science framework*. Complexity scientist Eve Mitleton-Kelly (2003: 43) has described 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 follows: "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). More specifically, in the context of urban development, Boonstra and Boelens (2011: 113) give a following definition of self-organization: "initiatives that originate in civil society from autonomous community-based networks of citizens, who are part of the urban system but independent of government procedures" (see also Fuchs 2006; Uitermark 2015).

Various positive aspects of self-organization, in relation to fourth sector practices, have been offered in the literature. First is about adaptability and agility of the fourth sector. Self-organizing civic activism is based on improvisation and creativity, making fourth sector actors capable to act often more flexibly, unconventionally and quickly than actors in other sectors, whose actions are limited by various regulations and rules (Mäenpää & Faehnle 2017; Polanska 2018). Accordingly, the fourth sector could improve the resilience of cities and support public authorities facing sudden changes (see Mäenpää, Faehnle & Schulman 2017). In addition, as fourth sector practices often bring together like-minded people, this may be enabling, motivating and empowering experience for many. Acting together in a rather symmetrical form may at best encourage creativity, friendship, diversity and enthusiasm. Also, due to certain elasticity, fourth sector practices may be an attractive way of contributing for busy modern people who cannot engage in activities for a long time. (Polanska 2018.) This elasticity makes it even possible, that counter to its anti-institutional orientation, the emergent activities of the fourth sector eventually lead to the establishment of actual third-sector organizations or business entities (Mäenpää, Faehnle & Schulman 2017).

However, self-organization also refers to activities and processes that can be considered malign (see Uitermark 2015). Bella (2006) uses the concept *emergence of evil* to describe such developments. In raising this darker side of self-organization and emergence, Bella, King & Kailin (2003: 68) refer to "dark outcomes [which] emerge from interactions among well-intended, hardworking, competent individuals." Such outcomes are not unknown to fourth sector. There can be for example friction, disagreements and even conflicts between fourth sector actors and traditional NGOs. In addition, negatively perceived groups, exemplified by the Finnish *Soldiers of Odin* citizen watch movement, may emerge. (see Mäenpää, Faehnle & Schulman 2017.) One challenge is that as fourth sector activism is often emotionally driven, this can steer the activity in, both, benign and malign directions. As noted by Böse, Busch, and Sesic (2006: 148) fourth sector practices can "easily be directed towards nationalism and hatred, similar to 'football fan scenes'." One of the greatest risks is that self-organization, when unevenly realized, will come to increase social inequality (see Mäenpää, Faehnle & Schulman 2017). For instance, Polanska and Chimiak (2016: 672) point out how elitist tendencies of social activism and the creation of exclusive enclaves (i.e. *intelligentsia ethos*) may come to "prevent individuals lacking cultural capital from joining the initiative"; thus in a Putnamian sense bonding over bridging social capital is produced. The question is also, how self-organisation is distributed across countries, cities and neighbourhoods (Uitermark 2015). Uitermark (2015: 2304) summarizes the above-described darker side of self-organization as follows:

> "At the same time, the government's idealization of citizens and the boasting about civic power raises suspicions. It is narcissistic to only see the power and beauty of civil society. The idealisation of citizens – by governments and occasionally by citizens themselves – betrays a lack of real curiosity and true commitment as it is blind to self-organisation's weaknesses and darker side. […] Just as the state can fail, so can the market, and so can civil society."

2.3 Hybrid organizations

The discussion on hybrid organizations, as we will later explain, dates back to the 1970's. Due to the long history of this discussion, there are hundreds if not thousands of academic articles on the subject,[1] ranging from the fields of economics to social and political sciences. Yet discussions where hybrid organizations are explicitly equated with the concept of fourth sector are few.[2] An important stimulus

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[1] For the literature review of this paper we searched the following data basis (in early summer 2018): Scopus, Science Direct, Web of Science and Google Scholar. 389 hits were found for "hybrid organizations" in Scopus, 646 in Science Direct, 85 in Web of Science and 6370, respectively, in Google Scholar.

[2] Scopus gave only 4 hits for the search "hybrid organizations" AND "fourth sector", Science Direct 7, Web of Science 21 and Google Scholar 99, respectively.

for such writings has been the Fourth Sector Network (FSN) that was founded in 1998 to enable an environment for the development of fourth sector enterprises and the infrastructure that supports them. Sabeti's et al. (2009) report "The Emerging Fourth Sector" is among the key publications of FSN. Even though the number of articles explicitly defining hybrid organizations as forming the fourth sector is low, there is a broadly shared understanding of the nature of this phenomenon among those articles. Hybrid organizations refer generally to the amalgam of for-profit and non-profit organizations. As Sinuany-Stern & Sherman (2014: 3) put it, "hybrid sector dedicates resources to deliver social benefits using business methods to optimize their social benefit."

Different labels have been used to denote hybrid organizations that follow 'sustainability driven' business models. Such labels include, inter alia, social enterprise (McNeill & Silseth, 2015), low-profit limited liability company (or L3C), Blended Value, For-Benefit, Values Driven, Mission Driven, and Benefit Corporation (B-corporation) (Hoffman, Badiane, & Haigh, 2012). While employing market tactics to address social and environmental issues, hybrid organizations include contributions from corporate social responsibility, nonprofit management, social entrepreneurship, and inclusive business (i.e., bottom of the pyramid) (Ogliastri, Prado, Jäger, Vives, & Reficco, 2015), cause-related marketing, socially responsible investing, corporate philanthropy and social marketing (Avidar, 2017), as well as ethical trading, microfinance, social venture capital, community development and public private partnerships (McNeill & Silseth, 2015).

For the business practitioners, hybrids organizations challenge traditional ideas of the role and purpose of the firm, as well as what it means to be a sustainable business. For the academics, hybrids challenge the standard classifications used to categorize public and private organizations, and ways of understanding their objectives and functions. (Haigh & Hoffman, 2012) In order to distinguish hybrids from traditional organizations, Haigh & Hoffman (2012) analyse the differences in their missions, relationships with suppliers, employers and customers, as well as in the focus of industrial activities (Table 2.3).

Traditional organisations	*Hybrid organisations*
Social and environmental missions as secondary goals	Social and environmental missions as primary goals

Relationships with suppliers, employers and customers primarily functional and transactional	Relationships with suppliers, employers and customers based on mutual benefits and sustainability outcomes
Industry activity focused on creating markets for traditional goods and services, and altering industry standards for self-serving benefit	Industry activity focused on creating markets for hybrid goods and services, and altering industry standards to serve both the company and the condition of the social and environmental contexts

***Table 2.3** Key Distinguishing Factors Between Traditional and Hybrid Organisations (Source: Haigh & Hoffman, 2012)*

The key distinction is that hybrids do not prioritize profit making, but rather, they prioritize social and environmental missions among their primary goals. The idea is to create 'shared value' for the suppliers, employers, customers, and ultimately, value for the whole society (Porter and Kramer 2011; (Gidron, 2017)). Another way to contrast hybrids and traditional organizations is through the concepts of externalities. According to Dyck & Silvestre (2018), the traditional organizations enhance their financial interests via reducing an organization's negative socioecological externalities, whereas hybrids enhance positive socio-ecological externalities while remaining financially viable (i.e., not needing to maximize financial returns). They call the latter approach 'double bottom line' where enhancing social and ecological well-being is considered to be more important than enhancing financial well-being (see also Kurucz et al., 2014). In the analysis of Gidron (2017: 2), the hybridity of fourth sector organizations spans *from the form* (i.e., business models blending profit making with non-profit mission orientation) *to the substance* that has to do with the content and the organizational processes of the social enterprise's activity: the modes of personnel management, the outcomes of such entities creating simultaneously social and business value and the methods for measuring those.

The current understanding of hybrid organizations as an instance of fourth sector differs significantly from the earlier analyses of hybrid organizations as discussed in organizational sciences, in at least two respects. First, hybrids were originally understood just a new type of governance structure, struggling with the well-known trade-off between markets and hierarchies.[3] Secondly, hybrids were

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[3] Ménard (2004) track the initiation of hybrid organization research to Williamson's analyses in the mid 80's and early 90's, followed by a 'real take-off' from the mid 90's in economic but increasingly in non-economic journals. It was Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof. Avidar (2017) sees the beginning of studies on hybrid organizations even earlier, in Muhammad Yunus from Bangladesh who

considered to be formed of partners, who remain "independent residual claimants with full capacity to make autonomous decisions as a last resort" (Ménard, 2004: 353). If rivalry between different partners – be it in clusters, networks, symbiotic arrangements, supply-chain systems, administered channels, nonstandard contracts, and so forth – was among the key concerns of past studies, the current focus has shifted to analyzing hybrid organizations a new organizational entity, whose business model's endurance is at test. Can altruistically oriented companies really survive in the market? Hybrids, under the current interpretation, seek to grow like any business actor – but not simply for their own benefit – but also for other firms who are in associated markets. In other words, rather than to "make their core competency opaque and their value-adding capabilities inimitable (Barney, 1991), hybrids value transparency and use of open source model that others can follow" (Hoffman, Badine & Haigh 2012: 141).

The number of hybrid organizations has increased substantially in recent years, to a degree that legislators in many countries have had to adapt regulations to acknowledge the particular nature of such companies.[4] According to Haig and Hoffman (2012: 126), "hybrid organizations are underpinned by a new and growing demographic of individuals who place a higher value on healthy living, environment and social justice, and ecological sustainability in the products and services they purchase, the companies in which they invest, the politicians and policies they support, the companies for which they work and, ultimately, the lifestyles they lead. This demographic is recognized with labels such as Cultural Creatives and Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS)." These individuals have changed both consumer markets (the value of LOHAS market was estimated at $209 billion in 2008 and by 2011 had grown to $290 billion) and stimulated both individual and institutional investment to socially responsible investment (SRI) (Haig & Hoffman 2012).

Quite interestingly, in addition to the *changed demographics*, values and life styles, the success of hybrids, social enterprises in particular, has been explained through failures of the state and the market within the context of advanced global capitalism (McNeill & Silseth 2015). *Market failure*

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introduced the world to a new type of organization, which he called a social business. In 1976, Yunus first established the Grameen Bank, a community development bank and a microfinance organization that gave small loans (also known as Micro-credit) to poor entrepreneurs without requiring collateral.
[4] For instance, Maryland, Vermont, New Jersey, Virginia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, North Carolina, Utah and Wyoming recently created a new legal class of company for hybrids, it calls low-profit limited liability company (L3C) or benefit corporations. This tax classification grants organizations greater protection from shareholder lawsuits that demand the prioritization of profits over social and environmental missions. To qualify, companies must define nonfinancial goals in their charter and obtain approval of two-thirds of the shareholders. (Haigh & Hoffman, 2012.)

explanations tend to result in fourth sectors that express themselves via *bottom-up movements* that privilege the social economy and view capitalism itself as the underlying problem (Teasdale, 2012). *State failure explanations*, in turn, suggest that where the state cannot or will not provide adequate social services in efficient ways, social entrepreneurship emerges in response to an existing demand and the opportunities available in the marketplace for generating income from the provision of such services. Although the two theories are usually used simultaneously, market failure is particularly emphasised by European scholars to explain the emergence of co-operative forms of social enterprise (Spear, 2001; Defourny & Nyssens, 2006) and the evolution of community enterprises as selfhelp responses to the lack of a market presence in some areas (Pearce, 2003; Williams, 2007). In the US context, state failure is emphasised and used to explain the rise of social entrepreneurship to address social problems that have proved to be beyond the reach of "bureaucratic, ineffective and wasteful" government service delivery, which itself is viewed as "antithetical to innovation" (Dees, 2007: 25).

There is a considerable consensus that a key to addressing the serious socio-ecological crises facing the world is for organizations to implement innovations that foster sustainable development. Built upon the assertion that traditional business models are no longer adequate to address the social and environmental problems of our day (Alexander, 2000; Draper, 2005), hybrid organizations can provide an interesting alternative that employ market tactics to address social and environmental issues. That model is not without challenges, however.

In the literature on hybrid organizations, one of the main governance issue is how to understand and communicate their identity. On one hand, hybrids are altruistically oriented entities, but on the other hand, they have adopted pragmatic, efficient and business-like modes of operation that have many times classified as under the mantle of neoliberalism, new managerialism and third way ideologies, and in so doing so have become increasingly hybridised in their functions and organisational forms (McNeill & Silseth, 2015; Forth Sector Network, n.d.). A related concern is that employer-employee relationships, especially inside social businesses, can exploit weak populations by paying them very low salaries for their work (Avidar 2017; Atiya, 2012). More generally, Avidar (2017) has noted that hybrids (especially 'social business') is not yet well-defined from a legal and a tax perspective, which makes it difficult to decide which organization is entitled to be called a 'social business' and which is not (Benziman, 2009; Feit, 2011). Yet another related issue is to maintain their reputation, as according to Benziman (2009), identifying a business as a social business might damage the reputation of its products and services because they are perceived as low-quality products that were manufactured by underserved or distressed communities.

2.4 Other discussions on the fourth sector

In addition to the three academic summarized above, we observed two additional discussions that put the limits of the definition of the fourth sector at the test. One of such discussions is related to the special nature of so-called Zakat organizations (Santoso, 2017). Zakat is a form of alms-giving treated in Islam as a religious obligation or tax. Zakat organizations manage the funds by collecting such taxes and sharing them to poor people. Another discussion is related to the innovative forms of participation in research and innovation (R&I) governance, as studied by Rask et al. (2018).

Santoso (2017: 195) has argued that the since the *basic values* of Zakat organizations differ from other forms of organization (private sector, public sector and Non-Public Organization sector) - and how the values reflect in the performance and managerial solutions of such organizations -, they should be categorized belonging to the fourth sector. What then makes the value basis of Zakat organizations distinctive, is that the "[c]haracteristics of zakat management are inherent, among others, on the basic value and management of zakat funds itself." The core values of zakat management includes the enforcement of the pillars of Islam, the implementation of worship, including fight against people who do not want to pay Zakat. Linking the Zakat explicitly with the fourth sector is a most recent discussion, and the number of related articles is still low (Riyadi & Santoso, 2018).

What is interesting in Santoso's (2017) interpretation of the fourth sector is that values, in this case faith-based values, is the feature that distinguishes the fourth sector from other three sectors that operate on a more mundane basis. On the other hand, value-based organizations have also been recognized by Sabeti et al. (2009), who acknowledge 'Faith-Based Enterprises' as an instance of hybrid organizations. For this reason, it hardly is unfair to categorize Zakat type, faith-based funds, as one instance of hybrid organizations.

Yet some additional candidates to populate the fourth sector can be found in an international study of innovations in R&I governance (Rask et al. 2018). In analysing a sample of European and U.S. R&I governance innovations, they found that the number and variety of participants is often high, involving actors that cannot be classified as belonging to the three traditional sectors of the society. They identified four sub-groups of such actors: i) *hybrid experts* (e.g., gendered scientists and science parliaments), ii) *randomly selected people* (e.g., passersby, consumers, festival guests, randomly selected citizens), *field experts* (e.g., activists, hobbyists, web activists) and *life world experts* (e.g.,

senior citizens, coloured persons, patients, handicapped, young offenders, patients). In thinking about the characteristics that distinguishes such actor groups from the other three societal sectors (public, private and social sector), they found two main factors: firstly, the nature of expertise,and secondly, the nature of political representation.

As for the *nature of expertise*, governing research and innovation activities is traditionally considered to be highly professional activity that requires, if not a certificate of PhD in some field of science, at least much understanding of the production of science and professional expertise in managing related processes. While thinking about the most innovative ways of governing such processes, however, highly different types of expertise has emerged along the four sub-groups (Rask et al. 2018: 47). The expertise of 'field experts', for example, is not based on scientific expertise but on a combination of experience-based expertise and systematization of such experiences, as in the case of authorized sports instructors (Väliverronen, 2016). Another example is 'life world experts', who have gained expertise through systematic organization of experiences based on one's direct contact with the issues, as for example in the case of patient-activists, senior citizens, and immigrants.

In considering the nature of expertise as requested of the different sectors of the society, it seems that certified expertise is generally requested from public authorities working in any governmental office, while high levels of technical expertise is generally a practical request in the business sector. In the third sector, however, expertise is typically characterized both by 'life world expertise' and 'field expertise' for which reason expertise is hardly a feature that can help sharply to distinguish the essence of fourth sector from the other three sectors.

As for *political representation*, it is a relevant concern in any governance process, since such processes typically involve negotiation between different political interests and perspectives. The three traditional sectors of the society have distinct roles in the system of political representation. The business sector, most obviously, has a role in representing private interests. The social sector, consisting of NGOs and civil society organizations, tends to represent the values and interest of some particular societal groups, even though such organizations generally make the claim to represent the values of 'civil society' more broadly. The public sector is traditionally considered to have a role in balancing between competing interest groups. (Wartburg and Liew 1999.) Involving the fourth sector in governance processes breaks the traditional way of building such processes on the basis political representation. Involving the fourth sector, for example, through a sample of randomly selected

people[5] can bring in 'common sense' that is often lost in the midst of politically polarized conflicts, or along with reliance on technocratic decision making (e.g., Renn 2008). Instead of political representation, therefore, fourth sector involvement seems to offer a non-representational way of participation, at least in terms of any established interests or interest groups.

3 Emerging model of the Fourth Sector

Fourth sector is a topical phenomenon. What strikes is how different are the framings of the fourth sector, be it either about self-organized vs. organized activity, about an issue of economy vs. democracy, or about competing demarcation criteria of what distinguishes the fourth sector from other sectors, including self-organization, informality, spontaneity, and combination of market and mission approaches and so forth. Against this variety, it is relevant to ask whether there is actually any common nominator underlying the differences.

Despite the discrepancies, in our view, there are also commonalities that may justify to propose criteria that characterize, at least to some extent, all interpretations of the fourth sector, as summarized above. Using a general activity theoretical framework as a heuristic tool (Engeström 2001) that focuses attention on the *actors*, *tools*, *objectives* and *outcomes* of any form of activity, we propose following four criteria for the definition of the fourth sector:

- Actors: Involvement in the fourth sector is based on **non-representational participation**. This is particularly true in the case of one-to-one help, self-organized activism, and involvement through random selection. As for hybrid organizations, this criteria can be less clear, but at least members of any hybrid organization do not represent any particular interest or interest group (such as business or environment), but rather, they have multiple points of reference to the focal issues.

- Tools: Operation of the fourth sector favours **open application of co-creation**. Quite typically, fourth sector processes are based on 'sharing economy' and provision of platforms that allow anyone to take part or develop their own activities by using tools provided by others. In the case of hybrid organizations, this philosophy is pushed to the level where the opening

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[5] This is an increasingly used method when composing so called 'mini-publics' or other types of citizen panels, see e.g. Grönlund et al. 2014. A more common expression of this form of participation can be found in the citizen jury system that is broadly used in the context of jurisdiction.

of the business model can even endanger the economic vitality of the fourth sector organizations.

- Objectives: Fourth sector processes always call for **pro-social and non-profit based aims** of the activity. As the cases of urban activism and hybrid organizations indicate, however, this does not necessarily exclude parallel market orientation, particularly in the selection of the strategies and tactics.

- Outcomes: Fourth sector activity does not result in a formalized institution, but rather, it will **result in an adaptive actor or organization** that constantly seeks new responses to the changing conditions of the context. Self-organized activism will always find its expressions in ad hoc type solutions that fit particular places and their requests for effective action. Hybrid organizations will need to continuously redefine their missions along the way to accomplish their goals.

In addition to nominating common features that can be found in the different streams of fourth analyses reviewed in this paper, the four criteria also help contrast the fourth sector with the other three sectors of the society. As for the non-representational nature of participation, it is clear that state, business and civil society organizations do represent established interests of the society. As for the open application of co-creation, this surely is not a unique property of the fourth sector, but business interests, protection of IPR and requests for effective action (e.g., Greenpeace launching a media campaign) often limit the revelation and open sharing of the instruments applied in the operations of the three other sectors. As for the pro-social ad non-profit based aims, the contrast is primarily against the business sector, but along the 'pro-social' orientation also against operation favouring any particular interest group only, which is frequently the case with the operation of civil society organizations (cf. the NIMBY syndrom). As for the tendency to remain adaptive rather than formalized, this can be mostly contrasted with state and business actors, but also to some extent with NGOs, who have to comply with several regulatory norms that require clear definition of the rules of activity and related responsibilities.

Yet we acknowledge that the three different 'forms' of fourth sector described in the previous sections differ in their level of organization and also in regard to their stability over time (Figure 3.1). One-to-one aid is most informal, since it is not based on formal organizations or agencies, and is usually short lived, including local, one-time acts of aid and help between individuals. Self-organizing civic-

activism has at least an informal group-type organization, i.e. somehow (self-)co-ordinated acts of a group of individuals, and happens over an extended period of time, which may vary greatly depending on the context. Hybrid organizations per definition have an organization, which is usually stable over longer timespans.

Figure 3.1 *Different forms of the fourth sector and their characteristics*
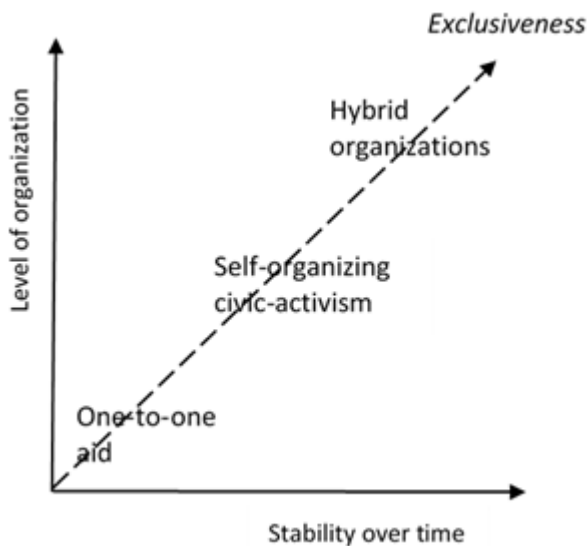
In thinking about how the levels of organization and stability impact the dynamics of involvement in fourth sector activities, we hypothesize that the exclusiveness of the activity will increase along the increasing stability and organization of the activity, which is clearly pronounced in the case of one-to-one help, which seems to be the most inclusive form of aid-giving (Williams 2004a, 2004b, 2008, 2009). We will discuss the governance implications of this hypotheses in the following section.

4 Discussion

One salient feature in the analyses of the fourth sector is their prevalently positive tone. Positive bias is perhaps most pronounced in the studies of urban activism that often describe it as expressing new type of societal creativity, positive energy and proactive orientation. A similar bias can also be found in studies of hybrid organizations that, reflecting the title of Hoffman's et al. (2012) article "*Hybrid organizations as agents of positive social change: Bridging the for-profit and non-profit divide*" pay generally more attention on the social benefits rather than to potential costs. The positive inclination can be explained through the pro-social, volunteer and non-profit based orientation that typically characterize the fourth sector. Who would not welcome freely offered, often generous support from others?

While it is undeniable that the fourth sector has often involved positive social change, a more prudent approach to fourth sector involvement should adopt a broader, and at the same time, more balanced view of its activities. Such a view can be built upon the four criteria and the following definition: *the fourth sector should be seen as a special type of activity that is characterized by non-representational participation, use of open co-creation approaches that are combined to pro-social non-profit orientation and adaptive, context sensitive strategies*. Such activity will often involve obvious benefits, such as new remedies to certain types of market and state failures for instance (see above), but it has its shortcomings, too.

In thinking about the *governance issues* emerging from our analysis, the first question to address is how to understand the scope and content of the fourth sector. Our literature survey highlights the diversity of the concept. The differences are most pronounced between the perspectives of self-organized activism vs. hybrid organizations. Taking the differences as a reality, it can sometimes be more advisable to keep the different streams separate, and prepare separate strategies for one-to-one help, self-organized activism and hybrid organizations, rather than to aim at one unifying approach.

Regarding the fourth sector from a broader and more systematic perspective, however, may offer certain benefits: it allows learning and reflection across different streams of activity that still have some common features. It may help perceiving the fourth sector as a specific sector that has a highly different dynamics as compared to the other three sectors. Building on this observation, we have identified below five critical governance issues the acknowledgement of which may help prepare better strategies of fourth sector involvement:

ISSUE#1 *It is about shared values and visions, not about political representation!* The non-presentational nature of the actors involved in fourth sector processes provide new opportunities to get rid of deadlocks that may have paralysed planning or decision making. Since the motivation of the fourth sector actors is deeply related to the societal missions and visions of the participants, to collaborate effectively, any government should be able and interested in understanding and working upon commonly shared values.

ISSUE#2 *Less organization can be more emancipatory!* Even though the fourth sector, almost by definition, calls for people to participate beyond established structures and channels of participation, they are not politically neutral, however. Rather, there are different inclinations of involvement under the different types of fourth sector activity. Particularly self-organized civic activism tends to take place in better off neighbourhoods, whereas one-to-one aid seems to be the most inclusive form of any volunteering, since it does not require any previous experience, special skills or training, empowering the marginalized or deprived parts of the society (Williams 2004a and b, 2008; Polanska & Chimiak 2016). However, it should also be noted that in situations where certain segments of society (e.g. migrants and refugee populations) are excluded from the other societal sectors, fourth sector activity, in the form of civic activism, can form an empowering way of self-organization. Self-organizing civic activism can then construct, both, elitist enclaves as well as empowering enclaves for the marginalized (e.g. Böse, Busch & Sesic 2006).

ISSUE#3 *Sharing economy requires new rules of operation!* Open application of co-creation is leading toward a new way of thinking about the nature of businesses, social co-operation and policy making alike. 'Sharing economy' thus implemented can extend the resource basis but also challenges traditional ways of making transactions. A minimum request for the fourth sector to operate effectively is a regulation that allows mission and value based operations in parallel to profit-making. Tensions can emerge from the different IPR requests and business models of the other three sectors.

ISSUE#4 *Fourth sector processes are transitory and tend to follow a project cycle!* The fourth sector both emerges from and results in the activities of the other three sectors. Fourth sector processes typically emerges from a socio-political context that is encouraging for individuals to develop ideas and solutions in collaboration with their fellow citizens. As described in Figure 3.1, the fourth sector involves different levels of organization (see also, Rask et al. 2018). Both anticipation of the 'project cycle', as well as an identification of the interphases between other three sectors can provide policy makers with tools to align fourth sector activities with the other sectors.

ISSUE#5 *Fourth sector participation does not automatically lead to better participation!* One rising issue in volunteering research that is also relevant on the fourth sector, is the possible anti-social nature of volunteering or fourth sector type activities (e.g Stukas et. al 2015; Raisio

et al. 2018). High motivation, focus on societal challenges and flexible adaptation to the new context do not only provide effective solutions to societal issues, but can also stimulate a culture of subversion and subordination. The activities themselves can also be anti-social in a sense, that the activation of one part of the society can go against the rights of another social group. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for policy makers to identify and anticipate, not only societal benefits but also threats that are often related to equity and protection of the rights and possibilities for equal participation by various sorts of participants.

In this paper we have provided an overview to the literature on the fourth sector in three different streams of academic study, proposed a working model that provides a definition and criteria for the fourth sector acknowledging the key insights emerging from the different streams. We will end this paper by proposing three avenues for future research that may help better understanding the emerging potential and governance challenges related to this phenomenon.

Earlier research on hybrid organizations has identified two types of explanations for the emergence of the fourth sector: market failure that is emphasized by European scholars and state failure that is emphasized by U.S. researchers. Acknowledging that these models emerge from the study of hybrid organizations, it would be interesting to make comparative research on the forms of self-organizing civic activism and one-to-one help to see whether they follow a similar tendency.

In addition to the three main streams of fourth sector activity, our study identified also additional types of activity that can be claimed to represent the fourth sector, as for instance randomly selected citizens that do not provide political representation but offer an access to the life world of the citizens. Further study should scrutinize the proposed criteria to evaluate whether they really can help capturing the 'essence' of the fourth sector, and delineate processes that belong to this sector or should alternatively be excluded from it. Also, the three main streams of fourth sector activity should continue to be scrutinized. For example, is there a danger that when naming hybrid organizations as the fourth sector we actually take away the 'hybridity', the essence of blending different sectors together.

Finally, 'strategies of fourth sector involvement' seems partly a paradoxical exercise, since it is very much the nature of the fourth sector that it will remain unorganized form of activity. As our study suggests, however, that the fourth sector consists of different levels of organization and stability, it

becomes important to understand what are actually the potential stages and interphases, where more formal sectors can affiliate with the operations of the fourth sector.

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