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CITIES AND HUMAN SECURITY

Abstract: Cities have been researched mostly in terms of their economic, technological, and social value and significance. Despite some changes in this respect there is still a need to research cities as a fascinating phenomenon, also in respect of its capabilities to increase human security on a local and global scale. The article examines the role of cities for human security in the selected and representative fields such as sustainable development, human rights and environmental protection which are components of human security. The subject matter is indeed fascinating as fascinating are cities themselves. They are dynamic, energetic, innovative and constantly evolving. The general thesis of the article is that cities may and do greatly contribute to human security.

Keywords: cities, human security, human rights, sustainable development, environmental security.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Charter of European Cities and Town Towards Sustainability of 1994 begins with significant words:

“We, European cities & towns, signatories of this Charter, state that in the course of history, our towns have existed within and outlasted empires, nation states, and regimes and have survived as centres of social life, carriers of our economies, and guardians of culture, heritage and tradition. Along with families and neighbourhoods, towns have been the basic elements of our societies and states. Towns have been the centres of industry, craft, trade, education and government. We understand that our present urban lifestyle, in particular our patterns of division of labour and functions, land-use, transport, industrial production, agriculture, consumption, and leisure activities, and hence our standard of living, make us essentially responsible for many environmental problems humankind is facing” (Charter of European Cities and Town Towards Sustainability, para. I.1.).

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Today 3,5 billion people live in cities which makes it half of the world's population. By 2030 almost 60 percent of the world's population will live in cities and what is significant 95 percent of urban growth will take place in the developing countries (Sustainable Development Goals).

Cities have always been the centers of political, social, cultural and organizational innovations. City is the most important and probably the most innovative creation that emerged in the last ten thousand years (Bendyk 1, 2014, p. 8). It is thanks to cities that the division of labour became possible. The latter increased its efficiency and contributed to the economic growth. The development of cities made it necessary to facilitate the transport culminating in the current level of massive passenger air transport. Global cities or megacities, as they are sometimes called, "are places where a lot of wealth and power are concentrated, and which are in a position to take part in very influential global networks in a state of limited but real independence vis-à-vis their states and national governments" (Auby, 2011, p. 205). As stated in the *UN Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium* "[...] cities and towns are engines of growth contributing to the development of both rural and urban human settlements [...]" and further "[c]ities and towns hold the potential to maximize the benefits and to offset the negative consequences of globalization. Well-managed cities can provide an economic environment capable of generating employment opportunities, as well as offering a diversity of goods and services" (*Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium*, point 2, 11).

At the same time States are getting too weak to handle the challenges of a global character such as climate change or economic globalization. In both of those cases cities and their networks are better prepared to deal with such challenges. Cities possess intellectual, cultural and economic resources sufficient for those tasks. Big cities have almost everything that States have, except for such attributes as sovereignty and monopoly on the use of force (Bendyk 1, 2014, p. 7). But as K. Nowrot states,

"[d]espite the variety of challenges to the predominant role of States in the international realm, the institution of the State as such will probably not become obsolete and wither away in the foreseeable future. The challenges by non-State actors to the position of nation-states, although obviously influential in some areas, can in general be regarded as being only sectoral ones, each in itself limited to a specific interest or segment of the society" (Nowrot, 1998-1999, p. 644).

On the other hand, cities are not free from problems, threats and challenges. For example, 828 million people live in slums. Cities occupy about three percent of the world's land area but "account for 60-80 per cent of energy consumption and 75 per cent of carbon emissions. Rapid urbanization is exerting pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, and public health" (Sustainable Development Goals).

So far cities have been researched mostly in terms of their economic, technological, and social value and significance. Until about 2006 they had not been analyzed as legal entities, with possibilities of taking actions on the international stage¹. This state of affairs has changed today

¹ In 2006 there were published such articles as: Y. Blank, 'The City and the World', in *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, 2006, no. 3, pp. 868-931; G. E. Frug, D. J. Barron, 'International Local Government', in *The Urban Lawyer*, 2006, no. 38, pp. 1-63.

but still there is a need to research cities as a fascinating phenomenon in many respects, also with respect to their capabilities to increase human security on a local and global scale. Cities may affect the human security on a global scale mostly through their very influential networks. Section 2 will present the genesis and the essence of the concept of human security. In section 3 I will examine the role of cities for human security in the selected and representative fields such as sustainable development, human rights and environmental protection. The article will conclude with some remarks. The general thesis of the article is that cities may and do greatly contribute to human security.

2. THE GENESIS AND THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN SECURITY

Traditionally, security pertained to relations between States and was mainly of a military character. This caused the individual to have most of all obligations of service towards the State, for example as a member of the army. Threats to security came from other States, for example in the form of external aggression. After the end of the cold war States became more secure but their nations not necessarily. New threats to their security appeared, threats of non-military character. R. Thakur notices that

„[t]o many poor people in the world's poorest countries today, the risk of being attacked by terrorists or with weapons of mass destruction is far removed from the pervasive reality of the so-called soft threats – hunger, lack of safe drinking water and sanitation and endemic diseases – that kill millions every year, far more than the so-called ‘hard’ or ‘real’ threats to security” (Thakur, 2006, p. 73).

He continues with some shocking statistical data:

“More than one billion people in the world lack access to clean water and 2.6 billion to sanitation. These deficits could be overcome through a decade-long annual investment of \$7 billion – less than what Europeans spend on perfume – which would save 4,000 lives each day from the resulting reduced exposure to infectious diseases” (Thakur, 2006, p. 73).

Human security was the answer to new threats and challenges. It places a human being in the centre of the debate, analysis, politics and interest. People are important and a State is an instrument of ensuring their welfare. Elementary goods protected in the framework of human security including life and personal safety may be threatened not only by an external aggression but also by internal factors. The human security concept is based on the human rights tradition that is supposed to protect the individual from the abuse of their own State and – on the other hand – on the concept of development which envisions a State as a necessary instrument of promoting human security (Thakur, 2006, p. 72).

It is the individual and their collectivities that are the main subjects and at the same time objects of human security. Generally, the object of any security consists of entities or collectivities to whom the security is ensured but which themselves do not undertake independent activities in this regard, whereas the subject of security is treated as an entity or collectivity that undertakes activities in order to ensure its own security (Urbanek, 2015, p. 42). For increasing human security concrete actions must be taken not only by States (which are

also subjects of human security as they act in favour of ensuring it for human beings and their collectivities) but also by the individuals themselves and their collectivities. In this regard the latter are also subjects of human security, actually the main one.

The concept of human security has its roots in the United Nations, in the famous president Roosevelt Declaration of 1944 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The Universal Declaration states in the preamble that “[...] recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” (Sustainable Development Goals).

For the first time the concept appeared in the 1993 *Human Development Report*. It was included as one of the five pillars of the world order concentrated on man (1993 *Human Development Report*, p. 2). Then in 1994 *Human Development Report* was published (by UNDP – *United Nations Development Programme*), where the whole concept was developed. In the Report it was indicated that

“[t]he threats to human security are no longer just personal or local or national. They are becoming global: with drugs, AIDS, terrorism, pollution, nuclear proliferation. Global poverty and environmental problems respect no national border. Their grim consequences travel the world” (1994 *Human Development Report*, p. 2).

Human security embraces two fundamental components – freedom from fear and freedom from hunger (1994 *Human Development Report*, p. 24). The entire Chapter II of the 1994 Report is devoted to the human security. There it was claimed that „[t]he concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust” (1994 *Human Development Report*, p. 22). According to the Report the human security concept is characterized by the following features:

1. Human security is a universal concern as it touches on people all over the world. It is connected to the fact that the threats are also universal as they are common to all people. Such threats include unemployment, drugs, crime, environmental pollution and degradation and human rights violations;
2. The basic elements of human security are interdependent. It means that when the security of people is endangered in one part of the world, all States and nations may be endangered. The effects of threats to human security in any part of the world may be felt in another part. Threats such as hunger, disease, environmental degradation, drug trafficking, terrorism, organized crimes, ethnic conflicts and social disintegration are no longer isolated events and their consequences are transnational. What happens in one State or region may affect the whole world;
3. It is easier to ensure human security through early prevention than later intervention. It is the expression of a well known maxim ‘better prevent than cure’;
4. Human security concentrates on people – on their lives, their functioning in a society, on their autonomy, access to the market and social opportunities. It is also concerned with the state of peace which is a necessary condition for human security (1994 *Human Development Report*, pp. 22-23).

Human security contains seven categories: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (1994 *Human Development Report*, pp. 24-25). Consequently, human security is understood broadly – in a holistic and integrative manner.

Among the most serious threats to human security in the XXI century the 1994 *Human Development Report* enumerates unchecked population growth, disparities in economic opportunities, excessive international migration, environmental degradation, drug production and trafficking and international terrorism (1994 *Human Development Report*, p. 34). The remaining threats are the direct ones such as criminal violence, killing women and children, sexual violence, genocide, war crimes, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and small and light weapons or anti-personnel mines (they all result in death, injuries and trauma) and the indirect ones such as deprivation of the basic needs, for example access to water, food, medical care, education, diseases and low economic growth (Urbanek, 2015, p. 161).

In the subsequent years numerous UN organs, including UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), acted as a forum for debate, expression and promotion of alternative concepts of security. States as well as international organizations also participate in this process. UN organs and agendas such as UNHCR and Secretary General took the new concept into account in their actions. Hence, UN became a key instrument for legitimizing the new concept of security (Thakur, 2006, p. 91).

In 2003 the Commission on Human Security published its *Human Security Now* report which defined human security as “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” (Human Security Now, 2003, p. 4). On the basis of this one may conclude that human security means living in peace and safety in one’s own State, in which people enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination. People must be able to meet their social needs and realize their plans and aspirations.

In 2004 the concept of human security was given prominent place in the *High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change A more secure world: our shared responsibility*. It mentions human security in different places together with the national security. States are treated instrumentally meaning that they should be protected not because they are good by nature but because they are necessary for ensuring respect for human dignity and values as well as for ensuring justice and security for its own citizens (*Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change A more secure world: our shared responsibility*, para. 30, von Tigerstrom, 2007, p. 114).

In 2005 also the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) published a report *Common Purpose Towards a More Effective OSCE. Final Report and Recommendations of the Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE* where it was indicated that “Human security in general, and the security of the individual in particular, are seen as the individual and collective responsibility of all participating States. Human rights and security are inseparable” (2005, point 24). All the aspects and problems of human rights in the framework of OSCE are identified as “human dimension”, and respect for human rights is one of the fundamentals of the international order (Kuźniar, 2002, p. 246).

B. von Tigerstrom points to the basic aspects of human security such as:

1. “the ‘human-centred’ approach. [...] human security is sometimes described as an approach that places individual human beings at the centre of our attention and efforts” (Von Tigerstrom, 2006, p. 606);
2. “its preventive orientation. Proponents of human security emphasise the need to minimize the human (and economic) cost of security threats by preventing harm, instead of trying to contain or repair it after the fact” ((Von Tigerstrom, 2006, p. 606-607);
3. “‘common concern’ for human security. [...] It is derived from two distinct but complementary tendencies in the current uses of human security in official and academic discourse. The first is the recognition that the security of individuals in different parts of the world is often interrelated or mutually dependent, and that collective action will often be essential to ensuring human security because of this interdependence and the transnational nature of many important threats to human security. Human security is thus a common concern in the sense that the security of others, even in a distant part of the world, may affect the security of any of us, and no one’s security can adequately be ensured without common effort” ((Von Tigerstrom, 2006, p. 607).

Those features are clearly based on the 1994 *Human Development Report*. Bearing in mind the above considerations one should try to define human security. Human security is a state and process that aims at the certainty of survival and existence and the opportunity of development as well as meeting the most elementary needs of humans. This is a process because security is not a given forever, it evolves and fluctuates and constant efforts must be taken in order to maintain it. As a concept that should be implemented in practice, human security places human beings and their needs in the centre of its interest and analysis. National and international security are instrumental for human security, thus ensuring the former should ultimately serve people. “The best guarantee of human security is a strong, efficient, effective, but also democratically legitimate state that is respectful of citizens’ rights, mindful of its obligations and responsibilities and tolerant of diversity and dissenting voices” (Thakur, 2006, p. 90). For that reason human security should not be regarded as contradicting national security and should not replace it. Those two dimensions of security are complementary (Thakur, 2006, p. 89). From the perspective of human security, national security is valuable but treated as one of many tools used for promoting individual’s interests (Kutz, 2009, p. 233-234).

3. THE ROLE OF CITIES FOR HUMAN SECURITY

Among the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 Goal 11 is to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. “Cities are hubs for ideas, commerce, culture, science, productivity, social development and much more. At their best, cities have enabled people to advance socially and economically” (Sustainable Development Goals). Hence, cities may and do play a significant role for human security. Sustainable Development Goals are a continuation of Millennium Development Goals that also gave rise to cities activities such as

“the involvement of cities in the Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign, which aims at achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this campaign, hundreds of cities in the developed and developing world are united to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education and promote gender equality. Diplomatic ways to achieve the goals vary from informing local communities and expressing solidarity, to mobilizing local resources, to funding efforts and partnering civil society organizations in efforts to achieve the MDGs, as well as lobbying central governments” (van der Pluijm, 2007, p. 24).

In order to be able to conduct relatively independent policies and other activities cities have been attempting to reach greater autonomy from the State. They have also sought to become active players on the international arena and cooperate with the cities from foreign States. One of the adopted strategies includes forming international networks such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the most renowned of such cities networks. This strategy aims at gaining recognition in international relations (Porras, 2008, p. 538-539). I. M. Porras states that:

“Basing their arguments on the democratic potential of cities and on the claim that city government is the level of government closest to the people and therefore most responsive to their needs, such groups have advocated for greater decentralization and autonomy for cities. The cities’ assertion of the desirability of greater autonomy has been well received by the international community, which has embraced the city as an alternative interlocutor to the state. [...] Because cities, unlike traditional non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”), are able to lay claim to representative legitimacy, they have emerged as a favored actor within the umbrella of international civil society representatives” (Porras, 2008, p. 539).

Thus, cities’ demands for greater autonomy are based on their conviction that they are best placed to meet the basic needs of their inhabitants.

3.1. CITIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As cities are becoming more and more active players on the international stage, there are more opportunities for their contacts with other cities across the border but also with international organizations of a governmental character. J. Nijman is of the opinion that direct and institutionalized relations between the city and global institutions will intensify. To illustrate this trend the Author focuses on *Agenda 21* adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Nijman, 2011, p. 219). Chapter 28 of the *Agenda 21 Local Authorities’ Initiatives in Support of Agenda 21* states that “[b]ecause so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people,

they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development” (para. 28.1).

According to the *Charter of European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability* of 1994 “[a]s democratically elected representatives of our local communities we are ready to take responsibility for the task of re-organising our cities and towns for sustainability. The extent to which cities and towns are able to rise to this challenge depends upon their being given rights to local self-governance, according to the principle of subsidiarity. It is essential that sufficient powers are left at the local level and that local authorities are given a solid financial base” (para. I.12).

Since 1990s the interaction and cooperation between cities and international organizations in the sphere of sustainable development developed significantly (Nijman, 2011, p. 219-220). For example, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) cooperates with ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) and C40 (C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group). UN-Habitat, ICLEI, IUCN’s (International Union for Conservation of Nature) project Countdown 2010 (project completed), UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research), UNESCO, a Steering Group of Mayors, Secretariat of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* and UN Environmental Programme engaged in the Global Partnership on the Cities and Biodiversity aimed at restricting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 (Nijman, 2011, p. 220; Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity and the International Day for Biological Diversity 2009). According to the Partnership idea:

“[w]hile cities are today part of the problem of the current unprecedented loss of biodiversity, they are also part of the solution. Indeed, they have a major role to play, as global change starts at the local level. Several leading cities and local authorities are actively involved in this battle for life on Earth and one of the ways they have chosen to spread the word about biodiversity loss is to celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity, and to take this opportunity to inform their citizens about Invasive Alien Species” (Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity and the International Day for Biological Diversity 2009).

Other examples of cooperation of cities in the area of sustainable development and environmental protection include: in 2010 during the World Mayors Summit on Climate in Mexico 207 mayors of cities adopted the *Global Cities Covenant on Climate – the Mexico City Pact* (World Mayors Summit on Climate – Mayors push for hope after Copenhagen). Organization C40 acts against the climate change by dint of programmes promoting the use of bikes in cities and pedestrian streets (Barber, 2014, p. 22 – translation by the author). As J. Nijman indicates “[c]ities are part of the problem of climate change, but also part of the solution” (2011, p. 214). 75% of the global CO₂ emissions is caused by cities. But as a part of the solution cities have undertaken many programmes and actions to counteract environmental pollution, also in cooperation with other cities (Nijman, 2011, p. 214). For example the *Charter of European Cities and Town Towards Sustainability* states that cities

“shall give priority to ecologically sound means of transport (in particular walking, cycling, public transport) and make a combination of these means the centre of our planning efforts. Motorised individual means of urban transport ought to have the subsidiary function of facilitating access to local services and maintaining the economic activity of the city” (para. I.9).

Similarly, the *European Urban Charter II* of 2008 provides that “[i]t is for us, European local elected representatives, to promote sustainable mobility policies which favour “soft” means of travel such as walking and cycling as well as all forms of public transport”.

3.2. ROLE OF CITIES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

According to J. Nijman, in the future cities will increasingly implement and enforce international law and they will be doing that on their own initiative independent of State obligations (Nijman, 2011, p. 221). This trend or prognosis is already visible in the field of international human rights and environmental protection. Very often cities implement human rights conventions that their host States did not even ratify. For example,

“the *Child Friendly Cities Initiative* (CFCI) is a global city network established to implement the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child directly in the participating cities. The *UNESCO International Coalition of Cities against Racism and Discrimination* aims to give direct effect to antiracism and anti-discrimination norms as included in international treaties, customary law (the prohibition of racial discrimination is *jus cogens*), and resolutions and declarations of IOs and their organs in the cities involved” (Nijman, 2011, p. 221-222).

One of the initiatives undertaken independent of States obligations was that of Greg Nickels, the Mayor of Seattle, who in 2005 appealed to other cities to give effect to the Kyoto Protocol and reduce locally the level of greenhouse gases emissions. As the reaction was positive, it gave rise to a city network called the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement that comprises more than 1000 member-cities (Nijman, 2011, p. 222).

“These cities give effect to the Kyoto norm through their local policies while the US as a state had not wishes to be bound by the protocol. International law here plays a role in the self-identification of the city as a global actor which takes account of its responsibility with respect to climate change and takes the lead in the governance of one of the most urgent global challenges” (Nijman, 2011, p. 222).

As is clear from the above remarks, cities often attempt to internalize international law – to include it in its local law, adopt its standards and enforce it. One may say that in a way international law is transposed into local law. Another example may be found in the sphere of human rights protection. San Francisco (via *Ordinance 1998 on the Local Implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*) and Los Angeles have adopted the *UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* (the U.S. did not ratify the Convention) and Salt Lake City and Seattle decided to fulfill the obligations flowing from the Kyoto Protocol that

commits State Parties to reduce greenhouse gases emissions and in this way fights global warming (here again the U. S. did not ratify the Protocol) (Frug, Barron, 2006, p. 28; Nijman, 2011, pp. 222-223). Cities are places where people live, work and spend their free time. For that reason it is important that human rights of the citizens are ensured. As the *European Urban Charter II* provides cities and towns are

“multigenerational, multicultural and multireligious places where people from all social backgrounds mingle on a daily basis. For urban society to develop fairly, mutual assistance between citizens, dialogue between groups, including inter-religious dialogue, and voluntary activity need to be promoted. We will continue our fight against financial and employment insecurity, exclusion and all forms of discrimination on grounds of social status, age, culture, religion, gender and disability” (European Urban Charter II).

As is clearly visible, cities attempt to enforce human rights law on the local level. Cities have also a role to play in the context of migration crisis, as for example the one currently taking place in the European Union. For instance, the City Council of Helsinki prepared a strategic document *Immigration and Diversity in Helsinki 2013-2016* that determined the most important directions in the urban migration policy. It defines measures of support of activities in the area of employment (Burszta, 2015; Cities of migration: <http://citiesofmigration.ca/>). Such activities and initiatives contribute to respect for human rights of migrants and refugees.

Apart from the above activities cities may, and actively do, oppose their States going to wars as, for example, did 165 cities when they passed a resolution opposing U.S. war against Iraq for example (Frug, Barron, 2006, p. 28; Cities for Peace). In this way cities and also their networks may influence the foreign policy of its States and contribute to the peace building and conflict prevention. A state of peace is a necessary precondition to human security.

3.3. DIPLOMACY OF CITIES

A great majority of cities have offices of international relations or international cooperation, for example Seattle, Atlanta, Goteborg, Kyoto (Frug, Barron, 2006, p. 29; Nijman, 2011, p. 214), New York (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/ia/html/home/home.shtml>) and many others. Another relevant instrument in the sphere of participation of cities in international relations *sensu largo* is the institution of twin towns or sister cities. It takes a form of legal and social agreement between cities from different States to promote cultural and commercial ties. The concept of town twinning was intended to foster friendship and understanding between different cultures and to encourage trade and tourism. Currently, the concept of sister towns has increasingly been used to form strategic international business links between member cities. Even the term “city diplomacy” was coined. It embraces direct contacts and mutual assistance between cities across the borders. For example the town of Toruń (Poland) cooperates with the following twin cities: Philadelphia (USA, since 1977), Göttingen (Germany, since 1978), Leiden (the Netherlands, since 1988), Hämeenlinna (Finland, since 1989), Kaliningrad (Russia, since 1995), Čadca (Slovakia, since 1996), Swindon UK, since 2003), Łuck (Ukraine, since 2008), Novo Mesto (Slovenia, since 2009) and Guilin (China, since 2010) (<http://www.tmpt.torun.pl/twincities.html>).

As has been indicated, cities form global networks. City diplomacy may be conducted within such networks as well. The most important city networks include: United Cities and Local Governments (<http://www.uclg.org/>), International Union of Local Authorities (<http://web.mit.edu/urbanupgrading/upgrading/resources/organizations/iula.html>), World Association of Major Metropolises (<http://www.metropolis.org/>), National League of Cities (<http://www.nlc.org/>), ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability, founded in 1990 as the) (<http://www.iclei.org/>), C40 Cities (<http://www.c40.org/>), Eurocities (<http://www.eurocities.eu/>), U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement (<http://www.usmayors.org/climateprotection/agreement.htm>), Megacities Foundation (<http://www.megacitiesproject.org/>), CityNet (<http://citynet-ap.org/>) and City Protocol (<http://city-protocol.org/>). One should also mention Cities Alliance convened in 1999 by the World Bank and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) which “is a global partnership for urban poverty reduction and the promotion of the role of cities in sustainable development” (<http://www.citiesalliance.org/>). The most important of them is UCLG. The primary goal of the UCLG is “[t]o be the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community” (<http://www.uclg.org/en/organisation/about>). Its activities aim at increasing the role and influence of local government and its representative organisations in global governance and at becoming the main source of support for democratic, effective, innovative local government close to the citizen (<http://www.uclg.org/en/organisation/about>). In its Constitution of 2004 UCLG states that it is aware “that the traditional role of the State is profoundly affected by the above trends and that States cannot centrally manage and control the complex integrated cities and towns of today and tomorrow” (The Constitution of the World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments, 2004)². The significance of global networks of cities is in the strengthening the position and influence of cities. It also “marks a break from the competitive order of the nation-states, as localities from all over the world manage to cooperate” (Blank, 2006, p. 923).

J. Nijman rightly claims that

“[t]he self-conception of cities as global entities is not only caused by the impact of economic globalisation on the city, but also by the fact that the major global problems of our time (variations of human-political and ecological injustices) are often felt most urgently by the inhabitants of the world’s cities” (2011, p. 214).

For example, global warming is global (as the name demonstrates), illnesses are global (such as AIDS, Ebola, bird flu etc.) and corporations are also global. Very often those challenges must be met at the local level, in cities that are the gatherings of natural and legal persons as well as necessary infrastructure.

² The Constitution of the World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments, 2004. Retrieved 28 December 2015, <http://www.uclg.org/en/organisation/structure/constitution-rules>.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Cities are energetic laboratories of social, political and cultural innovations. This is exemplified by participatory budgets, local currencies, barter exchange, time banks, consumer cooperatives, breakfast markets, media labs or city bike systems (Bendyk 2, 2014, p. 115). According to B. Barber, the scale of the contemporary problems overwhelms States. Radical interdependency of globalised world in the XXI century overwhelms States and pushes cities to the forefront (Barber, 2014, p. 183). Decentralized planet connected by the networks of cities and regions already exists even though it is dominated by States. It includes a great variety of regional and non-State actors such as multinational corporations, global finance institutions, NGO's and global social movements. Each of them is dealing in its own way with such relevant problems as climate change, social justice, public health, immigration or child labour traditionally falling under the State jurisdiction (Barber, 2014, p. 348-349). It is impossible to ensure peace and security without the cooperation between States, international organizations, business community and civil society (Barber, 2014, p. 360). And civil society blossoms most of all in cities.

The problem of cities and their role for human security including their growing role in many spheres of international cooperation, human rights and environmental protection which are components of human security, is indeed fascinating as fascinating are cities themselves. They are dynamic, energetic, innovative and constantly evolving. Various international or transboundary activities of cities are on the increase and they contribute to closer ties between people and nations and as a result to international peace and understanding. On the other hand, a lot of challenges exist to

“maintaining cities in a way that continues to create jobs and prosperity while not straining land and resources. Common urban challenges include congestion, lack of funds to provide basic services, a shortage of adequate housing and declining infrastructure. The challenges cities face can be overcome in ways that allow them to continue to thrive and grow, while improving resource use and reducing pollution and poverty. The future we want includes cities of opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transportation and more” (Sustainable Development Goals).

The vision of future cities and their sustainable development includes creating jobs in the economy based on knowledge, eradicating poverty and social deprivations, ensuring effective environmental protection, dealing with demographic changes, preserving cultural diversity and preventing social conflicts (Karwińska, Brzosko-Sermak, 2014, p. 70). By increasing the quality of urban life, ensuring opportunities for development and self-fulfillment cities clearly contribute to human security. Selective activities of cities in areas of human rights, sustainable development and environmental protection were presented in this article. Cities are also centres of civil society and as such they empower their inhabitants, make their voice heard. Many cities undertake initiatives aiming at increasing social participation in the form of consultation with inhabitants (Cities of change. Cooperation of cities In the field of city development. The good practice of the Cities – The partners of the Project, 2015, p. 8). In this way inhabitants are given meaningful voice and participation in decision-making process in their own affairs.

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