

Temporary affiliation: Volunteers during disaster response operations

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This presentation is about people's affiliation at ambiguous occasions, in situations that are something in between, positioned between certainty and uncertainty, between the organized and the unorganized, between routine and improvisation. Volunteerism during disaster response operations is in focus. The aim of the study is to understand how different types of volunteers are affiliated in different ways to different parts of the response operation. Empirically, the study consists of interviews with volunteers active during the response to the large forest fire that occurred in the Swedish county of Västmanland 2014. All prospective volunteers were not included in the response operation, and among those actually included different types of volunteers participated under different conditions. The most important dividing line in this respect goes between organized volunteers and those lacking a relevant organizational affiliation. To understand the different forms of affiliation of volunteers in the response operation, a distinction between an official and an unofficial operation is needed. The affiliation of organized volunteers takes the form of organization-based membership in the official operation, whereas the affiliation of volunteers lacking an organizational connection is a matter of network-based informal participation in the unofficial response operation. In the different kinds of response operations different conditions for inclusion prevail, but in both kinds of operations restrictions for inclusion are applied. Thereby, control of affiliation is used as a means of managing the uncertainty that characterizes all disaster response operations. The different kinds of affiliation may be understood within the boundaries of two forms of social order, namely, organization and network. Within this framework, the temporary affiliation of volunteers is analyzed.

Community response to crises and disasters: From preparedness to practices