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HUMANIZING SECURITY

Two human security case studies in Serbia




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Humanizing Security – Two human security case studies in Serbia
Belgrade, January 2015





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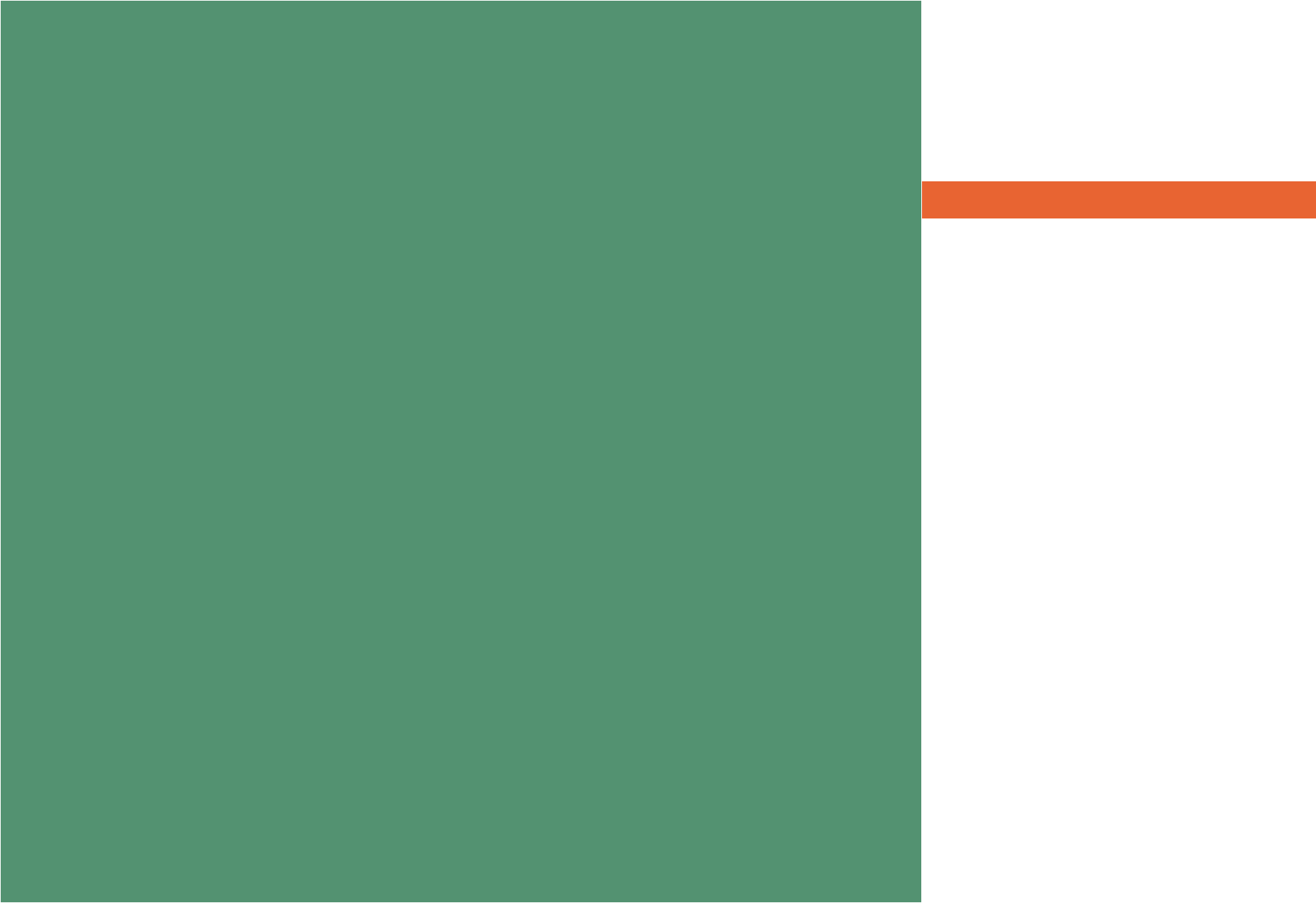
HUMANIZING SECURITY – TWO HUMAN SECURITY CASE STUDIES IN SERBIA

Belgrade, January 2015



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INTRODUCTION

Human security threats are widespread in Serbia and the region. In Serbia, the positive effects of the reform policies after the fall of Milosevic regime were short lasted. Although economic growth together with political and social transformation suggested a more secure future, the economic crisis since 2008 and further inability to build up and maintain democratic processes, to create reliable institutions and to establish the rule of law, have brought serious problems to the region. Social disintegration and social exclusion, and revival of authoritarian tendencies, are just some of the challenges which face the country today. In human security terms, this poses severe threats to the dignity and quality of life of a large portion of the Serbian population.

These types of threats are however often 'hidden' and consequently overlooked by security actors – policy makers and civil society alike. They are often seen as normal and secondary to state sovereignty. Research on human security can bring these insecurities and vulnerabilities to the forefront and allow us to understand some of the main underlying process which threaten peoples' lives on a day-to-day basis. Once these complex networks of insecurities are understood, a human security approach in the policy arena can contribute to more stability and decrease vulnerability.

Since human security is a relatively new approach in the world, and Serbia in particular, this report will explore human security aspects of threats in two particular cases:

1. peer-to-peer violence among youth in schools
2. insecurities of workers caused by illegal and irresponsible privatization



In-depth accounts of these two case studies will illustrate both particular threats posed for two specific groups in Serbia, as well as show wider human security issues which can contribute insecurities in a broader number of settings. This analysis will rest on a bottom-up human security methodology developed by researchers across the region within the project “Cross-border citizens’ network for peace, inter-communal reconciliation and human security” and in cooperation with experts who have actively worked on human security issues at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences. As part of this broader initiative, this report does not only contribute to better understanding of vulnerability in the two topics chosen, but can also be compared to other countries in the region.

The first part of this report will try to familiarize the reader with the concept of human security and different ways human security threats can be explored, while the second part of the report will give an in-depth analysis of the two case studies selected. In the end, through these accounts, we hope the reader has gained some key understandings of how vulnerabilities are construed and how they can be understood in human security terms.





CITIZENS NETWORK FOR HUMAN SECURITY

The Citizens' network for human security is a joint initiative of civil society organizations from Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, supported by the European Union, Open Society Foundation and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Turkey through the project "Cross-border citizens' network for peace, inter-communal reconciliation and human security in the Western Balkans and Turkey". The main objective of the initiative is to build a citizens' network for human security across Balkans and Turkey, which will raise public awareness and create social mobilization among citizens and policy makers on the centrality of human beings as the prime dimension of security. The aim is thereby to strengthen advocacy activities at the country, regional and European level on human security issues, grounded in a programme of systematic research.

In the past two years of project implementation, the Network has conducted research on forms and sources of insecurity in the everyday lives of the citizens with a particular interest in schools, workplace and local community, under the theme of forms and spaces of violence in the Balkans and Turkey. As part of this research agenda, the Network has published two reports on human security – the Baseline report on Human Security in the Western Balkans and Turkey and the Regional Thematic Report: Hidden Forms of Spaces of Violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Apart from building an evidence base on human security, the Network also aspires to become a model of collaboration between civil society organizations and research institutions and thereby contribute to bridge the distance between research, advocacy and policy making community.

More information about the initiative and the Networks activities can be found on: www.cn4hs.org



WHAT IS HUMAN SECURITY?

Human security presents a relatively new paradigm for approaching the problem of security. In contrast to traditional concepts of security which revolve around the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state, human security recognizes that the security of individual humans is essential in building stable and peaceful societies. This individual security is multifaceted and depends upon the inter-relatedness of multiple different phenomena.

The main objective of human security initiatives/policies is thereby to protect individuals and groups from a range of severe and pervasive harms which affect their ability to lead tolerable lives. Hence, human security focuses on addressing and preventing risks to individuals' and groups' physical, material and psychological being, summarized as ensuring freedom from fear, freedom from want and dignity.

Although the concept has long been in the process of developing (e.g. John Burtons emphasis on the individual in international security), it was first introduced in the international arena in UNDP's 1994 Human Develop-

Definition of the
Commission on Human Security
from *Human Security Now* (2003: 4):

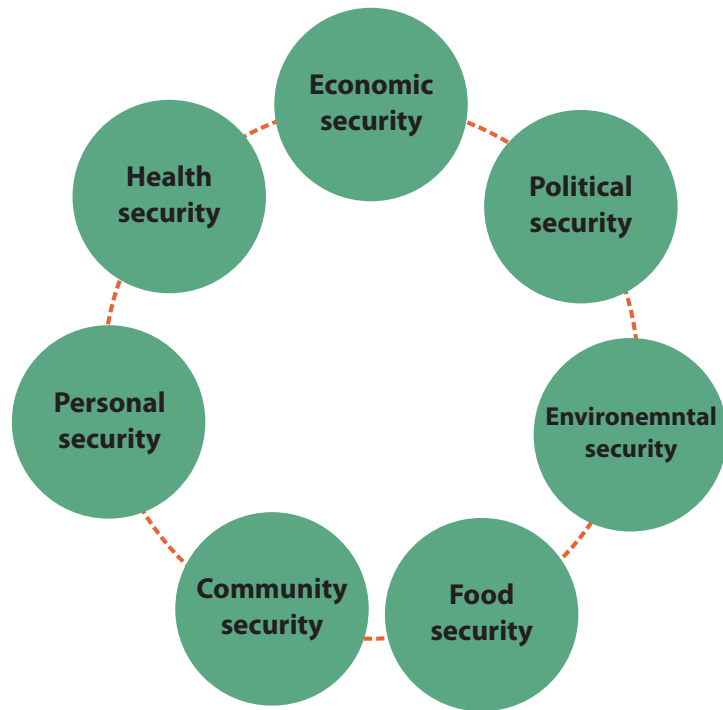
...to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive widespread threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.



ment Report. In this report 7 key areas or dimensions of security are identified: economic, political, health, food, environmental, personal, community and political security. It is important to keep in mind that these dimensions are interconnected and often reinforce and influence one another.

Since the publication of the UNDP report, more scholars and policy makers have taken an interest into the approach. In accordance with these dimensions, some scholars have also tried to develop indicators and indexes which can help assess human security threats.

Another approach to human security which differs from this rigid structure is the more bottom-up approach often promoted by scholars from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). In this more qualitative approach to human security, human security emphasizes the lived experiences of insecurity and the interconnection of threats and is concerned the downside and extreme risks. The focus here is thus to understand the relation between



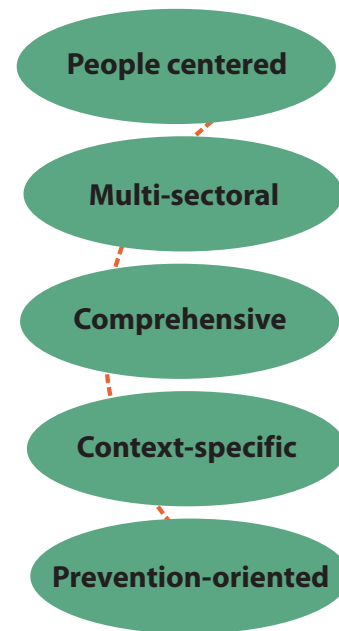
the severity of a threat and an individual's capacity to ameliorate it, rather than representing an 'objective', measurable phenomenon. Hence the importance of how vulnerability is articulated by those affected.¹

In both instance, human security threats are highly specific, and geographically, historically and culturally contextualized. It is important to stress that human security is mixed with other approaches such as human rights or human development, rather, human security threats are those vulnerabilities which are manifested in the conjunction of these different insecurities.

MAPPING HUMAN SECURITY THREATS IN SERBIA – SELECTING CASE STUDIES

As already mentioned, human security is not a mainstream concept for approaching vulnerability in Serbia. Although we can see that the approach has gained ever more attention among policy-makers, scholars, and civil society organizations in the past years, there is still no comprehensive overview over human security threats in Serbia, nor strategic objectives for countering these threats.

Hence, in order to gain an overview of human security threats, a qualitative bottom-up methodology was used. The aim was to gain grass-root inputs on what stakeholders from different fields – CSOs representing different vulnerable groups, local level government



¹ Kaldor, M. (2011), Human Security. *Society and Economy* 33, pp 441-448. Kaldor, M., Martin, M. and Selschow, S. (2007), Human security: a new strategic narrative in Europe. *International Affairs* 83 (2), pp 273- 288.



representatives, policy makers etc. – identified as key threats which influence their daily lives and the lives of the groups they represent. Based on these consultations, some key themes could be mapped out as important subjects that need to be investigated further through a human security lens.

SHORT OVERVIEW OF HUMAN SECURITY INITIATIVES IN SERBIA:

Academia:

The Faculty of Security (University of Belgrade) has since 2002 recognized the need for more research and scientific attention in this field by establishing the Center for human security. As a result of this initiative, the Center published 2 annual journals on different thematic HS issues in the period 2004 – 2009. After a couple of years of inactivity, the center is now again becoming more active.

Initiatives from civil society and international organizations:

Several projects instigated by Open Society Foundation, Helsinki Committee for Human rights in Serbia, Public Policy Research Center, Queeria, The Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, Belgrade Center for Security Policy, Autonomous

Women Center, Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, UN agencies (UNDP, UNOPS, WHO, UNFPA).

Project focus has predominantly been on human security in relation to specific vulnerable groups (Roma, LGBT population, women victims of violence) or on specific demographics Sandzak region or youth.

Governmental arena/policies

The wider political arena and policies are still primarily oriented towards a traditional understanding of security. Although human security is mentioned in the National Strategy for Security, the focus is still on territorial sovereignty and security.



Area	Threat
Crime	International and national organized crime (e.g. human trafficking, drugs, illicit economies) and corruption (state officials and institutions, private sector).
Violence	Threat of violence (physical, psychological, economic and sexual) – women, children, minorities, street involved children/youth, are among the most exposed to and in fear of violence. Widespread systematic violence is seen as a consequence of broader social values (patriarchal culture, nationalism, and numerous prejudices), lack of proficient institutional support and political will to tackle these problems e.g. police and justice responses against perpetrators of violence (hooligans, right-wing groups, criminal organizations, male perpetrators) and lack of support systems (shelters for victims of violence and socio-psychological guidance).
Institutional and legislative accountability	Lack transparency and accountability of institutions, especially in regard to corruption, are considered a continual threat limiting access to all forms of rights. Furthermore, limited sustainability of institutions creates long term insecurities Human rights are in particular mentioned, with overarching disadvantages of minorities and vulnerable groups.
Culture of intolerance, antagonism and apathy.	Rising intolerance and upsurge of conflict seen as everyday possible threats – hooligans and right-wing extremist groups are seen as the main instigators of ethnic, sexual, political hatred and violence, and consequently as the main threats towards tolerance of differences in the country. Additionally, people do not feel represented or protected by the political elite, rather, they feel alienated – political power is often seen as separate from citizens, as dishonest, centered around party or party leaders interests which do not account for the public good.



<p>Unemployment, low living standards and insufficient development</p>	<p>Unemployment and low living standard are creating everyday insecure environment for people, especially vulnerable group. This insecurity includes inability to plan or feel secure in the existence of a future and to provide for the basic human needs. Furthermore, economic insecurity is to a large part considered the cause of other security issues, including: youth migration, lack of parental supervision, inability to participate in politically and socially life etc. Unutilized industrial and agricultural potential, badly structured state fiscal policies, technological backwardness, and consequences of the 1990s wars are seen as perpetrators of economic problems. Additionally, certain vulnerable groups are excluded from the labour market due to discrimination (and racism), exclusion from other public realms such as political, educational, and cultural life, and generational exclusion from economic activity,</p>
<p>Natural disasters</p>	<p>Natural disasters, and in particular floods, are seen as a new threat to the security of people, both due to their devastating effects, as well as lack of procedures to counter their effects.</p>
<p>Health care system</p>	<p>People are generally concerned for their health as well as the quality of treatment. The health system is considered one of the most corrupt institutions in Serbia, while the quality and accessibility of the health care system is considered insufficient and a daily threat in many lives.</p>
<p>Migration</p>	<p>Forced and irregular migration patterns both within the country and across borders.</p>

Based on these consultations and with the aim to give focused insight on the very link between these multiple threats and fears, qualitative research has been conducted exploring different manifestation and locations of violence. Forms and spaces of violence are here viewed as a proxy for insecurity, allowing us to gain in-depth and holistic knowledge on several key human security issues.



It is important to note that 'violence' is understood as a severe insecurity which can be manifested in direct, structural and symbolic ways.² Baring this in mind, violence does not only refer to direct forms of violence which includes different types of violence such as physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence, but rather also structural and symbolic forms which are broader and refer to different forces which are limiting and threatening people in their everyday lives. In connection to the latter, discrimination, social exclusion, and inequality, are typical examples which refer to social structures which can pose severe threats to individuals and communities.

In the case of Serbia, the research has during this project focused on peer-to-peer violence among youth in schools and workplace violence in the form of economic expulsion through illegal and irresponsible privatization. The research tried to illuminate different aspects of forms and spaces of violence in these areas by exploring manifestation of violence, everyday coping mechanisms against violence, and the possibility or perception of change for mitigating these threats. The following three main umbrella questions were pursued:

- Who or what makes you insecure?
- What do you do to cope with that insecurity?
- What needs to change to make you more secure?

Exploring these aspects of human security in the selected topics allows for bottom-up understanding of threats, by collecting personal accounts of insecurity and risk. This approach gives a voice for some of the most vulnerable people and groups to formulate their problems and solutions, which are often overlooked.

In the end, these vulnerabilities will be put into a wider context of human security in Serbia.

² Galtung, J. (1990) 'Cultural Violence' *journal of Peace Research*, vol. 27, no. 3: 291-305. & Galtung, J. (1969) 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp: 167-191.



Case 1:

Peer-to-peer
violence in schools

INTRODUCTION

Peer to peer violence has been a growing problem in Serbia and the region in the past two decades. Fights between students in school yards, bringing knives and other weapons to schools, students being stabbed or beaten by their peers, young girls being harassed or bullied through social media, are just some of the headline news being reported across Serbia. These instances are closely connected to deeper insecurities of youth and factors influencing risk: accessibility of drugs and other substances; violence in community and media, harsh economic adversities and unemployment; chauvinist ideologies; religious extremism; war and other violence clashes; family conflicts and substance abuse; inadequate education system etc.³ In turn, youth is also often the main source of insecurities, as perpetrators behind acts of crime and violence.

Until now, peer to peer violence has been studied mainly through quantitative research aimed at mapping different forms of violence and through psychological approaches focusing on behavior. Moreover, research has had a primary focus on primary schools in Serbia. This short case-study will try to gain a more understanding of this types of violence by exploring the three main research questions posed in the previous section, focusing on manifestations of insecurity, coping mechanisms and possible changes.

The qualitative research included two components: (1) review of existing studies, policy documents and reports on youth violence and school protocols, and (2) fieldwork through FGDs with children, parents, teachers, school psychologists and pedagogues in – Belgrade and Novi Pazar. The focus were on secondary school education, but two as of nine FGDs were conducted with primary schools to capture the socialization of violence. Three different research instruments were used, specifically adjusted to each target group. In the case of FGDs with children/

³ Jugović, A. (2004) *Rizična ponašanja omladine. Mladi zagubljeni u tranziciji*. [Risk behavior of youth. Youth lost in transition.] Centar za proučavanje alternativa, Beograd.



youth, instead of talking directly about 'violence', focus was on insecurities and fears. This was especially important in order to avoid public narrative on peer to peer violence and allowed the students to reflect and react to each other's' understanding of security. In the case of parents and teachers, the focus was to identify what they define as violence and their normative attitudes towards violence, followed by their experiences, strategies, and responses. Before illuminating the main results of this inquiry, a short background on peer-to-peer violence in schools will be presented based on existing insights.

Background

Peer to peer violence is a widespread in Serbia, but although it is not a new phenomenon, it has only recently gaining more attention from academic circles. One of the most comprehensive researches was initiated as part of the UNICEF projects "Schools without Violence".⁴ By 2007 the first preliminary results of this survey were published in a scientific article prepared by Popadic and Plut.⁵ Although the research results were not based on a nationally representative sample, collected surveys from 26,628 respondents from 3rd – 8th grade (50 different schools across Serbia) were the most reliable of research conducted thus far. According to the self-assessment of exposure to peer violence, 21.1% report exposure to violence in the past three months. Of these, about a fourth (5.1% of all respondents) experienced violence several times or on a daily basis. However, if we look at results indicating the number of incidents whereby respondents have themselves been perpetrators of violence towards their peers, the numbers are considerably higher. In total 41% admit to violent behavior in the past three months, suggesting that respondents are either more prepared to admit to violent behavior rather than to be seen as victims or that they do not recognized violence when it is directed towards them.⁶

4 More information on the official website of the program: <http://www.unicef.rs/skola-bez-nasilja.html> (19.01.2014).

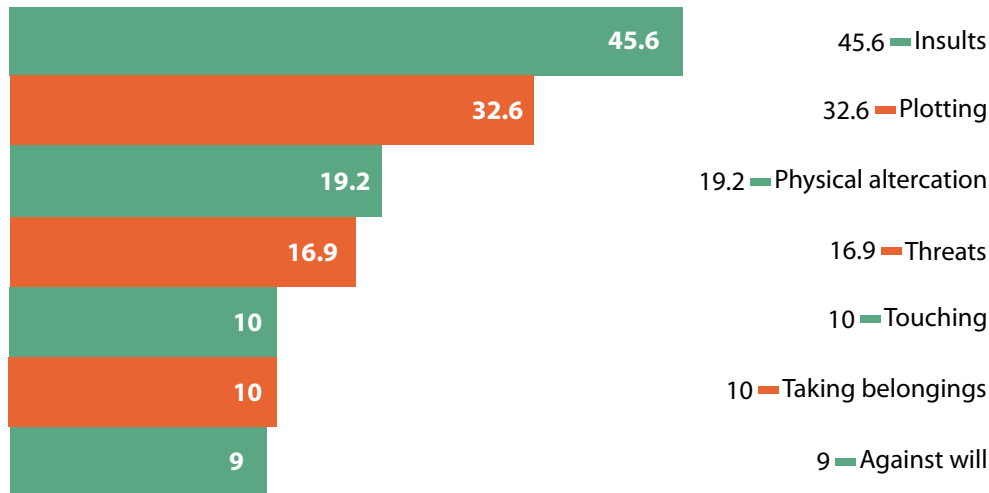
5 Popadić, D. and D. Plut, (2007). *Nasilje u osnovnim školama u Srbiji, oblici i učestalost* [Violence in primary schools in Serbia, forms and frequency], *PSIHOLOGIJA*: 40 (2), 309-328.

6 *ibid.*: 316 - 318.



The forms of violence students were exposed to (once or several times) are manifold. The most dominant form of violence is psychological violence, which involves different forms of insults, plotting and threats, or forcing peers to do something against their will. A fifth of all students surveyed report physical violence, while 10% have been exposed to sexual harassment. Economic forms of violence, whereby students have had their belonging taken away or destroyed occurred in 10% of cases.

Graph 1: Exposure to different forms of violence (in %)



Source: Popadic & Plut (2007): 319.



In the case of respondents admitting to being the perpetrators of violence, a similar hierarchy is evident: insulting (32.4%), physical hitting (15.6%), threatening (9.1%), touching (sexual harassment) (7.2%), and plotting (6.3%).

Additional insight can be formed on the basis research results from smaller researches relating to specific territories.⁷ For instance, a research conducted by Citic among 12 of Belgrade's primary schools indicating that children/youth involved in violence of perpetrators or /victims are less attached to school than those who are victims or not involved in violence at all.⁸ Tomonjić, Blagojević-Radovanovi and Pavlović show on a sample of 417 students (age 11-15) from Uzice, how many students consider violence to be normal, how they often do not even recognize violent acts as violence, and how they are very reserved in talking about violence in schools due to fear of possible consequences.⁹ Kodzopeljic, Smederevac and Colovic show, on a sample of 14943 students, predominantly from urban areas of Belgrade and Vojvodina, how prevalence of violence is higher in primary than in secondary schools.¹⁰ And lastly, the most interesting results can be derived from a research conducted in 9 high-schools in Vojvodina (6254 respondents) where at least 42.2% children have had experiences of violence once, several times, or regularly, during primary education and 22.7% during secondary education.¹¹ Here, as in the case of Popadic and Plut's study, boys are more frequently victims of violence than girls. One of the most alarming results of this survey which are not evident in other studies is that 9.5% of respondents admit to carrying weapons to school.

Separate inquiry into internet bullying, or cyber violence as it is sometimes called, have also gained special attention in the past years. Results show that older primary school children (above 4th grade) and secondary school

7 UNICEF (2012). Digital violence in primary and secondary schools in Serbia. Project "Stop digital violence" – summary of preliminary results, unpublished.

8 'Vaspitanje' is a terms used in Serbia to describe education or upbringing related to general norms, values, and overall behaviour. Thus, if someone swears or does not sit properly in his chair in the class room, it is often considered as 'nevaspitanje', or that the person is not socialized enough.

9 As drugs seem to be ever present at the school, teachers did mention two locations where they suspect dealing is taking place.

10 In primary schools however, boy attacking girl by attacking them or touching them against their will seems to present.

11 Grades are given for conduct and reflect the behavior of the students in terms of possible misconduct or non-attendance.



children are more exposed to cyber violence than younger generations: 23% of respondents have been insulted once or more times through telephone calls and 19% through SMSs; 18% of primary and 17% of secondary school youth have experienced harassment through social media; 10% report that photos or video of them have been publicized against their will; and 16% have experienced that someone used their internet profile without their consent.¹² All this data suggest that internet and electronic devices have become new spaces where peer to peer violence is manifested, and should therefore be taken into account in further inquiry.

With these overwhelming statistics in mind, this research tried to take another step further and understand what these numbers mean to youth in their everyday lives. In particular, the research tried to denote how this situation is manifested in terms of their experience of threats and quality of life.

Manifestations of violence

These sections will show some of the main research findings from the qualitative by looking at the forms, types and frequency of violence, rationales behind and attitudes towards violence, spaces and places of violence, and gender differences in relation to peer-to-peer violence.

Forms and types of violence

In coherence with the quantitative data collected (and presented above), the most common form of violence in schools is *psychological* violence. This form of violence usually takes on two different forms, it is either verbal or more controlling in nature. In the latter case, students are using threats, blackmailing and manipulation in order to exercise some form of power. In the case of verbal violence, it has become a part of the everyday discourse of youth, even in those schools where violence is not as persistent (where physical violence is not present). Swearing,

¹² UNICEF (2012). Digital violence in primary and secondary schools in Serbia. Project “Stop digital violence” – summary of preliminary results, unpublished.



insulting and humiliating one other for all sorts of reason is part of the 'normal' conversation, to the extent that it is often not recognized as violence, either in the case of student nor the teachers. Consequently, it is not classified as a serious problem, but rather as a generational issue. When parents and teachers speak of this form of violence they often say that it is a consequence of a lack of a proper upbringing ('nevaspitanje').¹³

In the latest years, this form of violence has also become very common through the use of pictures on social media. Taking compromising pictures of peers and circulating these on the web has become synonymous with some insults and a way of humiliating.

Teacher (high school, BG): Another form of violence that exists for years is photographing. That is something they do and which we talked about a lot. When you walk into the classroom and they are for example taking pictures of a student that doesn't know it. Then they hang it up on Facebook and then they chat about it and insult one another. Then, when they come to school the laughter starts and they start calling each other out.

Taking away belonging, destroying other people's belongings, and taking other students money against their will are the most common form of economic violence in schools.

Girl (high school BG): I left my book at my desk. When I went to the toilet and came back, the book wasn't there anymore. And there were people... in the classroom.

This form of violence seems to usually be perpetrated against younger students and girls. In some cases it is a form of humiliation, while in others it is a persistent way to just collect money, and can be repeated towards the same victims.

¹³ 'Vaspitanje' is a terms used in Serbia to describe education or upbringing related to general norms, values, and overall behaviour. Thus, if someone swears or does not sit properly in his chair in the class room, it is often considered as 'nevaspitanje', or that the person is not socialized enough.



Sexual violence was the least widespread form of violence on the account of students, teachers and parents. It is however important to keep in mind that this is the most sensitive of all topics and that there is a big possibility that the research method and approach limited the possibility for respondents to openly talk about this form of violence. Although no reference was made to this form of violence in the gymnasiums, sexually charged psychological violence and insults were highly present in the vocationally oriented high school. What is concerning, is that the sexual behavior of teens is put into question by parents and teachers. Although this has been pointed to already in primary schools and early sexual activity of girls and boys, what is an issue are sexual favors girls perform on boys in the bathrooms and during school hours.

Teacher (high school, BG): There is no sexual abuse, but there is extortion (iznudjivanja). How should I describe this... Giving sexual favors in public and very explicitly. For instance, I had in the first year two twins which were creating chaos. I was ashamed. I called social workers and everything. Because the situation is, parents are divorced... At some point I even thought that they were sexually abused by their father, but I'm neither a psychologist nor a pedagogue, so I am not a good person to judge, so I left it to faith. But that was horrible what she was doing in the toilets.

This form of sexual favors, as well as taping different forms of sexual activity and distributing videos is questionable, because there are not direct signs of duress, but there seems to be other factors which influence the behavior. In the case of the quote above, the teacher does not seem herself able to classify this behavior, if it is connected to other forms of abuse in the family, nor what to do about it.

Physical violence has become part of the daily realities of many schools. What has been most alarming is at what young age physical violence perpetrates the education of children. In one primary school, already by the 4th grade, children are bringing large knives, catapults, and other forms of weapons. This form of violence includes those acts that have less severe physical consequences/injuries (pushing and slaps) to quite severe forms such as hitting with fists and other objects such as chairs, kicking people on the ground, choking, throwing people, burning with cigarettes.



Interviewer (high school, BG): They were harassing you? What did they do?

Boy 1: Nothing. Hitting me.

Interviewer: Who is hitting you?

Boy 2: There are a couple of them!

Interviewer: And what do they say, why are they hitting you?

Boy 1: Nothing. They just come and hit.

Interviewer: Literally hitting you?

Boy 1: Yes.

In the worst cases, there is also use of weapons such as bricks or knives. During our research, students in Novi Pazar talked about a stabbing outside of their school gates, between one of their students and a student from another school.

Frequency of violence

Some remarks on the frequency of violence have been made in the background section of this paper. Still, there are a few characteristics which determine the frequency of violence which need to be mentioned. Firstly, the frequency of violence is very dependent upon the individual school. In Serbia, as in many other countries, there are clear definitions between schools that are considered 'good/bad', 'violent/non-violent', 'rich/poor' etc. Further research needs to be conducted in order to illuminate how these divisions are created and how they are manifested, but it is very evident that these influence the frequency of violence. In Belgrade, the main divisions are between vocational and preparatory secondary education, whereby vocational schools are overall considered more violent, with students with lesser educational competences (grades), from worse economic background, and with less opportunities. With this in mind, it is not surprising that the vocationally oriented secondary school in Belgrade is faced with far greater problems with peer to peer violence. Here, all forms of violence are part of the everyday school setting, which is considerably different to the other schools included in the research which were all gymnasiums and where violence was more limited to individual and sporadic incidents.



Secondly, violence is partly connected to the grade or age of the students. Opposed to primary schools where violence became more frequent the older students got and they expressed fear of attending secondary school because it would be worse, violence in high-schools seems to get less frequent with years/grades.

Boy (high school, BG): They are usually more quite in 3rd and 4th grade. It's more normal then.

Interviewer: What happens in that first year that is so horrible?

Boy: Well, the younger they are, the worse they are. Truth!

Interviewer: What happens then between 1st and 3rd grade?

Boy: Those who finish the grade...most students go crazy by the 3rd and 4th year. Those who go on to the 4th grade, they survived, so to say.

What the boy in the above exert from a FGD is trying to point out is that a majority of students who are violent and who cause problems leave school or are kicked out before they get to the higher grades. In the same FGD it became evident that those who are here described as survivors, have gone through the first turbulent years and have found their position among their peers. In this way, violence is used as a way to create power divisions and build relations/relationships among students. Once these have been established and the different roles distributed and stabilize, the frequency of violence minimizes.

Thirdly, frequency of violence seems to be growing. It needs to be mentioned that this is a qualitative observation and that it cannot be abstracted to high-schools in general. But although some previously 'violent' schools have managed to change their profile, according to the teachers and psychologists interviewed, the frequency of violence is become more persistent.

Teacher (high school, BG): I think that the problems is that those used to be individual cases. So, in the day, you might have one kid, three tops (that you need to send out of class because they were disturbing/violent). Now, each our, you have at least one kid from each department.

The growing frequency in violence suggests that violence is becoming more and more normalized.



Rationales behind violence – Victims and Perpetrators

One of the most important things when trying to establish the *why* and *how* behind violence, is to understand who the victims and who the perpetrators are. Perhaps not surprising, but the relationship between victim and perpetrator are rather dynamic – the victims often become the perpetrator, while perpetrators become victims. In this sense, there is often a set of people involved in violent acts.

What is interesting is the way victims and perpetrators are defined. What quickly becomes evident that there are several stereotypes in place – victims are connected to weaknesses while perpetrators to strength. However, when we talk about individual cases of violence, we see that the practice is rather different. Although students who perhaps have some form of disability, students who come from small towns outside of the city and do not have friend in the school, those who have some learning disability, easily become targets from the first day of school, they are also those who become violent later on. Hence, some of those considered loners, outsiders and ‘weaker’, as mentioned before, become violent towards others. For instance, one boy who was consistently the victim and beaten on a daily basis by his peers in school, was in other instances also often the perpetrator. After long deliberation about why he is the victim during the FGD, other students turned and remarked that “he is not so innocent himself, sometimes he has it coming”. He would often attack girls and harass other students, which would be the motive for further attacks on him. In this sense, violence is both the cause and the effect and it becomes a circle which is difficult to break.

Adding to this dichotomy between strong and weak is the notion of solidarity. To return to the case above, when other students considered the violence directed at the boy “too strong”, which meant that more boys where attacking him while he was lying down, then they would jump in to protect him.

Interviewer (high school, BG): Where is the limit, where do they go over it?

Boy 1: When they throw him on the ground, to the wall, when they are kicking him, then...

Boy 2: When there is four of them.

In other cases, taking advantage of the ‘weaker’ is not considered acceptable behavior.



Boy (high school, BG): He got his ass kicked by me because he was taking advantage of those weaker than him.

This shows the constant power struggle in order to shift the balance between 'strong' and 'weak'. It is also important to mention that it is crucial to position yourself on the 'strong' specter of the scale. This might also be connected to the reason why violence occurs more frequently at the beginning of the secondary school. Students would also refer to this as a form of defense. Violence is a necessary means in order to defend yourself, because if you do not result to violence, you will become a victim. This is not only the case of boys, although many examples can be found, but also girls. When a girl was provoked by her peer on the bus, she felt she had to defend herself later.

Interviewer (high school, BG): What kind of fight was it, what happened?

Girl: Nothing. I just slapped her.

Interviewer: Why?

Girl: I walk into the bus, and she says 'don't push me'. I said to her 'I'm not pushing you, if I was pushing you, I would have apologized'. But then she started screaming at me..

Interviewer: When did you hit her?

Girl: When we returned to school. Both my class and her class, everyone got in the fight. Then I slapped her and that was it.

In some cases, defending oneself through violence can create secondary victimization. For instance, one boy, who defended himself from psychological violence he was experiencing on a daily basis by physically attacking the boy, would after the fight feel very bad. His guilt and sadness are here a new phase of violence.

Defense, however, seems to overlap with revenge. In this way, defense does not only refer to the immediate defense from an attack, but as mentioned above, positioning one-self and defending themselves from future attacks.

In addition to these relationships, other significant factors influencing possible conflicts are clothing, nationality, girls or boys (sympathies/love interests), place of residence and football-team alliances. These attributes become



an instigator for further fights. For instance, the conflict between 'Partisan' and 'Crevena Zvezda', two Belgrade based football teams, and their supports is a given. Showing alliance to one team can almost immediately be seen as an attack on the other.

Teacher (high school, BG): The classroom is used by two different classes, those from the technician course and those from the course in the driver course who are in the second shift. Students from that driver course started to stick sticks on the walls (supporting Partisan). One of the students from the other class, where 'Zvezda' supporters are, started to tear down those sticks. They told him twice to stop it, and then the third time they jumped into the classroom and started to beat him.

Later on in the FGD we learn that the boy who was beaten was beaten by several guys with chairs. Not long after the incident, the boy himself became violent and started to attack others. Another example was how boys who came from the same neighborhoods would create groups or small gangs (e.g. Veliki mokri lug) and then be harassing other students. As a group, they would thereby have more power and freedom.

It is important to mention that the above examples are taken from the vocationally oriented school where physical violence was the most dominant, where the changing roles of victims and perpetrators are probably more common. In the secondary school in Novi Pazar, distinguishing between those who are violent and those who are not was a bit easier. Here, victims and perpetrators are more on the margins and they are more identifiable.

Students from the gymnasium explain that they are very aware of those students who might be 'problematic'. This was also very evident when talking to primary school children in Novi Pazar. Some children get identified as more prone to violence. Considering that the community is much smaller, cases of violence are more overt and stories of violent behavior or other forms of behavior (drug use and crime) are shared among students from different schools and parts of town. As a result, students who have a history of violence are feared and avoided among their peers.

Teacher and parents also suggest that there is also two other dimensions to this circle of violence which is important to mention. Namely, in several cases students are often themselves victims of violence in their home, while



there are also teachers who try to generate violent behavior among students. In the latter case, one teacher explains how teachers sometimes transfer their personal attitudes, as for instance racism or conflicts with other teachers, to the classroom. In this way, they legitimize some forms of violence and some relations between victim/perpetrator. In the case of violence in the home, parents suggest that this is creating a deviance in children's upbringing and thereby transfers to insecurity in school. Here, the child can both become a victim of violence or a perpetrator (depending on other circumstances), but in either case it is considered an acceptable way of socializing.

Spaces and places of violence

Spaces of violence depended very much on the school in question. In the two gymnasiums in Belgrade, where physical violence was something sporadic, violence was seen as something occurring outside the school gates. Private security, teachers, and overall different composition of 'good' students were considered the main factor in creating a safe space for education. There was one instance where outsiders came to the school too 'cause trouble', but they were prevented at the gates. In Novi Pazar, direct physical violence was not that common in the school yard and classroom, but a few serious instances did occur at the very gates of the school. Students themselves did not feel threatened or concerned with this in a sense that it can affect their daily lives. The vocational school in Belgrade showed a completely different picture where space and place were very important.

Several aspects of the relationships between space and violence need to be pointed out. Firstly, place of residence is crucial. As mentioned earlier, place of residence influences the students' 'power' in school. On one hand, if a person is far away from where he went to primary school or grew up, it also means that his friends are not close to protect him. Since the school is located in Zemun, students from Zemun have an advantage. On the other hand, groups within school can be formed in accordance with the place of residence and thereby be stronger within the school itself. One teacher was even describing how long it took her to understand, confused by the unrest a group of students were causing in her classroom, that kids were grouping together by convincing teachers to transfer them from one class to the other.



Teacher (high school, BG): Students goes to the director and asks: "Can I join the class to be with my friend, so that we can be together?" He signs and the kid transfers. And that is how about three students transferred and then they were a group of four, one was already there. And then another student comes from another school, not knowing he was from the same neighborhood.. And that is how the group 'Veliki Mokri Lug' was formed and they are proud, they can do whatever they want.

Secondly, there does not seem to be a 'safe' place within the school walls. Violent acts seemed to be committed everywhere from the classroom, hallways, school yard, bathrooms, and in front of the school gates.¹⁴However, although there are examples of violence in front of and towards professors, they do seem to have some degree authority in the sense that student prefer to not be seen because they will be reported.

Lastly, the relationship between violence in and outside the school needs to be mentioned and it is something both students and teacher are aware of. Surprisingly, most students in Belgrade said that they did not interact with each other outside of school (parties etc.), but they are aware of that conflicts inside the school gates can take on a more serious role outside the school gates. Here, there is again for some (especially those leaving far away), no form of protection. If a quarrel starts inside the school, or a student snitches or does something to upset somebody else, there can be consequences outside. Similarly, conflicts that start on the bus on the way to school, can also escalate inside the school gates. For instance, on one bus which many students seem to take to and from school is a place where many arguments play out. In Novi Pazar, groups were consciously separating themselves outside the school gates with those who might be violence and thereby strengthening the divide and separation between different groups, between those environments where violence is accepted behavior and those where it is not.

Social media is a new 'space' of violence which in all schools was present. Students did not express much concern with this and they talked about how it is easy to protect yourself, but there it does seem that relationships in the school are translated further to the online world.

¹⁴ As drugs seem to be ever present at the school, teachers did mention two locations where they suspect dealing is taking place.



Gender violence patterns

There are a few gender differences in relation to violence among peers in school. One of the most apparent differences is the amount of psychological violence between female students. As one boy says “girls are the worst, they are constantly at each other”. In all schools, insults between girls seemed to be an everyday occurrence. Boys are considered to be more prone to find themselves in physical altercation between themselves. In the vocational school where there are mostly male students, “testosterone” is described as an important factor in the unrest. Still, here, where violence is a very dominant part of the everyday life of the school, girls seem to be becoming more prone to physical violence.

Teacher (high school, BG): They are both violent. Just that girls are not so much physically violent, but are more gossiping and on social media. But lately they have become very strong also, they are working out, they get into fights without any problems.

Violence between girls and boys is less common. Both students and teachers suggest that this is rare, although as mentioned earlier, sexual violence might be an under researched/overt form of violence between girls and boys, especially in secondary schools where it is more overtly a taboo.¹⁵ Still, during the FGD with primary school children, we could see how even then one girl was afraid to admit to sexual violence. She was harassed and touched by a boy on a daily basis, but was too afraid to tell anybody about it. She was even shameful, because he was friend of her brothers. Only when it reached a limit when she could not stand it any longer, did she attack him physically as a response. In the end, this was then brought to the attention of her parents.

Attitudes towards violence

Among youth, violence has become normalized. In all the schools, psychological forms of violence are a ‘necessary evil’, while in the one school where physical violence is very pronounced on a daily basis, psychological violence is not

¹⁵ In primary schools however, boy attacking girl by attacking them or touching them against their will seems to present.



even recognized. Economic and sexual violence seem to have a little bit more of a taboo attached to them. In the latter case, considering that few people mentioned this form of violence and immediately denied its possibility, suggest that although it is a sensitive subject, it might also not be recognized in all its aspects (that it is not only a matter of rape but a wide specter of violations) or that they consider it a serious offence which should not be spoken off.

Since physical violence was the most present topic, there were differences according to when students considered that violence was acceptable behavior and when it was not. Several students expressed that violence is normal, but that the threshold is when knives or other weapons are involved.

Boy (highschool, NP): Its fine when we kickeach other, when some people get into a fight and knock around a bit. It's just normal. But when someone brings a weapon, it's taking it a bit too far, than it gets serious.

The violence threshold, which is connected to severity, can also be seen in the example mentioned earlier whereby bystanders jump in to protect a boy, only when he is really overpowered and beaten.

In Novi Pazar another attitude was evident among students and that is the position that they are indifferent towards violence. They see that those who are involved in this type of behavior are often asking for it, provoking it, or part of some sort of criminal activity, and therefore they considered as people who they do not want to have any connection to. Hence, they believe that as long as they are not harmed in any way, they can do whatever they want, even kill each other.

In the case of parents and teachers, although some expressed that some violence is just normal, a majority talked about how it is an extremely negative effect of wider social changes. One of the most prominent aspects here is that violence is being glorified. One parent talked about how video clips of one teacher or some student being beaten on Youtube are being disseminated as entertainment among students. Still, some parents point to that this form of acceptance of violence is connected to what they see in the older generations, especially within the family.



Teacher (primary school, NP): We have grown up with so much violence that children don't have any other model than the violent model.

Parent (high school, NP): You should see the parents teacher conference there in the gymnasium, its catastrophic. I had to tell the teacher that this is the first and final time I will attend the conference. The parents almost want to beat him up (boy who was violent). The parent comes and slaps the kid around in front of the classroom and I cannot believe what I'm seeing.

Teacher (high school, BG): They (children who are different) become mediums through which other children can affirm themselves. They become as a means through which others can show that they are a little bit bigger. That is the problem in our people, our children. They see this with those who are older, those who appear in media and in politics etc. etc. The more someone puts someone else down, he thinks he is better/has more quality.

In light of the fact the parents are filled with aggression and prone to have relate to others through violence, they believe children are just imitating what they are seeing. In many cases, the children are victims of violence within their home.

Other factors listed by both parents and teacher include dysfunctional family structures (divorced parents, single parent households), poverty and harsh economic times, and overall lack of parental care and supervision. All these are again connected to earlier times, before the wars of the 1990s, when daily lives where just different all together. Here, new insecurities are put into connection with the rise in peer to peer violence in schools.

Strategies against violence

As we have seen in the previous section, violence is an ever growing presence in the lives of many teens. How do teens respond to it? What are their coping-mechanisms? How are other relevant actors such as teachers and parents accounting for this problem? Students, parents, teacher all have different strategies and coping mechanisms.



Everyday strategies of youth against violence

Several different coping mechanisms regarding violence emerged during this research. The most dominant strategy among youth is avoiding conflicts and people who are prone to violence, having friends and a group of people around who can protect you, or countering violence with violence.

Trying to avoid situation where violence occurs, people that are prone to be violent, planning to leave town in order get away from violence and the insecurities violent behavior is embedded in, is one of the main strategies. There are different reasons for avoidance and trying to ignore incidents of violence, which the girl in the following examples list.

Interviewer (high school, NP): If you see something, do you tell anybody, what do you do?

Girl: I was just recently walking the street and I saw to people fighting, physically, and I just don't want to get involved, so I just walk past them. For me to then call somebody, some service, or someone at the school... I don't know. I can do it, but nothing will happened...

Interviewer: You don't think that there will be any sanctions?

Girl: They won't because they know they can't do anything against them.

Boy: I don't know how other people look at it, but nothing is happening here. If you have some connection, you will just stay in the school.

Girl: Everyone has some connection that's going to help them out.

Interviewer: Are you afraid that someone might accuse you of being the snitch?

Everyone: of course, of course.

Girl: And then the next day, you will be the target.

These views are expressed by more students – getting involved might either put a target on your back or nobody else is going to do something about it anyway. Hence, the student would be taking unnecessary risk if he reacts. In Novi Pazar, the attitude that there would be no sanctions was stronger than in Belgrade, where the predominant reasons was suggested to be fear of getting hurt in the fight or possible revenge later. One teacher in Belgrade



explained how whole classes were often witnesses of some violence or fight, without one person coming forward. Not only are spectators involved afraid to get involved, but victims themselves are not prone to report violence. Both parents and teachers seem to understand this attitude.

Parent 1 (primary and high school, NP): We should just teach children to talk about it and talk about it.

Parent 2: I thought so too until a little while ago, but not anymore. I just saw an example in the high-school where a child who was in first grade, his mother works as a teacher, he was in the toilet and they burned him with a cigarette. It was so serious that the police talked to everyone who was coming out of that toilet, I don't know, and that boy, everyone knows in that school, that kids recognizes as well, but even he cannot say who it is, there's no chance.

Interviewer: Why?

Parent 2: Because this guy (who burned him) is problematic and they say he already opened up the skull of two guys, he has two cases in court.

In another case where a teacher was forced to report a fight (they're legally obliged to), she expressed that her biggest fear was that the fight which could have been kept behind closed doors, would now mean further punishment to one of the boys by others in the school. Hence, keeping your "mouth shut" and not standing out by any means is one key strategy.

Another strategy is having a group backing you up. In the case of younger children in primary schools older brother/sister or classmates would form a net of security, but in the case of secondary schools, these networks seem a lot more fragile. In Novi Pazar, where violence was not present to the degree as within the vocational school in Belgrade and where people seemed to interact and be friends with their classmates, these groups were formed within the school as protection shields. More specifically, as some shield that separates them from those who are prone to violence. In Belgrade, group ties were directly linked to power in a more active sense. It seems perpetrators would assess how much muscle capital each person has and then act accordingly.



As mentioned earlier in detail, victims often become perpetrators. This can therefore certainly be seen as some form of protection. One strategy which is therefore evident is to from the start show who is stronger.

Boy (high school, BG): When they attack you, and you beat him up, then they know how you are and they won't touch you later.

The above quote is from a boy who expressed that he doesn't have any problems at school because others know what he is capable of.

In regard to official procedures as possible protection mechanisms which should be used, students are overall very negative. With the exception of the two gymnasiums in Belgrade where violence did not seem to be a presence in the daily lives of the students, students considered the present system, that is, the system that is 'performed' by the institutions, as a very ineffective system. In Novi Pazar, the position was clear. If you have a position within the community and if you have some money, you can do whatever you want. Here, the institutional insecurity and corruption outside of schools seemed to be reflected within the school.

Interviewer (high school, NP): What about the school, what do they do?

Boy: Nothing, they don't do anything. Of course not! They go to the principle, have a chat, and nothing.

Girl: Actually, it is usually those who don't make all that grave offences that get punished, while those who are really bad, just do whatever they want.

What is most alarming, is that even children from primary schools in Novi Pazar are very aware of these ties. They are conscious of the fact that there are official rules and that there are practices which correspond to rather different values – values based on power and position and not equality and justice. In conversation with teachers, it becomes evident that these alternative practices are closely connected to relation which are evident outside the school in Novi Pazar.

In Belgrade, students also expressed that the system doesn't always work, that students know how to 'cheat' the system, and that violence often goes unpunished. Most notably, the most severe punishment students talked about was



to be asked to be written out of the school (thus not expelled), while most students pass the year even though they have a failed grade in conduct.¹⁶ Thus, the severity of the punishment is not considered intimidating. Moreover, if a student manages to stay in school in spite of violent behavior, he is considered a winner, that he fooled the system.

In the end, it should also be noted that children did not consider talking to their parents or teacher, as a good strategy for countering the effects of insecurity. Furthermore, the school cop is in no case considered protection.

Parents' response to violence

In the conversations with parents and teacher, we also had the opportunity to hear more about their strategies in preventing violence. In the case of parents, the main strategies in terms of prevention seem to be control of and communication with their children. There are however different categories of parents emerging, those who: try to keep a constant line of communication open, try to control and 'surveil' their children, want to be more involved but do not know how or do not have the time, who do not recognize any problems, who neglect their children, and lastly, those who support violent behavior. Here, the first two cases are described as ideal mechanisms for minimizing undesired behavior with children. When it comes to supervision, some parents even explain how they have their children's' Facebook access codes and how they read their messages on their phones.

This form of control strategy is also reflected in the school system. Schools have the option of creating a digital system that informs parents automatically about their children's grades and attendance, as well as hiring private security. This is precisely the case in the two gymnasiums in Belgrade. However, an important aspect of this system is that parents need to be prepared to pay extra, while teachers need to also keep track of these digitally. What is considered less favorable strategy by parents is of course to ignore the problem or to support the behavior of their children. This is especially something teachers react to and consider a big hinder in their work. They even say that they prefer the parent to tell them that they are powerless and for the teacher to have the free range to try to 'discipline' the student.

¹⁶ Grades are given for conduct and reflect the behavior of the students in terms of possible misconduct or non-attendance.



In terms of responding to violence, parents seem to be rather restricted. The main strategies are to contact teachers and try to get them to respond if they have not already, to try to involve other inspecting bodies, to write their children out or transfer them to other schools, or if they disagree with the school decision, try to counteract their decision. In relation to the first strategy, it became evident during FGD that teachers are sometimes either slow to react or do not want to react to violent incidents among students. In these cases, parents can try to raise “panic” among the teacher and other parents in order to make them respond. In cases when the school system is not responding, there is the possibility to call in the policy or the school inspection and try to pressure the school in this ways. In many cases, if the perpetrator of violence has not been punished or if parents consider them a continued threat, they can decide to transfer their own child to another school. And lastly, if parents own children are treated unfairly according to the parents, teachers stressed how parents try prove that there is a case of misconduct on behalf of the teacher.

In the end it is still important to mention that parents recognizes different economic and social problems as potential limitations for having a successful strategy against violence. They explain how parents are overworked and their everyday lives are centered on survival, which often results in widespread depression and aggression among parents. In turn, this creates an environment where children are not nourished and where feeling of displeasure are being transferred between generations.

Systems and protocols against violence in practice

What is not encouraging is that teachers seem to be rather paralyzed in their positions. Teachers from the vocational school where violence is a part of their daily realities spoke about how there are several protocols in place as response to violence, but overall, they feel that they have lost their power and that children are protected by these protocols. This is evident in even the most direct form of prevention whereby teachers are afraid to intervene in fights because they can get accused from using excessive force. According to official procedure, teachers should first gradually lower the ‘conduct grades’ of students (according to each incident), ask for disciplinary hearings with parents and teaching staff, make the student change classes, or in the worst case, expel the student from the school completely. In all these steps, there are difficulties.



In terms of lowering students' grades, meticulous procedures and protocols need to be carried out. Here, teachers need to keep very meticulous records and be very engaged in following up. For instance, teachers need to have a meeting with the parents and psychologist, before they can take any action. Only having a meeting with the parent might require sending three different letters inviting them to come. In order for parents to understand and not try to overturn their decision, they have to have solid evidence in the form of witnesses and records, which is again difficult to acquire. Here, the role of the parents is especially criticized.

Teacher (high school, BG): They leave their children to us. But the minute an incident occurs, they know exactly how to react and what to do. Then they would turn to the educational inspection which would do anything that is in the interest of the child. It's not in their interest to help us.

Teacher (high school, BG): The bottom line is that the whole procedure for punishment is very complicated and that it takes a lot of time. While, you have to fulfill a lot of administrative tasks, there are 1001 possibilities where they can make a mistake.

What the teacher above is describing, is the fear for their credibility to be called into question. In these cases, they feel like they are not supported by the very institution that is supposed to be their support system. This is also the reason why many teachers are not taking further steps to 'punish' those students making offences. Considering that each incident requires meetings, documentation, evidence etc., while in order to get a failed grade in conduct you need to perform several such procedures during the year, many teachers do not see that it is going to have an effect or they do not have the energy for it.

Even in cases when teachers are very meticulous and do take on all the necessary measure, by the time the student has a failed grade in conduct and can be expelled, it is already the end of the year and the student is usually allowed to stay.

Teacher: And then when the student stays in the school like that, with that kind of reputation, then the next year, the kid comes into the school as a winner. He won over the system. Then



even the teacher has no more authority, but should be the authoritative power. He starts the New Year again with the highest grade in conduct and the whole procedure starts from the start.

On the other specter of things, one teacher recognized that reporting violence is not always the best solution. As briefly mentioned earlier, the incident and problem can escalate if more parties get involved.

Teacher (high school, BG): Those kids were declared as violent, they parents were called in, it became a whole incident. The kid got beaten up after school really bad, because other kids got involved, but he kept quiet about it, and so did I.

Interviewer: Why did they attack that kid after school?

Teacher: "You attacked him, now you will get a beating". And then when people here about the incident they say: "Oh, you're the reason why they called our parents in, now we are to blame as well". And that is how it just goes further and further.

Here, the suggestion of the teacher was to settle the issue through conversations with the students. But because there were other witnesses, she was afraid to go outside of the protocols which require her to report the incident.

In the few cases when the children are at the threshold of being expelled, the teachers or principle asks them to leave voluntarily. Leaving voluntarily or transferring allows the students to start in a new school immediately rather than having to wait until the new school year. But even here, they question whether the method has the intended effect.

Teacher 1 (high school, BG): We did for example expel three students, but I think they will continue to harass the kid. Only now, they will not do it at school, but outside of it.

Teacher 2: ... I don't think that the solution is to throw those students out on the street, because we then have to walk in those streets. What have we done? We have only moved violence to a place where you cannot control it at all.

Also when students are transferred to other schools, it again only means that the problem is transferred, and not resolved. In the same fashion, they get students who are transferred from other school, without solutions.



In all these cases, teachers explain that the attention is put on those children who are making trouble, while those who are not are not getting any support.

Teacher (high school, BG): But I feel a lot worse because we were not able to help the good kids, the kids who are victims of violence. I agree, we should help those who are violent, they all have some bad history behind them, they should be helped.. But wait, to work in order to help them at all times, while the other children are suffering, I don't agree with that.

Alternative strategies to just the 'punishment' root is to establish authority and order in the classroom at the beginning. Some teacher explained how they use 15 minutes of each class just to try to discipline the students, in order to be able to see later effect. Here it seems that the female professors are having a more difficult time because male professors from the beginning have more authority. Female professors have to be extremely firm and strict in order reach out to the students.

Lastly, as one teacher noted, there are two types of teachers – those who trying and are finding ways to help the children and ultimately help themselves and there are those who are not bothered at all or who are trying hinder any positive outcome. Worst case scenario, there are also a few teacher who perpetuate violence among students.

Perceptions of change

Views on possible changes and ideal situations are rather similar across the different groups. Students interviewed also suggested that the ideal change would be for a system that is more just and that punished the perpetrators, rather than ignoring the problem or implementing the protocols selectively among students.

Parents are generally taking a more comprehensive look at the problem and suggest that changes need to be made on all fronts. Firstly, improvements need to be made in the overall socio-economic situation. This way, parents will be less strained by the need to put food on the table, and could concentrate more on well-being of their



children. Secondly, the value system, which has been institutionalized and which does not benefit those who work the hardest, needs to be changed.

Parent (high school, NP): Everything should be adjusted so that good kids who are good in school have good jobs and good positions in society. If you are a good student you will be a professor, a doctor, a judge, you will be something responsible. But now, let just buy you everything, and buy you the diploma, and have it all

Here it is stressed how important it is to motivate children with good examples. Building fourth on this, one parent suggested that the overall school system also needs to change, because it is not designed in way that encourages children to learn and develop. Rather, if they want to make it in the school system, they have to learn things by hart by spending long hours with their heads in the books, which is why some children start behaving destructively. Fourth, parents need to speak openly about with children about their problems. And lastly, the teachers need to take a more active and caring approach to the students, rather than being uninterested.

From the perspective of the teachers, there are three key necessary changes. Firstly, parents need to have a more active role in taking care and brining up their children without violence. Secondly, the current procedures have to be adjusted allow more authority to the teacher. As the teacher feels unprotected and vulnerable, more institutional backing would allow them to follow through on protocols.

Teacher (high school, BG): That ministry or whoever has jurisdiction, should give us some concrete steps, so that we someday can live a little bit easier and calmer. Because we are completely vulnerable.

And lastly, the overall socio-economic position in the country needs to improve in order for the students to have some perspective in the future.

In addition to the three groups, some comments were also made by representatives from the Ministry of Science and Education. Here, they are stressing that it is the teacher which have to become more involved with students. That although the procedures have perhaps become a bit more complicated, teachers are still the main dominant obstacle for achieving change.



Conclusions on case study

What the research clarify shows is to what extent peer to peer violence is a complex problem that can be viewed as serious human security issue. In terms of the context, violence has to be seen in connection to wider social problems such as socio-economic insecurities, dysfunctional households, and overall acceptance violence as a form of social relation and communication. On the personal level, difficult childhoods and violence in the home, lack of opportunities and insecurity in the future, overall norms and values in relation to social relations, are just some factors which shape the perspectives of youth and consequently their behavior.

As a result, not only are many students exposed to direct forms of violence and threats, but there is also no system in place that is adequately responding to this. Most notably, the relationship between victim and perpetrator whereby victims often become perpetrators, shows how systems of protection are not working and how the problem of peer to peer violence is being reproduced. By looking at the different coping strategies and how they work in practice we can see that they are predominantly based on short term and direct solutions. Most actors involved in the change, are just trying to adapt to the problem. Students try to protect themselves and find ways to avoid being victims, parents try to protect their children, while teachers are trying to punish perpetrators. In this system however, what is created is a circle of problems rather than systematic solutions.

When considering possible change, there is again a problem of finger pointing and overall systematic problems. Students blame each other and the school which is selectively working with the law, parents see teachers as unengaged and ineffective, and teachers see the law as flawed and parents as uninvolved and sometimes even deliberately working against them, and so on. This creates insecurities at all levels, while problems are being handed over from one actor to the other. Victims are becoming perpetrators, parents are transferring their children out of school, teachers are transferring students from one grade to the next or from one school to the other, while, all in all, a comprehensive approach to solving the problem is missing.



Case 2:

Human Security of
workers in the
privatization process

INTRODUCTION

The privatization process, which has been taking place for over two decades in Serbia, has brought numerous problems that have affected the lives of a large part of the Serbian population, especially those who are (or were) employees of the privatized companies. The illegal or irresponsible manner in which privatization has been carried out, loss of employment without adequate institutional support, endangered workers' rights, reduction or complete absence of employees influence on decision-making processes, existential insecurity – are just some of the problems that a large number of employees are exposed to. Due to these negative consequences of privatization, the process itself is a prism of violence in the workplace, primarily as a specific form of structural violence.

Baring the above processes in mind, three cases of privatization were explored, each representing a different 'type' of privatization process:

- *Jugoremedija*, a Pharmaceutical company based in Zrenjanin, which is an example of illegal privatizations. It is one of 24 companies which were classified as controversial or illegal according to the Law on Privatization (2001).
- *Yumco*, is an example of a company that is currently under restructuring. It is a company in the textile industry in the city of Vranje in south Serbia, established in the 1960s.
- *FIAT Automobile Serbia*, established in 2008 in Kragujevac, to a large degree using existing resource of the former socially owned enterprise Zastava cars, the oldest industrial complex in Serbia. This is an example of legal privatization.

As in the previous case, the main method of inquiry was qualitative. Here, the focus was on in-depth interviews with the workers themselves. In addition to interviews with workers, several interviews with individuals such as



representatives of local government, as well as focus group discussions with stakeholders in the communities were conducted. Although the analysis will focus on the perspective of the workers, this data served as valuable input about the wider social impact of the privatization and the community as a whole.

Background

The process of social transformation in Serbia began over two decades ago. One of its key components is the privatization of companies, which refers to *the process of converting of the former large, medium and small state-owned and socially-owned enterprises into private property*.¹⁷ The main phases of this process coincide with two major periods in social transformation – the first period lasted throughout the nineties until the fall of the Slobodan Milosevic regime, and the second which began after the political changes in the 2000s and is still ongoing. While the first period can be called a period of locked transformation, the second period represents unblocked/unblocking transformation.¹⁸ Privatization of companies in Serbia differs greatly in these two periods.

The start of the privatization process in Serbia began with the adoption of the *Federal Law on Social Capital of Yugoslavia* and the *Law on Enterprises* in 1989. This institutional change was important because it meant that there was space for private initiative, that is, that there now was an opportunity/possibility for socially owned enterprises to be transformed into private enterprises. The basic models of privatization in this initial stage were recapitalization, sale, and later, payment of salary in shares. During this stage, employees and local

17 Erdei, I. (2007): "Dimenzije ekonomije: prilog promisljanju privatizacije kao socio-kulturne transformacije", u Ribic, Vladimir (ur.), *Antropologija postsocijalizma*, Srpski genealoski centar: Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta, Beograd, str. 76-127: 83)

18 Ibid.: 11 – 12.



investors were given several subsidies and possibility for longer repayment terms of shares, in order to keep local ownership. In the end, a total of 33.17% of companies were covered by these legislations.¹⁹

Already in the next year, 1990, a new, more restrictive, state law was adopted – *Law on the terms and procedure for social transformation and the transformation of other property*. Although the main models of privatization remained almost unchanged, repayment terms and discounts were reduced while the influence of the state was increased. As a result, the interest in privatization which had been generated, was now significantly reduced. Between 1991 and in 1993 only 134 companies were privatized, while in the area of infrastructure the opposite trends were imminent. Here, some major social enterprises became state-owned companies: JAT (until recently the only airline in Serbian), NIS (Oil Industry of Serbia), PTT (Serbian Postal Service), EPS (the Electric Power Industry of Serbia).

Due to hyperinflation, employee privatizations shortly accelerated in 1993, but was again halted due to new legislation and the process of revision and revaluation the following year, As a result, after numerous checks and assessments, capital participation in the total capital of privatized enterprises decreased from 43.14% to only 2.91%, which practically meant that privatization completely stagnated.²⁰

After three years of silence, the *Law on ownership transformation* were adopted in Serbia in 1997 and thereby again restarting the privatization process.²¹ The core element of this new legislation was that a majority of shares was to be sold to employees, while additional elements included recapitalization and conversion of debt into shares (Ibid). However, the implementation of this law has led to a very modest result. No substantial changes in the functioning and management companies occurred, while only about 10% of social capital was privatized by the end of the 2000s (Table 1).

19 "Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije", br. 32/97 i 10/01.

20 Ibid.: 11 – 12.

21 "Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije", br. 32/97 i 10/01.



Table 1: Results of privatization in Serbia prior to 2001

Privatization phase	Number of enterprises
Started privatization	428
Finished in first round	284
Finished in second round	246
Privatized	18

Source: Report from the Direction for the Assessment of Capital

It is important to bear in mind the social context in which the initial phase of the privatization process took place in Serbia – the disintegration of state, wars, economic sanctions, and hyperinflation. These circumstances allowed only a small number of people access to and influence on political decision making and thereby the possibility to stop corruption and personal enrichment. The privatization process was thereby to a large degree politically determined.²² This is especially visible if looking at newly established private companies during this period. In fact, when a mixed economic system of social, public and private property was established, the first privatization flows were realized through mutual business negotiations between the private and public sectors. Private companies were usually owned by persons close to the representatives who owned social enterprises, while they at the same time were business partners to those same companies. The dynamic growth of the small and later large-scale private

²² Vujačić, I., Petrovic Vujacic, J. (2011): "Privatization in Serbia – results and institutional failures", Economic Annals, Vol. 56, No. 191, pp. 89-106: 90.



enterprise was based mainly on the results of the spillover business from public to private sector, which is why this kind of privatization can justifiably be called "informal".²³

When political changes started to occur in 2000, a new phase of privatization of enterprises begun to unfold. Already in 2001, a new legal framework regarding privatization was adopted with the new *Law on Privatization*.²⁴ The main goals of the new law included: creation of conditions for economic development and social stability, public transparency of the privatization processes, and pricing in accordance with market conditions. The dominant model of privatization for achieving these goals was by selling as much as 70% of company capital to domestic and foreign investors through auction or tender, with the revenues flowing into Serbia's budget. In cases of state company for which there were no interested buyers, there was an obligation of the state to restructure the company first in order to make it more eligible for privatization.²⁵

Under this new law, a large number of enterprises were privatized in the following period, especially in the early years of privatization. The negative social consequences of this were mainly manifested in large scale termination of workers, especially in large industrial enterprises who until then had employed the greatest number of people.²⁶ For a large number of employees who were laid-off, provision of adequate social programs and severance pay was necessary, or at the least, giving them assistance to seek new employment. As this form of support, both by employers and by the state, was often lacking, there has been a large increase in the unemployment rate of the population and the informal sector of the economy, as well as poverty in general.

23 Draskovic, B. (2010), "Kraj privatizacije i posledice po razvoj", u Draskovic, Bozo (ur.), *Kraj privatizacije – posledice po ekonomski razvoj i nezaposlenost u Srbiji*, Institut ekonomskih nauka, Beogradska bankarska akademija, Savez samostalnih sindikata Srbije, Beograd, str. 3-40: 10 -11.

24 „Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije“, br. 38/01, 18/03, 45/05.

25 Ristic et al., 2011: 13-14

26 For instance, it is suggested that about 680 000 people were employed in large industrial companies with over 1000 employees in 1990. By 2007, only 157 000 were still employed in this kind of companies (Musić, 2013: 32).



Three different privatization processes

Illegal privatization – “Jugoremedija”

“Jugoremedija” is one of 24 companies which were classified as controversial or illegal according to the Law on Privatization (2001).²⁷ Established as a pharmaceutical company in Zrenjanin in the early sixties, the company quickly developed and specialized in the production of antibiotics for Eastern European markets. Although Jugoremedija became the eighth largest pharmaceutical company in the former Yugoslavia by the end of 1980s, the company was faced with numerous difficulties during the 1990 due to the economic blockade and the disappearance of the common Yugoslav market. Still, the production continued on a smaller scale with the support of the state.

In order to adapt to the new circumstances, some of the employees decided to, in accordance with the new Law on Ownership Transformation (1997), purchase shares of the company together with more than 4,000 small shareholders. As result, they became the majority owners of the factory where they worked. Despite the fact that the company, after the reform changes of 2000, managed to be independently and generate profit (with a total turnover of about 28 million U.S. dollars), the government decided to initiate privatization of the company by selling their shares. Jugoremedia’s state stocks were purchased by Nini in 2002, but rather than to focus his attention to the improvement and development of production, the new owner embarked on gaining the majority of shares in the company through fraud and blackmail, in which he succeeded. Furthermore, since he arrived to the company, the management started to create debts for this company to other companies, which were now used as suppliers. Once the debt increased, it was simply converted into com-

²⁷ The Council for the Fight against Corruption identified the 24 cases of controversial privatization, which in turn, were registered by the European Commission. Political conditionality is therefore certainly the reason why the resolution of these cases was set up as one of the priorities of the current government. However, this does not mean that the list of companies with questionable privatization is limited to these 24 cases.



pany shares which allowed Nini to become the majority owner. With this, the production began to decline, finished goods and raw materials were sold and the company was put in a very difficult position.²⁸

Throughout this process, the employee did not give up on their businesses, but they were constantly struggling to recover their ownership rights as well as the rights granted to them as workers. Of the approximately 350 workers, 250 workers were the minority shareholders and wanted to restore the production process. Their struggle to change the current management which was leading the company to ruins, lasted almost five years and was very difficult. During this period, workers were constantly on strike and trying to lobby in various government institutions.²⁹ However, they were frequently met with a lack of understanding and support by the government. Even yet, they were at one point thrown out of the company, and during the strike, even beaten by the privately owned security of the company and by the police who were brought in as reinforcement. A couple of people were also arrested, while many were fired for their insubordination. The whole process was completed in the spring of 2006, when Jugoremedija was legally returned to the ownership of small shareholders, to their great success. Since the end on 2013, Jugoremedija has gone into bankruptcy. The workers believe that we are actually talking about "forced" bankruptcy which aims to destroy the company until the end.

Legal privatization – «FIAT»

Juxtaposed to Jugoremedija, the second company included in this research belongs to the groups of companies that according to current information was privatized legally and which continued to operate. Fiat Automobile Serbia (FAS) from Kragujevac was established in 2008 in partnership between the Italian Fiat who has 67% of the shares, while the government of Serbia is a minority partner with 33% of the shares.³⁰ FAS is to a large degree

28 Musić, G. (2013): *Radnicka klasa Srbije u tranziciji 1988-2013*, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung – Regionalna kancelarija za Jugoistocnu Evropu, Beograd: 50-51

29 In 2004, they were even able to take control of the factory for a few months and managed the production process.

30 According to official data from FAS website, <http://www.fiatsrbija.rs/fas/index.html>, 18.01.2014.



established using existing resource of the former socially owned enterprise Zastava cars, the oldest industrial complex in Serbia, active for over five decades. However, in 2008, they stopped producing cars, as this section of the company was restructured to become FAS.³¹ Some of the workers previously working for Zastava transferred to the new company, a group of workers was laid-off, and a large number of new workers were hired. In the analysis, we will try to look at what the current position of workers is and the problems and insecurities they are faced with.

Companies currently restructuring – «YUMCO»

Yumco is a company in the textile industry in the city of Vranje in south Serbia. Yumco was established in 1960 as plant for the production of cotton. With the years, the production diversified to include production of clothing and different threads. By the end of the 1980s the company had its own retail network across Serbia. In accordance with the Law on Ownership Transformation, Yumco became a shareholders company in 1999. When it was faced with financial difficulty between 2001 and 2004, the company had to reorganize and was forced to close several different company departments. During the next four years the company started to gradually recover and production returned to all departments. In spite of their recovery, the company had to start restructuring again by 2009. This means that they are in the process of implementing statutory and organization changes and settlement of debtor-creditor relations – company transformations with the goal to find solutions to current problem and/or with the aim to speed up the privatization process.

Today, 1716 workers are employed with Yumco. Their aware net wages for the past years were less than 150 Euros a month.³² Since the restructuring process is very slow and the goals have not been achieved, workers have not received the last 8 months' worth of salaries, and their workers books (evidentiary for workers) have not been no-

31 According to official data from Zastava online, <http://www.zastava-automobili.com/sr/zastava.htm>, 18.01.2014.

32 Serbia Privatization Agency, www.priv.rs, 18.01.2014.



tarized, workers went into strike on the 14th of January 2014.³³ With this in mind, the position of workers in Yumco is marked by high insecurity.

Manifestations of Violence

Considering the histories of the three companies described above, it is not surprising that workers have had very different experiences of the privatization process. Still, in all three cases, violence and insecurity is experienced on a daily basis.

In the case of *Jugoremedija*, workers have been exposed to different forms of violence over a long period of time. Moreover, this exposure to violence is one of the reasons why they still feel threatened today and in some cases almost helpless. Firstly, they have been exposed to direct forms of violence. *Physical violence* was perpetrated by private security guards or armed units employed by the state during organized strikes against the illegal privatization of the company – constant threats of the use of physical force, as well as occasional direct physical violence, restriction of movement within the factory space (e.g. escort to toilets with guard and dog), and lastly, violent arrests of the strike leader.

When Nini came, that was evil – arrests, prison, security, they were beating women. They did everything. They followed women, who were working minimum wage, they followed them like dogs to the bathroom! There were 150 black shirts in Jugoremedija at the time, who wore boots, military ones, like the police, that's what their uniforms were like, white coats... They were making the medicine at night... Two trucks were driving from Jugoremedia to Nis, nobody could stop them because they had escort with them. Nobody could touch them. (Male, 53 years)

Workers were constantly exposed to *psychological violence* including the threat of getting fired if they do not follow all the demands of the new administration (e.g. the first condition upon the arrival of the new administration was

³³ <http://www.juznevesti.com/Ekonomija/Javni-sektor-najavio-strajk-podrske-Jumku.sr.html>, 18.01.2014.



that all workers immediately had to leave the union if they wanted to keep their job) and constant intimidation of workers by management and by security.

Secondly, workers were feeling *helplessness* due to *lack of support*. Both during and after the strike, Jugoremedija workers felt abandoned without any form of support, especially from the state who was part owner of the company. Moreover, they felt that the government was even intentionally *limiting or disabling* workers in achieving their goals. For instance, those workers who were arrested were predominantly on the forefront of the strike, and later, when the company went into bankruptcy, workers suggested that it was a very tactical step by the state to close the factory down, rather than the based on real conditions.

I think the government is to blame for all of it. If Jugoremedija can work now, that it can be leased by Selaskovic, that means that I could have worked before. If only the government would have helped us... 470 workers. How is the government not seeing this, why bankruptcy?! The recent assessment showed that the estimate worth of the company is three times higher than what they assessed before bankruptcy. Now we'll wait and see what the states does. Will someone pay attention to .Jugoremedija? (Female, 58 years)

As a result of these developments, a majority of workers now threatened by *Impoverishment and exclusion from the formal labor market*. Workers are now exposed to widespread poverty due to limited financial resources which were caused by unpaid wages and benefits while working in the company, limited support from the National Employment Service, and exclusion from the labor market due to their age. Sporadic informal jobs which are the primary source of income are limited and do not create security for the workers primary needs.

Look, I'm just before my pension. I went to the bureau for two years. I will probably lose some money there. We didn't receive our salary for 13 months. Who knows if we will receive it at all? I didn't get my severance either, nor my stock. I have 2500 stocks. One stock used to be worth 20 EUR but now they aren't worth



anything. If a plan for reorganization is not submitted, for someone to take over the company... And for the 13 months that we were not receiving our salary, they were also not paying the social and health insurance... I went to the Mayor: "My husband is lying there sick, he is dying!" Within two months he was dead...

Lastly, *disruption of social cohesion* among workers has become a key manifestation of insecurity. All the above threats and insecurities create an environment where the workers feel rejected, helpless and scared for the future of themselves and their families. In the end, this also influences the workers motivation to change the current situation which results that less and less workers are organizing and supporting the fight against the latest shifts in the company.

In the case of *Fiat*, insecurities of workers were not caused by irregular or lagging incomes, unpaid taxes, or even bad relationships with their supervisors. It is rather security, understood as predominantly financial security that is the main reason for getting employed with Fiat. Furthermore, no direct forms of physical and psychological violence were identified. Even if such form of violence would occur, the research suggests that the worker would be protected and that he/she would have the opportunity to turn to human recourses for support. Still, during the interviews it did become evident that there are hidden forms of insecurity underneath this external or firsthand interpretation of their position.

Work are *unequally valued* and have difficulty in *advancing* within the company. This is the main problem highlighted by all respondents, regardless of their position in the company. Namely, based on their observations in the company, Fiat workers believe that they have very limited opportunities for advancement which is dependent upon personal connections and friendships with people who are employed in senior positions in the company. This means that the work and effort workers are investing is often not evaluated in an adequate manner and that personal interests still prevail, hence, the procedures are quite problematic and subject to certain forms of corruption.

It is very difficult to advance. I really don't know. You work where you are and if you do a good job, you don't have to possibility to advance. There has to be someone 'pushing you'. Perhaps there are some people... but for two years I'm at the same place where I was. I am a very dedicated worker, so



there is no reason why I shouldn't advance, to get a position which is a bit easier. I don't know what it's dependent on (line operator, female, 34 years).

They are constantly faced with the possibility of *losing job* after the end of the contract. Workers employed in manufacturing (the operators on the lines) who signed fixed-term contracts are in a particularly precarious position, because the number of cases where employment is terminated by the expiration of the contract is rising (this is often justified by reduced need for certain number of workers due to the improvement of the way in which production takes place).

There are also different threats or problems which respondents identify in relation to the *organization of work* in Fiat. Whereas previously there was occasional unpaid overtime, and some weekend work, now a particular problem is that the workers at any time may be informed that there is no use for them during a certain (usually short) period of time, and that their wages will be lower than usual during this time. Furthermore, all mistakes in the production are blamed on the "human factor", creating constant fear among workers in making a mistake or being wrongfully accused.

It is always the fault of the workers, a human fault, and the human factor. That's always what they look at first. Only later to they look further to see if it is the machine, robot, I don't know what. Human faults are usually the least common. Something else is always the cause. And then it's always 'why did you do it like that' and you cannot explain to them that it has nothing to do with you (line operator, female, 34 years).

Lastly, there is a *decreased ability to establish social contacts* which alienates workers. This problem is mostly faced by production workers who work on the machines and have little opportunity to establish contacts with other workers because the production process is constantly flowing and breaks very short.

The situation of *Yumco's* workers is very serious and they are currently in a very difficult position. Interviews show that they feel very threatened on a daily basis and that they are exposed to both structural and direct forms of violence. The most common threat is *financial deprivation* on a daily basis. Uncertainty caused by lack of economic



resources (due to unpaid wages, taxes and insurances) makes the lives of Yumko workers very difficult and they can barely support themselves and their families. Furthermore, this withholding of income workers see as a form of disrespect by management.

Have you ever been afraid to not be able to put food on the table?

Haha (sarcastic)... I am to this day afraid of that. When I take a peek into the fridge, I wonder if I have something for the kids to eat. Only some *zimnica* which we have left and a little bit of flour. [...] I am afraid, maybe you notice the tears in my eyes ... when I see, when I see, that we don't have enough for the children ... that is terrible.

All the respondents agreed that the lack of financial means is the main instigator of all other problems. It causes people to feel powerless and helpless because they cannot provide the minimum conditions for their existence. In effect, there is a *weakening of social contacts among workers*. Social contacts among workers were once very common but are now extremely rare, because people feel insecure and powerless (especially due to the scarcity of economic resources at their disposal) and therefore withdraw into themselves. People do not only socialize less than before, but people even begin to envy each other and begin to treat each other badly.

People used to feel much freer. The salary, when you have a salary, when you have money, you are secure. Then there is a smile, and a joke...like... you can say, „lets go and have some cake, let's go for a coffee“. Now, if I use 300-400 dinars I won't be able to buy for the kids. That's just one example. People turn more to inwards (female, 50 years)

It's all connected. You don't have a salary, then you don't get respect. If he had respected you, valued you, then he would have given you enough to be able to live. He doesn't value you... he doesn't value you as a human being, he doesn't respect you as person...and in addition to that he doesn't value you as a worker (female, 50 years).



Workers feel an overall *poor treatment of workers by management*. Management is completely ignoring and excluding workers from any decision-making process. And closely connected to their relationship to management, they also feel *abandoned* by both local and central government.

Everyday coping strategies of workers

The everyday strategies of the workers exposed to these different hardships are manifold. In the case of Jugoremedija, there is an undeniable energy which is focused on fighting the injustice they feel. *Continuous resistance* is mainly manifested in two ways: one side, through organized workers strike against illegal privatization, and on the other side, struggle for their rights through court proceedings/legal system.

We managed to prove, with the help of X, that it was all a scam. That they never paid the money they say they did. Those 14, 5 million marks, they took those from us. They took all the money which was saved from before, 11.5 million marks, they took it all, and they emptied all our funds (Male, 54 years)

Another strategy that was highly important was *self-organizing*. By organizing themselves they managed to take over the company and prove that the privatization was illegal. In addition, 46 workers/shareholders managed to collect (from their personal recourses) enough funds to build and open another company in the pharmaceutical industry, Penfarm (although production has yet to start).

Although workers had all these mechanisms in place in order to preserve the company and help it survive, in the end, they were again put in the position where they are in a daily fear for their livelihoods, as well as that of their family. Hence, one of the main strategies today is to look for *alternative income/work*. As result, they are often forced to work very difficult and low-paid jobs in order to survive. These jobs are by the workers considered some form of degradation, but considering that they do not have other options, they do not consider it shameful.

People don't have enough to by bread, they don't have enough to eat. So they go and they do work that they never imagined that they would do. Me and my colleague we go to someone



who has something, a woman who has a farm... they make organic apples and apricots. .. So we go and work for very little, 120 dinars an hour, so we work for 6 or 7 hours a couple of times a week, just what we need to survive. What I get from the bureau is really minimal. I cannot survive on that, and often the money comes in late, it makes me very angry (Female, 58 years).

In the case of *Fiat* workers, two main strategies for overcoming insecurities are evident – passivity or lack of action due to limited networks. The first strategy refers to the acceptance of the situation they are in and consequent passivity. The main reason for inactivity is their lack of belief that their efforts would have any effect and that change is not a possible reality. They also think that their job at Fiat still offers better conditions than others (especially private) companies operating in Kragujevac and that the problems they are facing now are limited and that they do not pose a serious threat.

The only people complaining are those who have not worked anywhere else. Those of us who have worked with *privatnika* before, those are not complaining about Fiat. We are working a lot and all of that, but our salary is on time (line operator, male, 23 years).

The other strategy is to some extent associated with the first and refers to the abandonment of action due to the weakening of workers networks. In fact, there is no form of workers organization to adequately protect the rights of the workers. There is a union in the company, but workers believe that it does not have the role that it should have and that it is an "extended arm" of the Fiat administration. Workers are not motivated enough to self-organize and try to bring about the desired changes, which in turn can be linked to them not believing that they are really threatened and that the problems they are facing are sufficiently serious.

We do have Union. I was a member of the Union but I'm not anymore because I saw that they don't do anything. I just didn't notice that it was improving my position in any way. For example, when we were working overtime, more than 10 hours, 11 hours of work, we were all complaining, but they didn't do anything about it. There were a few situations like that... I don't believe in the Union because they are dependent upon Fiat so I'm sure that they won't do anything that might harm Fiat in order to protect the workers (line operator, female, 34 years).



This also shows that workers who might want to have a channel through which they can influence change, feel that they do not have any partners in their efforts.

Faced with numerous problems, *Yumco* workers have very few opportunities to overcome these, especially considering that a majority of workers have not reached the required age to retire. As a result, they have several coping mechanisms: passively waiting for change, going on strike, accepting the current conditions of work, and finding additional side jobs.

Although a majority of workers would be open to find a new job and do almost any kind of job, they have become rather discouraged by the possibility of succeeding in this endeavor. As a result, many workers are rather passive and their strategy is to wait rather than to be proactive. They hope that the situation in the company will change and turn for the better, that the company will survive and that they will be able to stay. There are two issues that can be noted here. On the one side, they stay even though they are not getting paid because they believe it is really their only and best option. While on the other side, there are also those workers who say that they feel very connected to this company. They grew up there, they spent their life in the company, and they are therefore not ready to let it go.

I've been there since I was 19 years old, even before that. I have in a sense fallen in love with the company. I would feel bad to leave, honestly. I didn't want to leave. Until this day I don't feel bad over the fact that I haven't left. Now I do feel bad. Now, if they would offer me something, I would leave (female, 50 years).
We are not looking for new jobs until the status of the company is resolved. Because really, 20 or 30 years shouldn't be thrown away, you don't know what will happen. We will stay until the end and then we'll see. I hope I can come alive, that we can work (female, 44 years).

In order to change the current situation, a majority of workers are involved in the current strike. Since 2000, there are several occasions when their wages would be paid late or not at all, but workers still felt that it was their best chance to stay with the company and in spite of these conditions. The company was even closed for a while year at one point, leaving the workers sidelined. Still, respondents explained that the situation today has reached its peak and that going on a general strike is their only option to change the situation.



Really, it has reached that point when a strike is necessary. If nothing, just so that we know where we stand. We will either work and know when we are receiving our salaries or we will not work. If there's nothing for us, then there should be nothing for them either. But there is always something for them! There is always something for the management, while us workers... Shall I tell you how the general secretary talked to us? "When the conditions are met, you will get paid". Then he gives as all sorts of examples of how we owe water, electricity, for bread... But we are not the ones who made those debts (female, 44 years).

Contrary to those supporting the strike, there are also those who think it would be better to just keep quiet and continue working under the conditions they were in. In this way, they have a better chance of avoiding bankruptcy.

I think we should end the strike and go back to work. The fact that we have not been paid... we weren't paid in 2004 either, 5 – 6 salaries. But without work, there is nothing. If we don't continue to work, I'm afraid they will declare bankruptcy. And do you know how you work then? If the company doesn't come back on its feet, then its bankruptcy and they are shutting it down (male, 58 years)

Again, bankruptcy would be devastating for the workers who do not see any other possibility of employment. Hence, they are prepared to work even under the worst conditions and not be paid, in order to have some hope that things will turn for the better.

All the respondents explain how they are in a very insecure and dependent position. As they do not have personal incomes, they are forced to live of other family members. In most cases, the only income in the household are pensions of elderly, which is again insufficient to support everyone. When their existence is endangered like this, they try to find additional work in any way they can, which can give them some relief.

Until this day I am considered a good mechanic. I have created a network around town. If it wasn't for this private work, I would have... I go to some people's house and fix something, I go to private companies, and I take care of their machines. I take a few dinars... (male, 58 years)



It is however important to note that even this work is very sporadic and that it is usually paid very meagerly. Still, it is considered a life-line when one is in a difficult situation like these workers.

Perceptions on possible solutions

In regard to possible solution, workers have delineated several strategies. In the case of Jugoremedija, they are very clear:

- change the role of the state – the state should begin to work in the interest of workers and help them to return to the factory and start the production processes;
- continuing the fight of the workers for their rights and for the revival of Jugoremedija.

In the case of Fiat, the perceptions are more focused on the management of their work:

- better regulation of the promotion system within the company;
- better working conditions, especially for workers in manufacturing should be improved;
- increase of financial incentives.

And lastly, in the case of Yumco, the emphasis is again put on both state and management:

- change of the entire social system, which should be based on equal distribution, in which work will be appreciated and adequately rewarded;
- management change – that's what all the respondents considered appropriate as the first and necessary step that should be taken for the current situation in Yumko to improve;



- strengthening the role of the state and assigning greater responsibility to state authorities, since Yumko is state-owned – increased control of company management, control over the distribution of earmarked funds for the plant and the improving working conditions.

Conclusions on case study

In all three cases workers are in an unequal power relation to their employers and they have highly limited possibilities to influence change. Their position in the wider community and the lack of possibility to seek other employment under different circumstances is one of the main reasons why workers in all three cases feel very attached to the companies they are currently working for or worked for. They are in a sense at their merciful hand. What is interesting is that although they consider this attachment to be their only source of security, their everyday feelings of security and manifestations of different types of threats within the company suggest otherwise. In all three companies there are conditions and circumstances which are limiting the workers possibility to provide for their families and to feel a sense of dignity in their work. Still, their lack of empowerment to change the situation is an extension of the deep rootedness of the overall insecurity on the labor market in Serbia, and for previous industry workers in particular.

In order for the situation to change and for the position of the workers to improve, not only within the company but in society in general, it is important to keep the problems presented in this study in mind. Some of the thing which certainly need to change include: Improve transparency of the privatization and restructuring process in the companies in order to prevent illegal actions by different actors; change the role of the state to protect the workers, rather than the management; prevent all forms of violence against workers; ensure efficient implementation of the law which would sanction those who are breaking the law in these processes; create conditions within companies were workers would feel secure and protected; change the role of the Unions to protect the workers and not employers; help workers who are left without work to find new work and to provide for their basic needs.





CONCLUSION

Human security means that people can live a life in dignity, with freedom from fear and freedom from want. If we apply this approach to security inside Serbia's borders, we see that there are numerous human security threats which hinder this possibility, or as we have seen in the case studies represented, even reinforce insecurities. If these threats are viewed in isolation, they might seem as 'normal' forms of insecurities which can be analyzed in light of human rights or perhaps as human development issues. However, once these threats are viewed in conjunction and the threshold of insecurity assessed, some insecurities and threats become so severe that they influence the very essence of people existence and either their individual or community security.

In the two case studies presented – peer-to-peer violence among youth and workers insecurity – we can see that the people who are influenced by insecurity are 'ordinary people' whereby their daily lives are intrinsically threatened. Spaces that are supposed to be sources of security, such as the school and the workplace, become sources and places of insecurity in their everyday settings. Threats are hereby not only manifested as direct physical threats e.g. youth being beaten by their peers or a worker being attacked by private security. Rather, it is also structural in nature whereby workers are for instance excluded from the labour market through illegal and irresponsible practices of privatization proceedings or whereby the rule of law/codes of conduct in schools do not oblige, making alternative mechanisms of social structuring in schools possible. Here we can see that by examining individual threats and insecurities, we can see certain procedures have developed and become normalized, establishing structural processes that create social disorder and vulnerability. In this sense, violence is legitimized and normalized, thus in end also institutionalized. Most notably, the state, responsible for the rule of law, institutional security and democratic governance, is seen as a power legitimating this disorder, and in some case, even causing it.



The above example illustrates that by exploring individual threats in different domains, we can delineate some rooted insecurities and the cause of these insecurities which are often overlooked. In a time of transition, these insecurities become especially important. If they are not visible and the possible risks part of the discourse, people can remain unprotected and the transition can bring increase threats rather than more security. Already now we can see that the lack of a rule of law across the country have created normalized and legitimate social relations whereby the perpetrators of violence go unpunished, to the extent that even children are aware of how these relations work. If this is not seen as a human security issue and as an issue that has a profound effect on people daily lives, powerlessness, distrust, alienation, and vulnerability, will become unavoidable. Furthermore, as we can see in the case of workers, this also leads to break-down of social cohesion.

Considering these downside risks, as well as the recognized human security threats by different stakeholders in Serbia, we can see that action is imminent. Putting individual vulnerability into a discourse of security, and reversibly, looking at other social problems with a security lens, some of the most severe insecurities might be mitigated. If we do not recognize these threats and the risks that come with them, further social, political and economic disintegration is unavoidable. EU accession, which today is seen as the main road towards a more secure future, will not make a difference in peoples' lives unless insecurities are examined at their core.



