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**CONTRIBUTION OF SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS TO THE  
PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:  
CASE STUDY OF THE INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGICAL  
AND SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN BELGRADE**

*The sociological approach to science as a social field and process has a special value in its application to those areas of knowledge that are closely linked to important social issues, such as human rights. The subject of this case study will be the recent publications of researchers from the Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research in Belgrade, as an example of the scientific institution dedicated to the study of various aspects in this topic. Special focus will be placed on the exploration of different analyzed fields of human rights, as well as on specific disciplines from which human rights are viewed (legal disciplines, psychology, sociology, anthropology, special education, ecology, etc.), or on detecting multidisciplinary approaches. In addition to the description of scientific publications, the article will present various types of cooperation with other actors in this field, both scientific and state institutions and bodies, independent institutions, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations.*

**Keywords:** *human rights, sociology of science, sociology of knowledge, scientific institutions, case study.*

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## **1. Institutions and human rights**

Sociological explanation of emergence of the concept of human rights seems to be impossible without taking into account whole spectre of different institutions. First of all, institutions such as international organizations and bodies, national parliaments, courts, independent institutions and non-governmental institutions had crucial role in establishing rule of human rights, and still have in their implementation and development.

Secondly, broader understanding of influence of institutions on genesis and development of human rights finds these ties in much deeper socio-historical processes. Materialistic causes are found in capitalism and emergence of bureaucratic state, as Max Weber underlined in his classical study: “that the demand for formal, legal equality and economic freedom of movement paved the way for the destruction of all specific foundations of patrimonial and feudal legal systems in favor of a cosmos of abstract norms, and thus indirectly of bureaucracy, but on the other hand favored the expansion of capitalism in a very specific way” (Weber, 1978: 817). At the same time, Weber held in great esteem Rudolf Jellinek’s explanation about relevance of one much older institution on development of human rights – religion. Non-material social aspects were not only important because of inherent textual content of holy scriptures which contain some of norms which will become foundation of human rights, but also because struggles for religious freedoms led to formal appreciation of all other freedoms and rights (Joas, 2006: 6).

It is interesting to note that science also represents institutionalized practise which has roots in layman (and clergy of lower rank) interpretations of religion (Ben-David & Sullivan, 1975: 204). Emerging from this very specific relation between church as an established organization and individuals seeking to fulfill their authentic spiritual and social needs, western science found firmest foundation in its orientation to political and social reforms, beginning in 17<sup>th</sup> century and gaining prominence in 18<sup>th</sup> century. Process of socio-genesis of science led to formation of institutional framework, from an early academies, to modern universities and different types of scientific institutes and research centers.

Being relatively objective, consensual evaluation of discoveries makes science as an example of institutionally regulated cultural change, which can affect many aspects of society. From sociological perspective, scientific knowledge is valued for it’s technical applications, and for it’s own right of better understanding of ourselves and the world around us (Ben-David & Sullivan, 1975: 203). Particularity, concerning topic of human

rights, both aspects are relevant. Norms implicit in the public conduct of scientists include universalism, emotional neutrality, rationality, individualism, communality, and disinterestedness (Ben-David & Sullivan, 1975: 204).

## **2. Case Study: The Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research in Belgrade**

Institute was founded in 1960, originally as the *Institute of Criminological and Criminalistic Research*, and started with activities in 1961. In 1971 this institute was integrated with the *Sociological Institute of Serbia*, which led to the current form which this research institution have to this day (in Serbo-Croatian: *Institut za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja*, abbreviated: *IKSI*) (Kron & Stevanović, 2011: 21). Main goals of the Institute include both fundamental and practical research in the following scientific disciplines: criminal law and criminal procedure, criminology, penology, psychology of crime, social pathology, victimology, environmental protection, sociology, anthropology, disability studies, andragogy, security studies etc (ibid: 11). Main scientific problems and topics which are juvenile delinquency, penal policies, penal sanctions, recidivism, suicide, study of victims, international criminal law, human rights, methodology of social sciences, domestic violence, psychological factors in genesis of criminal behaviour and measuring instruments, sociology of rural and urban settlements, professions and medicine (ibid: 25).

At the present, the Institute is a unique scientific and research organization dedicated to studying ethiology, phenomenology and prevention of criminality and social deviations. In practice, these scientific questions are opened up and cover wide variety of themes, many of which correspond with human rights. Uniqueness of the Institute in context of Serbian science is in the fact that researchers from different formal scientific backgrounds work together, rather than in specialized departments, which brings forth original approaches to concrete problems. The main goal of this article is to map diversity of research activities aimed at better understanding human rights, or to enhance their implementation.

In order to acquire needed data, two main sources of data were analyzed. First, newly established digital deposit of different scientific publications was examined with goal to determine quantity of books and articles concerning human rights, main themes and scientific disciplines. Since number of publications relevant for this paper topic is large – around 250 in total – they will be only briefly presented. More detailed approach will be applied to publications from 2017 (five years period). Second source of information will

be official Institute's website, which contains information about projects, conferences, and other research activities.

### **3. Themes and approaches: empirical analysis**

Detailed analysis of concrete topics covered by researchers from the *Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research* before 2017 shows both diversity of themes and long-term commitment to certain problems. Human rights of the prison population (mostly in Serbia) prove to be most researched theme: 17 publications are dedicated to general rights of prisoners, 15 about minors in prison, 2 to healthcare and education and 1 was about rights of disabled and elderly people in prison (38 in total). Second most common theme are the rights of the children, minors or youth (in prison or in conflict with the law 15; general and theoretical topics 10; in foster families 1; girls 1 - 27 in total). Right to healthy environment follows with 6 publications, while 5 were about right to privacy. Rights of disabled people were the theme of 4 publications and elderly people in 3. Publications about human rights in court processes, such as right to just trial, rights of victims or witnesses were also 3 in number. Women's and migrant's rights were analyzed in 2 publications, while 1 was dedicated to health patient's rights; single parent's rights; war crimes; media reports; rights concerning religion and male rights each.

Analyze of publications during the last five years show even greater variety and quantity of texts. Articles and books about children's rights are most numerous, with 34 titles identified (Batrićević & Kubiček 2019 b; Ćopić & Ćopić, 2019; Đukanović, 2022; Glomazić & Glomazić 2022; Kolaković-Bojović; 2018; Kolaković-Bojović 2019 c; Kolaković-Bojović, Stevanović, I. & Vukićević, 2022; Kubiček & Marković, 2022; Maljković & Igrački, 2018; Milićević, 2017; Nedović 2018; Milićević, 2019; Milićević, 2019b; Milićević, 2020; Milićević, 2020b; Milićević & Nedović 2020; Milićević, 2021; Milićević, 2021b; Milićević, 2021c; Pavićević & Iljić, 2018; Pavićević, 2019, Stefanović & Karić, 2020; Stepanović, Pavićević & Iljić, 2022; Stevanović, A. 2022; Stevanović, I. 2017; Stevanović, I. 2017b; Stevanović, I. 2017c; Stevanović, I. 2017d; Stevanović, I. & Vujičić, 2019; Stevanović, I. & Vujić, 2020; Stevanović, I. & Kolaković-Bojović, 2021; Stevanović, I. & Kolaković-Bojović 2022; ). Publications concerning rights of children in conflict with the law are counted separately, and with 6 of them, children-related publications sum up to 39 in total (Karić et al. 2020; Kolaković-Bojović 2022; Protić et al, 2020; Stevanović, I. & Vujičić, 2019; Stevanović, I. 2020).

General rights of the prisoners make the second most researched topic, with 11 in total (Batrićević, 2019; Batrićević & Stepanović 2020; Batrićević, 2021; Batrićević, 2021b;

Batrićević & Kovačević 2021; Ilijić, Milićević, & Vujičić, 2020; Ilijić, 2021; Kolaković-Bojović 2021; Mededović, Petrović & Vujičić, 2019; Pavićević, Ilijić & Batrićević, 2020; Savić & Knežić, 2019). Again, more concrete problems are counted separately: education of prisoners numbers 6 publications (Batrićević, Paraušić & Kubiček 2020; Ilijić, 2022; Knežić, 2017; Vujičić, 2019; Vujičić & Karić, 2020; Vujičić & Drndarević, 2022 ), so that there are 17 in total.

Human rights in the context of police and court proceedings are analyzed in 10 publications (Batrićević, 2020, Kolaković-Bojović, 2017; Kolaković-Bojović 2019; Kolaković-Bojović 2019b; Matić Bošković 2020; Matić Bošković 2020b; Milićević, Ilijić & Vujičić, 2019; Pavićević & Ilijić, 2017; Stevanović, I. 2017c; Stevanović, I. & Vujić, 2020b), including one about the death penalty (Matić Bošković & László Gál, 2021).

Rights of the disabled were the theme of 10 publications (Milićević, 2017; Milićević & Nedović 2018; Milićević, 2019; Milićević, 2019b; Milićević, 2020; Milićević, 2020b; Milićević & Nedović 2020; Milićević, 2021; Milićević, 2021b; Milićević, 2021c). Right to privacy also saw a rise in interest with 9 articles and books (Batrićević & Stepanović 2020; Kolaković-Bojović & Turanjanin, 2017; Stepanović, 2018; Stepanović 2018b; Stepanović 2019; Stepanović 2020; Stepanović, 2022; Stepanović , Pavićević & Ilijić, 2022; Stevanović, I. 2017b). In the analyzed period, migrant rights also rose to prominence, with 8 publications about this problem (Batrićević, 2018 b; Batrićević & Kubiček 2019; Batrićević & Kubiček 2019b; Čopić & Čopić, 2018; Čopić & Čopić, 2019; Ćirić & Drndarević 2019; Knežić, 2018; Paraušić, 2017).

New topic of employee's rights emerges with 5 in number (Marković, 2019; Marković, 2020; Rabrenović, Kostić & Matić Bošković, 2018; Stevanović, A. & Kostić, 2020; Stevanović, A. 2021). With 4 in total each, there are few more themes: rights of the crime victims (Kolaković-Bojović & Grujić 2020; Kolaković-Bojović 2020b; Kolaković-Bojović 2020c; Pavićević & Ilijić, 2017); gender rights (Hughson, 2017; Pavićević & Ilijić, 2017; Pavićević, 2020, Pavićević, 2021); and media representation of human rights (Kubiček & Marković, 2022; Pavićević & Ilijić, 2017, Stepanović, 2022; Stevanović, I. 2017b). Finally, researchers from IKSI have published 3 works about ethnic minority rights (Kubiček, 2018; Kubiček, 2020, Kubiček & Marković, 2022); 3 about patient's rights (Kubiček, 2020, Batrićević & Kubiček 2021; Ilijić, 2021); 3 dedicated to mental patient's rights (Batrićević, 2019 b; Ilijić, Milićević, & Vujičić, 2020;) and 1 about disappeared persons (Kolaković-Bojović 2021b), elderly (Knežić, 2020) and the right to healthy environment (Batrićević, 2018).

Considering different scientific disciplines, law was the most common with 33 publications before 2017; followed by disability studies (14). Publications belonging to andragogy were 6 in number, anthropology 5, psychology, ecology and sociology 3 each. Multidisciplinary approaches were also noted, particularly as synergy of law and ecology 3, law and sociology and law and andragogy 1 each; while there were also 5 publications which combined 3 or more disciplines.

Again, in the last five years, most publications belonging to the law are the most numerous (38), and disability studies are next (12). Sociology follows with 8 publications, while anthropology and andragogy have 5 each. Two more publications involve psychology and 1 security studies. All multidisciplinary publications include combination of law with other disciplines: sociology 6; psychology 4; disability studies 2 and anthropology 1, while 4 are combination of more than two scientific disciplines.

#### **4. Thematic conferences, projects and promotion of human rights**

During the last years, the Institute organized a number of thematic conferences strictly dedicated to human rights, or to themes concerning human rights. Gatherings which brought together experts in the field of children's rights were "Juveniles as Perpetrators and Victims of Crimes and Misdemeanors" in 2015; "Child Friendly Justice" in 2018 and "Children and the Challenges of the Digital Environment" in 2022. Conferences "Penal Law and Medicine" in 2019 and "Drugs and Drug Addiction: Legal, Criminological, Sociological and Medical issues" in 2020, although not primarily dedicated to human rights, encompassed many important questions concerning compulsory psychiatric treatment and confinement in a medical institution, compulsory psychiatric treatment at liberty, compulsory drug addiction treatment, compulsory alcohol addiction treatment<sup>1</sup>.

Traditional annual scientific conferences organized with Protector of Citizens - Ombudsman of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, held from 2017 are closely commuted to human rights: "Freedom, Security: Right to Privacy" in 2017; "Protection of Human Rights: from Illegality to Legality" in 2018; "Protection of the Rights of the Child (30 Years after the Adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child)" in 2019 and "Right to Life" in 2021. All events were attended by representatives of the academic, scientific and research community from more than 20 countries, as well as representatives

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<sup>1</sup> All presented data is collected from the website of the Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, <http://www.iksi.ac.rs/>, accessed on 8. august 2022.

of independent institutions, local ombudspersons, centers for social work, judicial bodies and other institutions and organizations dealing with human rights.

In addition to listed publications, many of the most important and successful research projects in which Institute have taken part in the referred period were devoted to human rights. During 2017, the Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Serbia, conducted a research project on the topic "Application of medical security measures in the criminal justice system of the Republic of Serbia", which referred to rights of particularly precarious segment of prison population.

Institute's researchers also took part in the innovative programs in the Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica, which are aiming to contribute to better quality of life during the sentence, and an easier inclusion of convicted persons in the community after serving the punishment by offering them chance to learn how to train dogs and take care for them. During the last five years (since 2017), this method has significantly advanced, and now is applied in both semi-open and closed parts of Correctional Institution, and even includes work with horses. Researchers from the Institute gave substantial expert support to the implementation of mentioned projects, and documented their application and results.

One of the most encompassing multidisciplinary research projects undertaken in Serbia concerning prisoners quality of life, including their human rights is the *#PrisonLIFE project*, which is implemented by the Institute from 2022, with support from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological development. Research is focusing on differences related to socio-demographic, criminological and penological characteristics and examines the relationship with different subjective indicators, assessing the possibility of its improvement, with special emphasis on criminological, penological, psychological, sociological, legal and security aspects. The result of this project is the creation of guidelines for improving the quality of prison life of convicted men and women in the Republic of Serbia, thus enhancing their human rights in practice.

Finally, most original advance made by Institute's researchers is creative promotion of scientific results regarding human rights. One such event took place at Bartselona Koncept Gallery in Belgrade in 2018, when Ana Batrićević held photography exhibition "Second Chance". The exhibition consisted of 14 photos made by the author in 2018, during her field research on the application of re-socialisation programmes that consist of prisoners' work with dogs from dog shelter within prison in Sremska Mitrovica.

Second photo exhibition, “Freedom inside the Circle”, was held at the very Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research on 18.12.2019, as part of presentation of Ana Batrićević’s book “Second Chance: Prisoner's Work with Dogs in Correctional Institution Sremska Mitrovica”.

Third exhibition of artistic photos produced as part of research fieldwork was in 2021. at Cultural Institution Stari Grad (Parobrod). This time Ana Batrićević presented photographs of convicted persons working with horses for the purpose of resocialisation gathered under the title “Closeness of freedom”.

## **5. Conclusion**

Vast quantity of presented bibliographical and factual data reveals results worth clarifying. Even though different legal disciplines encompass human rights issues in the unified manner, their outline remains incomplete without many other social, and sometimes even natural, medical or technical sciences. Different social and behavioral scientific disciplines are intrinsically tied to specific areas of human rights which relate to their domains. Disability studies ought to be concerned with rights of people with various impairments, andragogy can give insights into rights of the elderly, ecology may explore different aspects of rights to healthy environment, while sociology is interested in the rights of specific social groups. This is something which was clearly demonstrated in the presented empirical data. Still, interest for human rights doesn't solely come from inherent structure of the scientific discipline on it's own, or from some intrinsic epistemological causes. Projects aimed at concrete problems prove to be one of the prime motivators. In that light, Institute's dedication is twofold: both programmatic and circumstantial. Long-term tendencies of researchers interest especially include questions concerning prisoners and children. On the other hand, it is shown that some topics became relevant because of current social situation: migrations (during the migrant crises) and health problems (caused by COVID pandemic).

Regardless of the specific scientific field or discipline, all scientific knowledge can enhance development and implementation of human rights in many different ways. (1) It offers theoretical foundation for better understanding of nature of human rights; (2) it can detect concrete legal problems, both in legislative and in its implementation; (3) It may map specific social contexts or individual cases in which concrete human right is jeopardized (4) scientific knowledge may have positive impact on policies; (5) or to bring changes trough applied research in different practical projects.



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