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3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SECURITY



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CONTENS

EDITORIAL	7
KAMRUL HOSSAIN	
1. SECURITY – A SHARED CONCEPT? <u>ARE THE SÁMI LEGITIMATE ACTORS IN THE SECURITIZATION MOVE?</u>	9
BÜLENT SARPER AĞIR, EKREM YAŞAR AKÇAY	
2. AN EVALUATION OF THE STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV <u>REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA’S HUMAN SECURITY IN THE POST-OHRID ERA</u>	19
JOVANKA KUVEKALOVIĆ, GOSPAVA STOJANOVIĆ, MARINA FILIPOVIĆ	
3. SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF THE MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE IN 2015-16	27
NENAD STEKIĆ, MITKO ARNAUDOV	
4. THE EUROPEAN ASYLUM POLICIES: AN EMERGING SECURITY AGENDA?	37
PAOLO BARGIACCHI	
5. MANAGING THE REFUGEE CRISIS BY (SLIGHTLY) <u>REVISING THE DUBLIN SYSTEM</u>	47
SRĐAN KORAĆ	
6. HUMAN SECURITY AND GLOBAL ETHICS: <u>CAN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS BE MORAL AGENTS?</u>	55
LUKA GLUŠAĆ	
7. PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES IN TRANSIT COUNTRIES: <u>WHAT ROLE FOR NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (NHRIS)?</u>	65
MARIJA MILENKOVSKA	
8. “FALSE ASYLUM SEEKERS” IN THE EU FROM THE BALKANS: <u>THE MACEDONIAN EXPERIENCE</u>	73
VESNA ĆORIĆ, ANA KNEŽEVIĆ BOJOVIĆ, MILICA MATIJEVIĆ	
9. “THE INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW, RATHER THAN THE LAW ITSELF, IS WHAT MATTERS MOST IN ASYLUM CASES” – HOW TO IMPROVE THE ROLES OF EUROPEAN COURTS <u>IN THE INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF THE ASYLUM LAW?</u>	81
IVICA ĐORDJEVIĆ, MARKO FILIJOVIĆ	
10. CONTEMPORARY GEOPOLITICAL FACTORS <u>OF MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS OF POPULATION</u>	91
MILENA VUKMIROVIĆ	
11. THE ROLE OF URBAN DESIGN AND STRENGTHENING SOCIAL INCLUSIVENESS <u>IN THE PREVENTION OF THE TERRORIST ATTACKS AND RELATED CRISES</u>	99
SLAĐANA ĐURIĆ, ANA PARAUŠIĆ	
12. HUMAN SECURITY CONCEPT AS ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK <u>FOR EXAMINING URBAN SECURITY</u>	113
ALEKSANDRA ĐUKIĆ, BRANISLAV ANTONIĆ	
13. THE SECURITY OF OPEN PUBLIC SPACES AS AN ISSUE FOR URBAN <u>REDEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF KOSANČIĆEV VENAC, BELGRADE, SERBIA</u>	123
ERJON HITAJ	
14. RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT AS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT	133
MILUTIN MICHAEL RAJKOVIĆ	
15. AN EXPLORATION OF ANALYTIC AND OPERATIONAL CAPACITY OF THE HUMAN SECURITY PARADIGM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND KOSOVO: <u>[THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENT</u>	141

XIRA RUIZ-CAMPILLO	
16. THE ADVERSE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON HUMAN SECURITY	151
VLADIMIR NINKOVIĆ, OZREN DŽIGURSKI, SLAVICA PAVLOVIĆ	
17. HUMAN SECURITY AND RESILIENCE APPROACHES IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT	161
NEHIR VAROL, TIMUR GÜLTEKİN	
18. DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF TURKEY AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING IMPROVEMENT	171
SADI UYMAZ, ERKAN YILMAZ, LEYLA DERIN	
19. SURFACE HEAT ISLANDS AND FEATURES OF SIVAS AND SAMSUN CITIES IN TURKEY	179
C. MELISA KAYA, OGUZ GUNGOR, DAPENG YU	
20. DEVELOPING LONG TERM DAMAGE REDUCTION STRATEGIES FOR PAZARSUYU CREEK, GIRESUN, TURKEY, USING A TWO-DIMENSIONAL INERTIAL BASED FLOOD INUNDATION MODEL	191
LEYLA DERIN, NEHIR VAROL, SADI UYMAZ	
21. COAL MINING ACCIDENTS AND EVALUATION REGARDING RISK REDUCTION STUDIES IN TURKEY	201
MOEKO MINAGAWA	
22. FOOD SAFETY CONTROL IN JAPAN AFTER THE ACCIDENT OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IN FUKUSHIMA: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN SECURITY	209
UNA RADOVANOVIĆ NENADIĆ, MILICA POPOVIĆ	
23. BIOTERRORISM AS A THREAT TO HUMAN SECURITY: THE LAST MINUTE (HOUR) FOR PREVENTION!	219
MARIJA POPOVIĆ MANČEVIĆ	
24. NATO AND HUMAN SECURITY: AN OXYMORON OR A CONTRIBUTION TO A BROAD HUMAN SECURITY NETWORK	227
VALENTINA RANALDI	
25. HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK: LABOUR SECURITY AS A PRIMARY CHALLENGE FOR HUMAN SECURITY	235
ZORAN JEFTIĆ, GORAN MANDIĆ	
26. USE OF ARMED FORCES IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS -MIGRANT CRISES -	245
ELIZABETA RISTANOVIĆ	
27. INFECTIVE AGENTS AND HUMAN SECURITY THROUGH THE PRISM OF CURRENT MIGRATIONS	257
NATAŠA JOVANOVIĆ	
28. CONTEMPORARY ORIENTALISTIC DISCOURSE AS THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN WESTERN SOCIETIES	269
MIROSLAV PENDAROSKI, KATERINA NIKOLOVSKA	
29. PHENOMENOLOGY OF FEAR OF CRIME AND THE RISK OF VICTIMIZATION AS THE BASIS FOR REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL SECURITY IN MAJOR TRANSITION CITIES: A REFERENCE TO THE MACEDONIAN EXAMPLE WITH EMPHASIS ON THE CHILD POPULATION	277

Sladana ĐURIC^{*}, Ana PARAUŠIĆ^{}**

12. HUMAN SECURITY CONCEPT AS ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING URBAN SECURITY

Abstract: Human Security concept begins with a question: “How much is the human as an individual secure and free?” This concept is based on the assumption that people (not a state) are main security objects, and that satisfaction of human needs, empowering personal integrity and well-being are main goals. Urban security relates to a wide range of threats to individuals in urban areas, as well as prevention and protection strategies and mechanisms. Key idea of the concept is that cities are complex formations and that, even if they represent the epicentre of life, they could also be a source of danger to its citizen.

Objective of this paper is to examine explanatory potential of Human Security concept as analytical framework for studying and explaining urban security numerous phenomena. For that purpose, we want to examine how people-centred approach in previous research was applied in investigating urban security challenges. Based on extensive analysis of research studies in the past decade, as well as on our own research experience in application of this model in several city municipalities in Serbia, we have identified several important advantages which can be achieved by applying Human Security concept in examining complex dimensions of urban security.

The most important advantage is related to the fact that broad and holistic Human Security concept, compared to other research approaches, enables widening of the research focus that may include: environmental security, personal and physical security, economic and social safety, political non-discrimination. In numerous studies based on Human Security concept, problems of hunger, diseases, natural disasters, which in reality take more lives than wars, genocide and terrorism all together, have been examined. Also, this approach has potential to explain other urban security problems: poverty, different forms of discrimination and exclusion, access to education, employment and health care.

The idea of personalizing the security, which is basis of the Human Security, provides changing focus from a state (as a referent security object), towards more narrow social environment – local community (village, city, region). The context of the local community ensures the proper consideration of the problems that citizens face in the most direct way. As a people-centred concept, human security places the individual at the centre of analysis. This comprehensive analytical tool allows scholars to cover such urban environment problems directed to individuals as sociospatial segregation, discrimination, social exclusion, crime and violence.

^{*} Full Professor, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Security Studies, djuricsladja@gmail.com

^{**} PhD Student, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Security Studies, parausicana@gmail.com

The Human Security approach to urban environment research provides not only complex assessment of the security level, but also the basis for creating effective reactive and preventive programmes. Human Security indicators assessment in urban environment requires improved methods which should provide creation of comprehensive empirical database. Through the adequate analytical model, the security level of different spheres of everyday life could be observed and examined.

In general, this research model could be further developed as a basic research approach and adapted towards the specific needs and life conditions of the observed communities (political instability, conflict and post-conflict environment, discrimination of social groups, underdevelopment, the so-called urban problems domination, etc.).

Keywords: *human security concept, urban environment, people-centred approach, participatory based community research*

1. INTRODUCTION

Human Security concept begins with a question: “How safe and free are we as individuals?” (Bajpai, 2000:2). This seemingly simple question has sparked a number of debates and disagreements in academic and political circles how to determine this complex and broad concept. The popularity of the idea of human security is the result of the need to reconceptualise traditional understanding of security in post-Cold War years (King & Murray, 2001; Alkire, 2003; Owen, 2004).

One of the first significant attempts to articulate human security was the 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report*. The UNDP articulated human security as “safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression”, along with “protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life” (UNDP, 1994: 23). The intention was to bridge the freedom from want and freedom from fear, which could be seen as two predominant ways of thinking about this concept.⁷¹

Human security is based on an assumption that people (not a state) are main security objects, and that satisfaction of human needs, empowering personal integrity and well-being are its main goals. Despite the fact that many opposed any analytical value of this concept (Krause, 2004; Paris, 2001), there have been attempts to apply human security to investigate security issues of everyday life in the city. Urban security relates to a wide range of threats to individuals in urban areas, as well as prevention and protection strategies and mechanisms. The key idea of the concept is that cities are complex formations and that even if they represent the epicentre of life, they could also be a source of danger to its citizen.

A big progress in research of the problem of safety in urban environments has been made since 1960s, and particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, raising interest for certain themes, such as geography, urban and cultural studies, health, environment, the manifestation of violent and hooligan behaviour in the cities, repeated terrorism and similar (Danilović Hristić, 2015). Cities, which encompass a large and growing portion of the world population, are particularly vulnerable to various threats because of the interdependence of their systems and the vulnerability of one system can have a major impact on other systems (Bugliarello, 2003).

⁷¹ A number of authors have focused on the freedom from need or vulnerability aspect of human security. For example, King and Murray define human security “as the number of years of future life spent outside a state of “generalized poverty”. Generalized poverty occurs when an individual falls below the threshold of any key domain of human well-being.” (2001: 585). More freedom from fear oriented authors see human security as the absence of threats to core human values (Alkire, 2003; Owen, 2004b).

This paper aims to examine explanatory potential of Human Security concept as analytical framework for studying and explaining urban security numerous phenomena. In the paper, we analyse research studies from the past decade that examine threats characteristic of urban environment. Bearing in mind that research focus of human security is primarily based on individuals and their well-being, we have examined how people-centred approach in previous research was applied in investigating urban security challenges. In addition, evaluation of the explanatory potential of human security is based on our research experience gained in research projects in which this concept was applied in the examination of urban security in several communities in Serbia. Projects were realized in the period from 2002 till 2012, on the territory of Belgrade municipality of Palilula (Đuric, 2009a), city area of Prokuplje municipality and municipalities of Pančevo (Đuric, 2008; Đuric 2013) and Indija.

Based on extensive analyses of selected research studies, as well as on our own research experience, we have identified several important advantages which can be achieved by applying Human Security concept in examining complex dimensions of urban security:

- widening of the research focus to include diverse problems of public urban spaces and its residents;
- changing research focus from state security, towards narrower social environment, i.e. city;
- implementation of research findings into preventive and reactive programs.

2. HUMAN SECURITY AS A HOLISTIC APPROACH

One of the most important advantages of the Human Security concept as analytical framework for examining urban security threats, compared to other research approaches, is that the concept is holistic and broad enough to enable widening of the research focus. Based on an extensive review of contemporary research practice, we were able to isolate a few problems in whose examination the concept of human security was successfully applied as an analytical framework: environmental security (Pelling & Wisner, 2012; Bulkeley, 2013), personal and physical security (Fawaz & Bou Akar, 2012), economic and social safety (Agboola & Balcilar, 2012; Floro & Swain, 2013), political non-discrimination (Musterd & Ostendorf, 2013).

Traditional approaches to security cannot identify and explore risks that citizens experience in urban public environment, that are diverse in its manifestations and forms. On the contrary, based on findings of analysed research studies we can conclude that Human security concept allows researchers to examine traditional, military threats, as well as contemporary threats, such as poverty, hunger, infectious diseases and etc. (Hove et al., 2013; Hardoy & Satterthwaite, 2014), which in reality take more lives than wars, genocide and terrorism all together. People-centred nature of the concept enables taking into account the whole range of threats directed at citizens.

Assessment of security at local (city) level may indicate threats that are specific for the examined community, and inclusive and holistic nature of human security concept gives opportunity for extending that list. Thus, this approach has potential to explain multidimensional and interrelated urban security problems: poverty (Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2013), different forms of discrimination and exclusion (Musterd & Ostendorf, 2013), access to education (Gordon & Monastiriotis, 2006), employment (Floro & Swain, 2013) and health care (Israel et al., 2006).

In addition to the insight gained by reviewing recent research practices, the concept of human security has proved to be a useful analytical framework when examining security problems of urban areas in our own research projects (Đurić, 2008a; Đurić, 2009a; Đurić, 2013). Complex assessment of the security situation was based on an analysis of three groups of indicators: examination of current problems in the local community in the area of human security; consideration of available resources in the community that can be used in prevention and reaction to threats; determination of level of readiness of the local community to undertake interventions.

Keeping in mind complexity of local community problems, which demanded high levels of sensitivity in the research strategy, community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach was a convenient methodological framework for investigating security issues of city dwellers. This multimethod approach, which involves the use of both qualitative as well as quantitative methods, enabled the creation of a broader picture of the general situation in the studied community and gaining deeper insights about how people perceive security threats in urban environment. CBPR was a suitable methodological solution for urban security research, because it implies active participation of community members in different stages of the research, and enables development of mutual confidence and trust between subjects and researchers.

Despite criticisms at the expense of human security, by summing up the findings of the existing corpus of academic literature, as well as our own research experiences, we can conclude that this concept has significant explanatory potential in the study of various security problems of urban areas that citizens face every day. The advantage of the human security approach is that it may include both traditional and non-traditional security threats.

3. MOVING THE RESEARCH FOCUS

The idea of personalizing the security, which is the basis of the Human Security concept, provides changing focus from a state (as a referent security object), towards more narrow societal environment – local community (village, city, region). Taking human security perspective in urban environment has shifted sovereignty from national to local authorities, which has opened up a space of autonomy where local authorities could play a proactive role in the provision of security to the citizens (Devroe, 2013; Mesko et al., 2013; Recasens et al., 2013). Moving the research focus from state security to security of community and security of individuals has contributed to the understanding of complex and interrelated threats city dwellers are faced with. The endangered urban population is normally associated with low levels of education, lack of employment opportunities, large family size, and poor housing conditions (Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2013). Results of the research studies indicate an unambiguous conclusion: the better the housing conditions, health, safety, and social support of city population the higher is the quality of life and levels of all the parameters of human security.

Human security sheds light on those that are most needed, the lack in basic human needs as housing and shelter, water, sanitation, health, education, social security and livelihoods (Rawles, 2014). This comprehensive analytical tool allows scholars to cover such urban environment problems directed to individuals as sociospatial segregation, discrimination,

social exclusion, crime and violence (Nagy, 2006; San-Juan et al., 2012; Recasens et al., 2013). Human security concept is broad enough to encompass these diverse threats towards individuals that range from crime, violence and terrorism to unemployment, poverty, disease, etc. (Barnett & Adger, 2007; Cook & Frank, 2008).

In urban settings, individuals are the main actors who define what a security threat is, which the main sources of danger are in city environment, and which the best strategies to confront and prevent them are (Boonyabanha & Kerr, 2015). Analysed research studies indicate that security issues proposed by the state government differ significantly from how ordinary citizens perceived security threats. Human security concept promotes the idea that citizens need to be actively involved in enhancing their own security, and not just passive referent security objects or receivers of protection from state based actors (Marquardt, 2012).

Our previous research experience (Đurić, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), showed that “it is the local, rather than the national or regional, level that provides a more comprehensive degree of human security assessment“ (Đuric, 2013: 309).

Estimations at the local level have enabled moving research focus on those threats that are relevant to specific conditions of examined community. The context of the local community ensures the proper consideration of the problems that citizens face in the most direct way. A city represents a social, political and cultural environment in which individuals directly exercise their civil and other rights, i.e. the place where those rights are most obviously threatened.

As a people-centred concept, human security places the individual at the centre of the analysis. Efforts directed towards specific context of the city may ease identification and understanding of different threats facing citizens' everyday life. What is possibly an important advantage of human security as an analytical framework of urban security is that it provides an opportunity to identify the individualized, local and bottom-up experiences of humans themselves.

4. PREVENTIVE AND REACTIVE PROGRAMMES

The Human Security approach in urban environment research provides not only complex assessment of the security level, but also a basis for creating effective reactive and preventive programs (Recasens et.al, 2013). This approach has potential to bridge the gap between science and practice, in the way that city residents and researchers work together, in an atmosphere of trust and partnership, to promote goals that meet the needs of a specific community (Nygreen et al., 2006).

Research experience shows that the results of studies where people-centred approach was theoretical framework could be successfully implemented in various initiatives for improving the quality of life in public urban spaces. Human security concept can serve as a plausible, measurable, alternate means of constructing a social safety net and empowerment for the vulnerable populations in the urban areas (Rawles, 2014: 360).

As our own research experience has shown, Human Security indicators assessment in urban environment requires improved methods which should provide creation of a comprehensive empirical database (Djuric, 2009; Đurić, 2013). In order to assess these indicators in an adequate way, it is necessary to collect and analyse data from different sources, which requires

careful planning of the methodological approach, as well as application of multiple research procedures (Evans et al., 2009). Research that draws upon both qualitative and quantitative methods can enrich the research through a process of identifying, theorizing and testing relationships between individuals and the contexts in which they reside and maximize the extent to which research questions being asked and hypotheses being tested are driven by the lived experiences of the residents themselves (Israel et al., 2006).

Through an adequate analytical model, the security level of different spheres of everyday life could be observed and examined. Thus, an adequate assessment of the urban security situation may be derived only if the overall analysis of the objective indicators of the presence of security threats is complemented by the analysis of the views of city residents on whether they are threatened in the place of their everyday life (Djuric, 2009b: 548-9). Continued monitoring of threatened parameters in urban environment provides social researchers with the opportunity to improve the human security concept as an analytical framework for urban security phenomena, and city management with possibilities for timely intervention and rational planning of security policy (Đurić, 2013).

As the analysis of the recent research practice indicates, as well as our own research experience, application of human security concept in the investigation of urban security problems can contribute to the implementation of research findings in diverse local activities, given that researchers and citizens jointly define and analyse the specific risks of examined communities. Research results should have applicability and social utility for policy and practice, and participants must be fully informed and involved partners in the research process.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Human security concept in urban environment research could be further developed as a basic research approach to urban security issues. It could also be adapted towards the specific needs and life conditions of the observed communities (political instability, conflict and post-conflict environment, discrimination of social groups, underdevelopment, the so-called urban problems domination, etc.).

Assessment of urban security applying human security as analytical framework implies comprehensive analysis of the objective indicators of security threats, complemented by the analysis of the attitudes of citizens on whether they are threatened and what the sources of endangerment are in public urban environment. Complexity of the urban security phenomena entails complementary application of different techniques for collection of various data that could reveal the diversity of the security challenges faced by the city dwellers.

Urban security is considered a strategic goal for everyone participating in the life of public urban spaces, and preserving urban security entails active engagement of local authority, residents, and academic community. Bearing this in mind, application of CBPR enables the achievement of a principle that only with full appreciation of the attitudes and opinions of the members of the community and with direct examination of their life experience, the scientific understanding of the conditions and dynamics of life in the community could be understood. This requires active participation of subjects belonging to different social groups in research: key informants, city government officials, city managers, city residents, marginalised persons, members of different formal and informal groups.

The broadness of the human security concept is often cited as an advantage because it allows the inclusion of a number of security problems faced by the residents of urban quarters. It is, however, only the relative advantage, because it is holistic nature and comprehensiveness of this concept that often leads to the loss of research focus. When it is not applied properly, human security can include an endless list of threats, which ultimately hinders its operationalization and determination of precise set of indicators. Therefore, human security should be seen only as one of many analytical frameworks for examining the security of urban areas. Researchers of urban security need to know the advantages and weaknesses of different analytical frameworks and that their individual choices are always based on a cautious assessment of their adequacy in each individual study.

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