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# 1

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8th annual NKL conference

# 'ARE WE ALL VULNERABLE? RISKS, CRISES AND DISASTERS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD/DIGITAL SOCIETY'

University of Belgrade  
Faculty of Political Science  
May 27-28<sup>th</sup> 2024

The Navigating Knowledge Landscapes (NKL)<sup>1</sup> research network brings together more than a hundred scientists from over 30 countries. Coming from a vast range of scientific disciplines, they share a common interest in mapping how the knowledge-creation process unfolds in the contemporary world. Through research collaboration and the organization of annual academic conferences, this research network aims to open up or shed light on various questions that are of particular importance to modern digital societies, and the ways in which we build knowledge about their characteristics and the processes that occur within them. In previous years, annual conferences of this research network have been held in Fulda (Germany), Vienna (Austria), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Zagreb (Croatia), and Halden (Norway). This year, the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Political Science has the honor of hosting the an-

nual NKL conference. The theme of this year's conference: 'Are we all vulnerable? Risks, crises, and disasters in the modern world/digital society', represents a continuation of the long and successful interdisciplinary international academic collaboration.

Humanity today is exposed to various risks, crises, and disasters, both natural and man-made. Among them are, certainly, pandemics, economic and political crises, climate change, rapid technological development, and the emergence or intensification of armed conflicts. Thus examination of our - as individuals, societies, and even as a species - vulnerabilities in the wake of such events seems timely and necessary.

Therefore, the theme of this year's conference is focused on ways in which we perceive and understand vulnerabilities, as well as possible ways to use knowledge and understanding to avoid or mitigate them. The aim of the confer-

ence is to explore vulnerabilities caused by risks, crises, and disasters from various perspectives and different academic disciplines. The conference is transdisciplinary in nature and will involve over 20 researchers from different countries and several academic fields, including political science, sociology, security studies, as well as medical science, psychology, and science, technology, and society studies. Topics of particular interest include:

- Ethical and philosophical aspects of vulnerability
- The relationship between politics and vulnerability
- Medical aspects of vulnerability
- Risks, crises, and disasters in digital media and popular culture
- Laws and progress as protection against vulnerability
- Open science as a tool in combating vulnerability
- Artificial intelligence and other new technologies.

The annual meeting of the Navigating Knowledge Landscapes research network also takes place during the conference.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://knowledge-landscapes.hiim.hr/>

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## KEYNOTE

# OPEN SCIENCE: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD THAT EVERYONE STRIVES FOR

Ivan Zaletel

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During the previous decade, there an increasing tendency for published scientific works to be accompanied by original data obtained during experimental work. This has encouraged the creation of numerous initiatives for their exchange, leading to the formation of online databases that provide, at no cost, a large amount of open-access data. The advantages of this type of data are its high quality, along with increased reproducibility and transparency, and collaboration opportunities among researchers working in different institutions, countries, and continents. The very term of open-access data falls under the broader concept of the principles of open science, which most countries strive for today. This movement aims to make science accessible to all parts of society through open scientific knowledge, infrastructure, engagement of different social actors, and knowledge systems. Looking at the benefits of open-access data, the concept and idea of open science can only have positive

aspects for the scientific community and the dissemination of research work. However, its implementation is slowly opening a series of previously uncharted problems that scientists will face in the future. These are reflected in various forms of vulnerability, which affect the confidentiality of patient data, copyright and authorship issues, the reviewing process, and, most importantly, the high financial costs of publishing research papers. Therefore, a big question arises as to whether such problems, above all the financial costs, will again fall on the backs of the scientific community itself. If adequate models for solving problems arising from the concept of open science are not found, they can prove to be devastating for researchers from low or even middle-income countries. Thus, will “publish or perish” be the only way for the future of open science?

**Keywords:** open science, open access, vulnerability, research

# EXTERNALIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ERA OF AI

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In recent years we have seen a growing body of work on digital knowledge and digital epistemology. The discussion in these texts concerns how our understanding of knowledge and ways of knowing is affected or altered in the digital society. Most recently, we have seen the AI-driven chatbot ChatGPT that has become an academic co-writer, or even first author, building on what others have already done, combining and composing new academic texts (often without acknowledging the authors). In 2023 we had the Writers Guild of America strike, refusing to accept a non-regulated situation for technology replacing scriptwriters and also actors in films, as creativity and ownership to embodiment were to be separated from the person who the expression and body belonged to. Our question is: how does AI's current appearance in academia affect academics' creativity, embodiment and production of knowledge? As with previous technological inventions, academics are expected to advance by finding ways to

work with AI as an integral part of academic teaching and research. We will argue that it is not just another tool to be added to academic practice. This might be most obvious in the social sciences, as reading and writing is necessary to achieve integrated embodied knowledge, the very feature of what it means to be an academic. As concepts, language and theories are being detached from academic lives, no part of academia remains untouched. In this presentation, we will identify and describe the ongoing process of externalization of academic knowledge. Our aim is to exemplify the process of externalization of knowledge, discuss the examples, and suggest a definition of externalization of knowledge, in relation to ongoing work in the field of digital epistemology.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, externalization of knowledge, production of knowledge, digital epistemology

# PRECAUTIONARY OR PROACTIONARY APPROACH TO THE PROGRESS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: SOME DILEMMAS AND CHALLENGES

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This contribution will address some risks and cross-cutting challenges presented by the progress of emerging technologies. We are entering a new revolutionary phase in the development of these technologies, where the integration of human genome editing and artificial intelligence promises to radically change the foundations of human and social life. As artificial intelligence evolves into a systemic technology, extending beyond narrow laboratory research and integrating into society through various applications, it reaches a critical crosspoint in many aspects. Notably, artificial intelligence represents one of the most advanced modern technologies. In terms of development speed and societal dissemination, it is unprecedented in the history of technological evolution. Our discussion will start from the premise that the current and future progress of artificial intelligence, increasingly utilized in genetic engineering, contributes not only to social well-being but also

poses potential radical social uncertainties, or even vulnerabilities to humankind as a whole (not just to individuals or specific groups). In this context, the mutually supportive progress of both revolutionary technologies appears as a double-edged sword. It sometimes leads to unpredictable risky situations, while often providing the only “instrument” to alleviate such risks. Our contribution will critically discuss whether more precautionary or proactionary social (policy) approaches are needed. Within this framework, we will provide an empirically-based overview of the social, political, economic, and historical factors in Europe that dictate the adoption of precautionary (rather than proactionary) principles in the anticipatory governance of artificial intelligence.

**Keywords:** emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, proactionary approach



# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND POLITICS: PANDORA'S BOX IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRACY CRISIS?

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This research paper examines the transformative impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on political landscapes, specifically focusing on its role as a potential Pandora's box amid the contemporary democracy crisis. The study investigates three dimensions: the harmful effects of AI on election processes, its potential influence on the alignment of workers with left-extremist political parties, and its broader implications for national security. Firstly, the paper delves into how AI technologies can pose significant threats to the integrity of election processes, potentially undermining the foundational principles of democratic governance. Secondly, it explores the complex relationship between AI-driven economic shifts and the political engagement of workers, specifically examining the possibility of a tilt toward left extremism. Finally, the research examines AI's broader national security implications, emphasizing potential vulnerabilities and risks associated with its deployment in political contexts. Through an analysis of case studies and a review of academic literature, this paper aims to illuminate the challenges posed by the

unchecked integration of AI in political sphere during times of democracy crisis. The research underscores the urgent need for ethical considerations, regulatory frameworks, and proactive strategies to capitalize the benefits of AI while securing democratic values and national security.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, democracy crisis, elections, left extremism, national security

# ALGORITHMIC DISCRIMINATION AS A THREAT TO THE REALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

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Artificial intelligence undoubtedly can improve the quality of life of the individual, realizing positive effects on efficiency, health, and economic growth. However, it can also have discriminatory effects, for instance when the artificial intelligence system learns from biased human decisions. The core of human rights is that all human beings have equal rights and must be treated equally. On the other hand, if artificial intelligence systems are based on biased information, they can cause algorithmic discrimination, that is, discriminatory algorithmic decisions or behaviors. This type of system is capable of not only reproducing but also reinforcing patterns of discriminatory treatment that exist in the society in which they were created. In further work, the author will try to introduce readers to the concept of non-discrimination as an important condition for the realization of human rights and freedoms, as well as its role in the discussion of modern artificial intelligence. As new types of unfair differentiation escape current laws by strengthening social inequality, the author will point out the need to create additional

regulations to protect fairness, human rights and freedoms in the field of AI, which requires a complex set of sectoral rules. Finally, to ensure that the algorithms used in different fields do not discriminate and do not threaten the rights of individuals and groups, the need to develop neutral algorithms, their transparency in the decision-making process, the inclusion of sample diversity, and testing before implementation will be emphasized. Attention will be focused on the transparency and availability of information on the basic data used for the development of these systems, which should be accompanied by the creation of an appropriate regulatory framework and guidelines, following ethical principles and values.

**Keywords:** privacy, bias, fairness, transparency, regulation

# AFTER HARM: A PLEA TO CONSIDER TEMPORALLY EXTENDED EFFECTS OF ALGORITHMIC FAILURE

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University of Bergen, Norway

As the role and influence of artificial intelligence (AI) become ever more pronounced in our daily lives, the need to ensure automated decision-making (ADM) systems to be trustworthy, safe, and ethical is of paramount importance. In particular, the imperative to address the ethical issues raised by such systems is underscored by high-profile cases of algorithmic failure such as the COMPAS recidivism-risk scoring algorithm in the United States (see, e.g., Angwin et al. 2016), the Dutch welfare fraud detection algorithm SyRI (see, e.g., AlgorithmWatch 2020), and the UK's Ofqual grading algorithm (see, e.g., Kolkman 2020), where the ADM applications have shown to be privacy- and autonomy-invasive, unfair, and/or discriminatory, thereby causing harm to those who are subjected to their computational judgement. While the field of AI ethics has emerged as a response to this growing need for ethical reflection on ADM-related issues, scholars have been primarily concerned with pointing out the ethical pitfalls of algorithmic systems in an

attempt to anticipate, identify, mitigate, and prevent potential harms (see, e.g., Shelby et al. 2023). Comparatively little attention, however, has been devoted to post-harm scenarios where individuals experience temporally extended detrimental effects of algorithmic failure. Thus, the perspective of those who were harmed by an ADM system – and who may endure lasting damages as a result – has remained underexposed. This paper seeks to remedy this gap by (a) considering the lasting effects that instances of algorithmic failure can have on individual lives and (b) contemplating what the repair of algorithmic harm in post-harm scenarios would ultimately require. Combining case study and philosophical analysis, we hope to demonstrate the need for a particular strand of AI-related research that has thus far flown below the scholarly radar.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, automated decision-making, algorithmic failure, AI ethics

# THE VULNERABILITY OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN AP KOSOVO AND METOHIJA AS A FACTOR OF DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING DURING THE PERIOD OF 2020 - 2024

Dejan Jovanović

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In the observed period, we analyze the vulnerability of different identity groups in AP Kosovo and Metohija with special regard to ethnicity, religion, class, age and language. We compare the obtained results with the universal democratic criteria of free and fair elections, freedom of speech and the rule of law. We attach the established results regarding the responsibility of the government to the citizens to the aforementioned research results in order to perform the necessary analysis. Special attention is paid to the analysis of the excessive use of force, in response to the alleged threats of terrorism, insurgency and organized crime. We present the results of the analyzed indicators through the concept of democratic backslide in order to contribute to the scientific explanation of the state of vulnerability of various ethnic and religious minorities in the AP of Kosovo and Metohija.

**Keywords:** avulnerability, ethnicity, identity, democratic backsliding, Kosovo and Metohija

# VULNERABILITY AND POWER: AN ETHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE KURDISH QUESTION THROUGH NECROPOLITICAL LENS

**Gabriele Leone**

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The Kurdish question in Turkey is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses a range of dimensions, most notably related to the preservation of Kurdish cultural identity and the fundamental right to freedom of expression. This issue has been the subject of extensive academic and political debate, with scholars and policymakers alike grappling with the challenges of finding a just and sustainable solution that addresses the concerns and aspirations of all parties involved. An ethical lens underscores the significance of respecting cultural diversity and upholding the rights of minority groups as integral components in fostering a just and inclusive society. This perspective is philosophically grounded in the principles of equality and justice, which are pivotal in addressing the vulnerability of the Kurdish population. As theories of necropolitics come into play, the analysis takes a nuanced turn. Necropolitics, a concept introduced by Achille Mbembe (2019), explores how sovereign power asserts control over life and death. In

the context of the Kurdish question, an exploration of necropolitics becomes particularly relevant as it delves into the mechanisms by which the vulnerability of the Kurdish population is not solely confined to the deprivation of rights but extends to more insidious forms of control. The intertwining of cultural identity, equality, and justice within the Kurdish question requires critically examining the necropolitical dimensions. This analysis involves questioning whether the vulnerabilities experienced by the Kurdish population go beyond traditional frameworks of inequality and injustice, extending into the realm of a necropolitical regime that may perpetuate conditions leading to physical and symbolic deaths. In navigating the complex landscape of the Kurdish question, understanding the implications of necropolitics adds depth to the ethical and philosophical considerations. It prompts an examination of the power structures that contribute to the vulnerability of the Kurdish population, shedding light on how these dynamics

may operate not only in the realm of the living but also in shaping the narratives and conditions surrounding death. Ultimately, a comprehensive understanding of the Kurdish question necessitates an exploration of both cultural identity and the theories of necropolitics, offering a richer perspective on the ethical dimensions of vulnerability in this context.

**Keywords:** necropolitics, Kurdish question, Turkey, cultural identity

# VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE AMIDST POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CRISES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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This paper delves into the vulnerabilities posed by political and economic crises in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) since the global financial crisis. This research adopts a comparative approach, scrutinizing five prominent leaders often characterized as autocrats: Jarosław Kaczyński in Poland, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Robert Fico in Slovakia, Aleksandar Vučić in Serbia, and Boyko Borisov in Bulgaria. The objective is to unveil systematic patterns and common traits in their governance and opposition strategies, particularly in times of crisis. The study revolves around four pivotal crises: the 2008-2009 financial crisis, the 2015 refugee crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russian-Ukrainian war. These serve as critical junctures for dissecting elite responses and opposition tactics, offering insights into the mechanisms governing both democratic and authoritarian resilience. The study hypothesizes that authoritarian responses to crises often intertwine with populist rhetoric, exploiting and amplifying societal discontent with democracy. Once in power, populism becomes a central ele-

ment of authoritarian resilience, molding public perceptions of crises and political realities in favor of the autocratic regime. Contrary to destabilizing populism and authoritarianism, which might be expected to undermine democracy further, our research suggests that various crises have paradoxically contributed to their consolidation. These crises have led to political, legal, and economic upheavals, creating states of exception that have, in turn, solidified authoritarian rule. This paper promises to yield fresh insights into the mechanisms underpinning democratic and autocratic stability in times of crisis, thereby enhancing our comprehension of resilience amid the multifaceted challenges faced in the CEE region. By investigating the vulnerabilities emerging from political-economic crises, this research makes a significant contribution to acknowledging and understanding vulnerabilities, while also highlighting the potential role of knowledge in mitigating these challenges.

**Keywords:** Central and Eastern Europe, political leadership, crisis response

# VULNERABILITIES OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY - A SECURITY STUDY VIEW

**Nikola Vujinović**

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Vulnerability as a concept is very broad and extends through different scientific disciplines. Its applicability is very important in Security studies, especially in the concept of challenges, risks and threats. We can see examples of it in defining critical infrastructure or analysis of security sectors which are defined within the framework of concept of threats. The intention of this paper is to investigate to what extent the vulnerability of collective identities, national or religious, consequence of objective reasons or objective consequences of social relations. Also, to what extent it is a necessary element of identity constitution - a necessity that homogenizes the members of one identity? In order to answer this question, we will use two elements from the theoretical heritage of the European school of security. On the one hand, we will use elements of sectoral analysis, more precisely, of the societal security sector, which analyzes collective identities as objects of security processes. On the other hand, we will use elements of the securitization and desecuritization process, i.e. the way in which a particular social issue becomes or ceases to be a security issue. The paper will also try to determine the

usability of the concept of vulnerability in Security studies, especially within the framework of the European school of security, which is characterized to be a constructivist approach to security-related topics and issues.

**Keywords:** collective identity, sectoral analysis, securitization, vulnerability



# POLITICS OF EMISSION AND THE APPLICABILITY OF THE MARXIAN PERSPECTIVE TO CLIMATE CHANGE TRAJECTORIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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The trajectories of climate change as a result of greenhouse gas emissions have been a tale of two countries: free and forced riders. In spite of the resolution reached at COP 21 in Paris on December 12, 2015, by parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with the mandate of increasing nations' capacity to deal with the effects of climate change and ensuring reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilience, the level of global emissions has significantly increased from 48 metric tonnes in 2015 to 58 gigatons in 2022, with the projection of increasing to 62 gigatons by 2030. Thus, the study explores the Marxian theory as an explanatory framework to assess the factor incapacitating the control of excessive and indiscriminate discharge of global green house emissions by countries of the world, its effects, greatest beneficiaries, and causalities within the global context. The study recommended the need for a global control mechanism for greenhouse emissions

and a collective resistance mechanism by the nation's most affected by these emissions to minimise the devastating effects of climate change.

**Keywords:** politics of emission, climate change, force and free-riding nations, global greenhouse emissions, Marxism

# SCIENTISTS AND ACADEMICS AS WAR REFUGEES – PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Khrystyna Nasadiuk**

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Despite the development of a society with high moral and humanistic values, wars are constantly being waged in the world and there are threats of new ones. One of their most dramatic consequences is refugeeism and the need for social and professional adaptation in another country. The latter can be especially difficult for scientists and academic teachers who, having devoted a significant part of their lives to professional development, obtaining scientific degrees, creating laboratories or building up academic centers, gathering teams, one day are forced to leave all this and start life in another country, where their diplomas can be found not valid. Internationalization of modern science, knowledge of the English language and its use for scientific communication, high qualifications, experience of working in international teams, undoubtedly, give the opportunity for academic staff to integrate into professional life abroad, however long-term contracts or tenure-track positions often require nostrification of higher education diplomas and scientific degrees. University teacher jobs require the knowledge of the national language

of the country that accepted the refugee at a very high level, allowing the realization of the educational process. The narrow specialization typical for highly qualified academics can make it difficult to find a job due to a lack of vacancies, which indicates the importance of gaining versatile scientific experience for scientists, f.i. through the participation in interdisciplinary projects. The author of this publication passed the path of professional incipience in Poland as a scientist and academic teacher after 17 years of medical and research career in Ukraine, finding protection in the neighboring country during a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Reflections on the problems faced by scientists and academic teachers who have become war refugees prompt draw conclusions about the need to unify the standards of higher education, especially in the field of medicine and pharmacy, postgraduate training of medical professionals and obtaining scientific degrees in different countries of the world for the purpose of mutual recognition of diplomas. The instability of the modern world with numerous natural, military and tech-

nogenic threats indicates high risks of forced migration. In these conditions, the knowledge of foreign languages apart from English, as well as the expansion of qualifications, are of particular importance. As mentioned above, narrow specialization makes it difficult for academic teachers to find work on the higher education market. The solution may be the readiness to teach different related subjects, especially if there is experience of teaching different courses at the parent university.

**Keywords:** refugee scientists and academics, knowledge production, vulnerabilities, challenges

# TECHNOLOGIES AS SOCIAL CHALLENGES

**Ivana Luknar**

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Nowadays society is characterized by technology development and changeability. Advanced technologies play one of the main roles in everyday life. The true challenge is to understand human-technology interactions as they occur. The topic will be considered through analysis of technological development, identity, individual's satisfaction with virtual and real environment relationships, and individual's fulfillment of their socio-emotional needs. This study will in a multidisciplinary way consider above mentioned. Further, this paper offers explanation of the importance of social challenges related to technology. Also, this paper will aim to stimulate debate about the researched topic and may further improve understanding of social challenges related to technology development.

**Keywords:** identity, technological development, virtual and realenvironment

# SOCIAL AND PERSONAL PATHOLOGY IS CONTAGIOUS: HATRED AND VIOLENCE IN DIGITALLY EXTENDED REALITY

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One of the complex socio-psychological conditions of hatred and violence is stigmatization. It leads to discrimination/exclusion, and other actions of hate. The lay observation that stigma is based on some 'natural' characteristics (ethnicity, gender identities, corporeality, ...) is crucially misleading. It relates personal and group identities or circumstances to the presumed innate characteristics (e.g. Romani individuals are not intelligent, women are less rational, Jews are greedy, ...). On the social level both – interpersonal hate, and hatred among groups are fuelled by the neoliberal dominant signifier of human sociality which is competition, power game being unavoidably implied. In the political sector 'competition' is translated to self-evident necessity of socio-political conflicts, inclusive of the most violent – armed ones, and even major civilisation(s) fights. In everyday sphere politics exploits every social dilemma to consolidate socio-political power by polarisation of people (pro- and anti-vaccine groups, pro- and 'anti-science', pro- and anti-AI, pro- and anti-#metoo, ...). In the narrower context of digital media there are basically

two phenomena which incite hatred and violence: not very problematic at the first sight is the stimulation of narcissism and the promotion of personality power; 'I am the world' and 'the omnipotent self' are becoming the 'objects of wish' of the digitally dependent, obsessed personalities. On the societal level the most devastating social pathology is generated: narcissism as personality disorder of grandiose type reflects in the contemporary mechanism of governmentality, and thus by the implied anti-values in the society, too (Grannon, 2023). Another psychosocial feature of social networks is the formation of group (in)dividuation, whereby the (individual) self is disintegrated, somehow merging with the consciousness of the others virtually present, and led by the most 'potent' one in the group; the concepts of con(division)ality (Raunig, 2013), and hegemony (Mouffe, 2013) explain – if considered together – the contagious nature of personal and social pathology.

**Keywords:** hegemony, extended reality, grandiose narcissism, con(division)ality, social pathology

# THE CHALLENGES OF VULNERABILITY

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The concept of vulnerability occupies an interesting place in philosophical and ethical discussions. On the one hand, it seems that vulnerability is despised as a sign of weakness. Moreover, many attacks on vulnerability see vulnerability as a threat to human autonomy. Such a view is based on the (false) assumption that vulnerability is the opposite of autonomy. Vulnerability indeed challenges the modern myth of autonomy, but it also challenges the myth of rationality by suggesting that there is a channel through which individuals connect with each other outside of purely rational categories, in a pre-rational way. The latter poses an interesting challenge to ethics and raises the question of whether vulnerability is a precondition for morality. This talk will give an overview of some of the challenges that the concept of vulnerability poses for philosophy and ethics.

**Keywords:** vulnerability, ethics, autonomy, rationality

# DIGITALISATION OF NIGERIA ELECTIONS; THE SEARCH FOR ELECTORAL INTEGRITY AND EXPERIMENT OF BIMODAL VOTER ACCREDITATION SYSTEM (BVAS) IN NIGERIA 2023 ELECTION

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African countries, including Nigeria, have witnessed a drive towards utilizing digital technological tools to improve electoral processes and outcomes across elections. such as biometric technology for voter registration and verification to consolidate digitally releasing raw polling station results in real-time since 2011 when the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). This alludes to improving the electoral process, integrity, and transparency, increasing public trust in the INEC, fostering public confidence in the election results, and allowing real-time public access to results. Notably, INEC introduced BVAS (Bimodal Voter Accreditation System) in 2023, composed of two complementary innovations: the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) and the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV) that digitally reads the fingerprints of those turning up at a polling unit, thus helping with voter authentication and accreditation. In view of this, the paper discusses why and how digital technology, notably the BVAS (Bimodal Voter Accreditation System) might have

been bound to fail right from the start of Nigeria's 2023 election. It also examines how digital technology strengthens or undermines Nigeria's 2023 election management and Presidential / Gubernatorial elections. The paper argues that while digital technology may ensure greater efficiency in the management of elections and enhance popular trust in the electoral process, it may also be susceptible to newer vulnerabilities and disruptive attacks. Additionally, technical hitches may arise that could equally compromise the credibility of the electoral process and undermine public confidence in democracy. Polling units across the country indicated that the BVAS failed to function because of password errors, weak internet connectivity and IReV hitch which heavily undermined the transparency. However, technology adoption brings in new vulnerabilities, such as technical hitches and derailed Nigeria's 2023 election.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, elections, digitalization

# CYBERSPACE AND ITS REGULATION AT THE CROSSROADS OF DIFFERENT VULNERABILITIES

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Cyberspace presents a specific challenge to security at various levels, from individual persons to huge groups of people, as well as supra-individual entities such as companies, states, international organizations and the likes. The scope of objects whose security is compromised is wide, ranging from personal data and finances to energy systems and human lives. In search of a way for the neutralization of this vulnerability, the initiative for its regulation came to life. However, the impalpable nature of cyberspace, its lack of hierarchical structure, as well as its capability to transcend national borders almost effortlessly, create a context of anarchy similar to the corporeal international system. Consequently, the same strategy of regulation – the use of public international law – has been implemented in its case. The paper evaluates the relevant attempts at regulation, such as the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (2001) and its two additional protocols, as well as the ongoing process of creation of the United Nations Comprehensive International Convention

on Countering the Use of Information and Communication Technologies for Criminal Purposes. The analysis suggests that the interests of states as sovereign subjects creating the norms of public international law prevent these solutions from being effective, instead making them focus on areas that are easier to regulate, yet provide less protection for the previously mentioned objects of vulnerability. At the same time, paradoxically, these rules induce vulnerability in other spheres, such as privacy, surveillance protection, freedom of speech etc. The main objective of the paper is to draw attention to the juxtaposition of these different vulnerabilities, as well as the position of the system between the two extremes of not regulating cyberspace at all and securitizing it. In the end, an evaluation of the possibility for improvement is given, based on the relevant factors impacting the situation at hand.

**Keywords:** cyberspace regulation, vulnerability, international regulations



# HOW TO PROLONG HUMAN LIFE – ETERNAL MYTH OR A SOCIETAL GOAL

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The improvement of general quality of life, availability of health care, better prevention and treatment of diseases, and advances in biomedical research have all contributed to the increase of life expectancy worldwide. This changed the demographic picture of the society as well. The World Health Organization (WHO) quoted that „By 2030, 1 in 6 people in the world will be aged 60 years or over.“ In some countries the share of people over 60 is higher than 20%, hence they are classified as super-aged societies (13 countries in 2020). Moreover, WHO states „Every person – in every country in the world – should have the opportunity to live a long and healthy life,“ which could be interpreted as a future goal, but in addition as an essential human right – to live healthy and to live long. In this contribution, I would like to discuss the change in how individuals and society perceive aging. My hypothesis is that aging (or it is senescence) is increasingly considered as a disease and that it should be combatted (or treated). Death is nevertheless an unwanted event. As the success of society could be measured by an increase of life expectancy (how society is efficient in combatted death), so the individuals dying

early could be considered as failures in guiding own life (i.e., not observing the all the good advices given). There is a significant overlap of terms “health” and “longevity”, accompanied by the overlap of terms “disease” and “death”. The above analysis will be complemented by an analysis of the recent frenzy accompanying the research on longevity drugs. There is an increase of both preclinical and clinical trials targeting ageing. As the anti-ageing drug should be taken by everyone for whole life, there is an immense market and financial incentives to develop such a “prevention” or a “treatment”. The idea of drug-for-life is exemplified by semaglutide (Ozempic), which as an antidiabetic medication is currently used as well for regulation of body weight. The effect lasts as long as the drug is taken, but there is a boom of users, claiming various beneficial effects (not only regarding weight control) and ignoring side-effects. In conclusion, the human enhancement got an extra aspect in inferring what we consider as successful human, quality of life and healthy society.

**Keywords:** life expectancy, aging, human enhancement

# VULNERABILITY OF HEALTHY VOLUNTEERS IN THE EARLY-PHASE CLINICAL TRIALS

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The first-in-human studies are conducted on a few subjects, usually healthy volunteers. The definition of a healthy volunteer considers health status (absence of known disease related to the planned study), morphological characteristics, and mental capacity to sign an informed consent. Also, the criteria for stopping the study on healthy volunteers were defined, and the corresponding guidelines were published (EMA/CHMP/SWP/28367/07 Rev. 1, 20 July 2017). As regards the interventional studies (trials), the aim is to examine how suitable the drug is for clinical use without putting it in the context of a specific indication. Assessment of tolerability, clinical pharmacokinetics, and pharmacodynamics is carried out, usually in departments of clinical pharmacology that are equipped with an appropriate number of beds, have specially trained staff, and are connected to intensive care units. Besides there are also non-interventional studies involving healthy volunteers. Potential harm to healthy volunteers who participate in the early phase of clinical drug development can be in the form of physical harm (subjective or objective)

and other types of harm (ethical, psychological, social, economic, legal, and threat to the family members, for example as a result of genetic testing). The validity of such studies is ensured by promoting the 4Rs. Human volunteers are healthy, and protecting them from any risk of harm is crucial. A particular issue is the vulnerability of human volunteers in human infection challenge trials. In conclusion, key principles of the European School of Bioethics (autonomy, dignity, integrity, and vulnerability) may offer the appropriate safety frame for protecting healthy volunteers in the early phase of clinical trials.

**Keywords:** healthy volunteers, clinical trials, vulnerability

# AI RX: A CURE OR CURSE FOR MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

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Artificial intelligence (AI) has started to play an integral part in our everyday lives. We live in a world where technology is advancing at an unprecedented pace. And AI has emerged as a potent force leading the advancement. Naturally, AI has made its impact in the field of mental health. It provides solutions from predictive analytics and early intervention strategies to personalized treatment plans. No one can argue that AI holds the potential to revolutionize mental health care, offering new possibilities ensuring both accessibility and efficacy. However, there are two sides to every coin. AI potential in resolving mental health challenges comes with double-edged sword powers. The predominant question related to the use of AI in mental health care is whether it is beneficial, and to what extent. Crucial questions about the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, potential biases in algorithms, and the risk of dehumanizing therapeutic processes need to be addressed. Undeniably, with AI emergence, people have profited in many ways. But that profit has made us vulnerable as well. Hence, our focus should be placed in reaching the ideal balance between the precision of AI algorithms and the irre-

placeable human touch in mental health care. Ethical landscapes are navigated, emphasizing considerations of consent, data security, and the far-reaching impacts of algorithmic decision-making on individuals' lives. The discussion will explore the complex relationship between AI and mental health, presenting real-world examples that highlight both the remarkable successes and downsides of AI applications in mental health. Is AI a revolutionary cure that can transform mental health care or if it poses unforeseen risks that may lead to unknown consequences? This question remains to be unanswered. Time will tell whether we can look at AI as a great ally or potential foe. At least in regard to the mental health.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, mental health, algorithmic bias

# ARE WE "ALL" VULNERABLE TO THREATS FROM STRANGERS AND EPIDEMICS?

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In 2018, approximately 500 individuals from Yemen entered Jeju Island in South Korea, with many applying for refugee status. However, the prevailing atmosphere in Korean society towards them exemplified a tendency to perceive the 'other' as grotesque, rather than extending hospitality as one would to guests. Communication disseminated and consumed on social media reached a peak of hostile anti-refugee sentiment, including the stereotyping of Islam and inciting fear within the community. The distortion of Muslim men was not unrelated to Korean religious bias, and the approach seemed designed to instill fear, especially among mothers with daughters. In 2021, a significant influx of refugees occurred from Afghanistan, recently reoccupied by the Taliban after 20 years. In response, daily comments on media articles in Korea ranged from a nuanced stance of "We can offer assistance, but we oppose accepting them within Korea" to strong opposition. In criticizing the prevailing public opinion, when I contributed an article to the newspaper, there were even those who commented, "Take them to your house."

While comments on media articles cannot represent the entire public opinion, comments on a specific platform tend to attract like-minded individuals, quickly burying well-intentioned disagreements under a flood of malicious comments. With the occurrence of COVID-19, as Roberto Esposito has pointed out, large-scale epidemics have led to the portrayal of strangers as potential biological threats, essentially imaging them as specimens of diseases. Now the fear that strangers could threaten our health is making us vulnerable beings. Of course, none of us are exempt from various pathogens, including viruses. However, the fact is primarily a consequence of climate change, mining, and the reduction of biodiversity, for which we are all culpable. The prevailing anxiety of our time seems dominant. As state power diminishes, governments control people by fostering anxiety and emphasizing a sense of crisis. Targeting refugees as a source of anxiety and a seed of fear under the rule of several countries has proven effective. Refugees not only bring the tangible impacts of war, such as the stench, noise, looted houses, and

burned villages, but also evoke intangible anxieties. The assumption that anxiety and fear will disappear by stopping the inflow of refugees is based on the idea that the basis for anxiety is external, not internal, and there is a power mechanism convincing people that expulsion is possible. However, thoughts about anxiety erode common sense, grow in size, and become a monster within us..

**Keywords:** South Korea, refugees, fear of strangers, vulnerability

# LOW NUMBERS - LOW NEEDS: MENOPAUSAL WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV IN SERBIA?

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The introduction of combined antiretroviral therapy (cART) has reduced human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) associated morbidity and mortality and improved life expectancy dramatically in the last decades. The proportion of people living with HIV who are aged over 50 years has increased, consequently leading to an increase in the incidence of age-related non-AIDS comorbidities and events. Women, who represent 53% of people living with HIV worldwide, experience aging differently from men, both biologically and socially. In contrast, in the Republic of Serbia, among all newly diagnosed cases of HIV infection women represent just 15%. They are getting old and reaching perimenopause and menopause and age-related comorbidities. Not only in the Republic of Serbia, but also globally,

there are no national/international guidelines on the management of age-related comorbidities in women living with HIV. Also, little is known about health care provision to this population. Furthermore, there is almost no data about diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD), mental health, bone mineral density (BMD), and sexual well-being in this patient population, in Serbia. All comorbidities are managed mainly within HIV clinics, whereas menopause care is mainly self-care provided. This highlights the need for international/national recommendations and clinician training to provide better health care of menopausal women living with HIV in Serbia.

**Keywords:** cART, HIV, menopause

# SECURITY FUNCTION AS A "NEW" FUNCTION OF CRIMINAL LAW- SUSTAINABILITY OR NOT?

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Purpose of this paper is to make an overview, analysis and comparison of the traditional and current basic functions of criminal law and its "new" and not so dogmatically proven security function. It can be stated that this question is the crucial one in a whole criminal policy and criminal law dogma, because the importance of the way that the criminal law is conceived and seen as a mechanism of the state reaction on criminality shape its complete structure. Main goal is to determine the peculiarities and characteristics of a criminal law based on the realization of its security function. In this paper author tries to indicate, by using primarily dogmatic and normative method, the possibilities, but also the strong limitations, of the criminal law framework based on preventive aspirations. Due to the main focus of the Conference for which purposes the paper is written, questions of vulnerability and protection against vulnerability by criminal law often are connected with the risk and the state reaction to prevent it. If the traditional criminal law function aimed to protect citizens from the the injuries and threats ex post, turns into the

function of getting higher level of security, than the moment of entering into the zone of punishment goes in the prior stages of the potential criminal progression, ex ante. It moves criminal law into the emphatically preventive zone and changes its positions within the law system itself and changes its strengths to its weaknesses. In findings the author apostrophizes that criminal law in a democratic state should be a rational system of legal regulations, used exclusively as a subsidiary, as the ultima ratio societatis. Tendencies contrary to this principle violate the basic juridical dogmatic conception, about the exceptionality of the criminal law reaction and assesses the security function as a negative trend guided by "security paranoia" and the preventive paradigm, which threatens to collapse the basic postulates and character of the traditional criminal law response to crime, characteristic of a liberal democratic society.

**Keywords:** criminal law, criminal policy, vulnerability, security function, preventive tendencies, preventive paradigm

# RESILIENCE AS A SUITABLE APPROACH TO FACE DIFFERENT RISKS, CRISES AND DISASTERS IN THE CONTEMPORARY VULNERABLE WORLD

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The concept of resilience can be embraced in the field of disaster/risk assessment, mitigation, sustainability, and adaptive capacity, and to study complex phenomena where natural and anthropogenic hazards are combined, such as global warming as well as epidemics/pandemics. Resilience can be intended as the capability of a system to “go back to a previous state” or “adapt to new scenarios”: if embraced without rigidity, both these views can be useful. After dis- sserting about our meaning of resilience, in this paper we will present the approach based on the resilience concept we devel- oped to analyze and manage different risks, crises and disasters we are facing in our world. Our approach is meant to be a valu- able tool to potentially be applied to any vulnerable situation, from human-made to natural disasters. To describe a considered risks, crises and disaster we identified a grid of resilience’s attributes, namely safety (pro- tection of life), robustness (system adequacy), adaptive capacity (ability to respond successfully to new changes and recovery with acceptable consequences), sustainabil- ity (links to the environment), governance

(emergency management, effectiveness of political decisions, reliability of scientific community, consensus versus conflict, de- mocracy versus control, communication) and anamnesis (individual and collective memory). The goal is to provide an effec- tive framework to study complex questions in times of new global challenges, as the combination of natural and anthropog- enic hazards. In the light of this approach, we have analyzed the COVID-19 pandemics with specific reference to Italy during the first phase in 2020 as well as the behavior of buildings, infrastructure and heritage under earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. In times of new global challenges to face various catastrophic events, a reliable resil- ience’s assessment is fundamental to man- age successful actions regarding disaster mitigation (tightly interlaced to commu- nication, dissemination, exploitation ac- tivities) aimed at increasing consciousness about our vulnerability.

**Keywords:** resilience, disaster/risk assessment, Italy, COVID-19



# DEALING WITH VULNERABILITY – AS A STRENGTHENING FACTOR

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Our presentation highlights vulnerability using the example of two socially disadvantaged groups: People with mental illness and refugees. This consideration will be supplemented by findings from two empirical dissertation projects at Fulda University of Applied Sciences. The management of vulnerability is a decisive factor in coping with challenges and quality of life as influenced by mental illness or flight. The stigma of mental illness, often referred to as a "second illness" (Finzen 2013), pervades the lives of those affected in lifestyle and behaviour and also encompasses their social environment (Goffman, 1975 [1963]). (Thornicroft, 2006). Refugees also experience stigmatisation by the host society, which views them as a vulnerable group and confronts them with negative prejudices such as "Arabs", "Muslims", "headscarf women", "refugee children", "second-class people", "dirty people", "asocials", (Mamajanyan 2023) etc. The survival mechanism of pre-judgements to quickly assess an opponent (Allport, 1954), which is deeply rooted in human behaviour, is still effective nowadays. The discrimina-

tion and stigmatisation of people with mental illness and refugees affects their integration and participation - often a lifelong. Various approaches, such as the UN CRPD and anti-stigma campaigns, as well as interventions such as the use of peers in care (DGPPN, 2019), are used to overcome prejudice. Peers, who contribute their experience as service users, offer a perspective that cannot be achieved through practical and theoretical knowledge alone (Bauer et al 2024). This promotes openness and reflection, particularly in relation to one's own vulnerability, and can help to strengthen resources. The integration of service user involvement in teaching makes it possible to promote these processes at an early stage and prepare students for working with peers as colleagues. This approach can, for example, promote a salutogenetic perspective on health and illness (Antonovsky, 1997 [1987]), which contributes to the strengthening of individual and community resources.

**Keywords:** mental illness, refugees, stigmatisation

# BEING VULNERABLE AND RESILIENT IN TIMES OF DISASTERS AND CRISES

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Disasters, crises, and related vulnerabilities are interconnected with a general comprehension of “normality” or everyday routine, disrupted by sudden and unwilling events such as disasters. However, some inconsistencies in the last comprehension induce an epistemological and existential crisis. First, the everyday life of some groups can be described as catastrophic and miserable. Second, disasters are, per definition, sudden events with identified timeframes, while crises can be long-lasting with the trends to become omnipresent. Third, juxtaposing previous points, the disaster may be slow and omnipresent in the lives of marginal groups, and the request for back to normal life from the subject point of view can be understood as a back to everyday racism, discrimination, and existential risks. Even in disaster time, e.g., the last pandemic, some defaults, like online lessons for children in poor communities or “stay at home” for the homeless, can be impossible at the local and global levels. Fourth, there is no common vulnerabil-

ity, whatever we looking at from a social or medical perspective. The COVID-19 pandemic has killed six times more people in three years than all geophysical disasters during the twenty years. The article tries to detect and label the most relevant socio-economic causes of miserable life conditions among marginal groups. Such analytical dimensions become marked as indicators of vulnerabilities. Such indicators could help enhance resilience and preparedness during crises and disasters.

**Keywords:** vulnerabilities, resilience, hazards, disaster, crises

# NARRATIVE OF VULNERABILITY IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Media communication during COVID-19 pandemic has been influenced by the new context of the virus that impacted the whole population of the world. While the journalists tried covering the news without bias and neutral towards the patients and victims, politicians spoke about the policies, outcomes and mostly about themselves in the process. What were the keypoints of political reports during the most fragile moments of the pandemic? What kind of narratives they portrayed – are they about patients, citizens or institutions? Who was presented by the politicians as the most vulnerable during the lockdown and how? The idea of this paper is to analyze political discourse during the official statements during lockdown in Serbia, which were public because they were broadcasted via Serbian public service television RTS. The spokespersons were either state officials or medical experts chosen to be a part of the institutional response to the pandemic. The society was on the verge of panic because of the lockdown; it was important to communicate effectively and to make sure to show who is

in charge. There were no narratives about humans who fell ill or died. However, the narratives that included vulnerability were the only kind of narratives. Power hides in the discourse, so the main frame for this paper is discourse analysis of the power shift of vulnerability from patients to politicians.

**Keywords:** vulnerability, political discourse, COVID-19, pandemic

# NON-HOBBSIAN APOCALYPSES: NEW ANTHROPOLOGICAL OPTIMISM IN THE FACE OF DISASTERS

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The notion introduced by Thomas Hobbes, that the power of the state is the only thing keeping the humans from descending into their “natural condition” of “war of all against all” has become widely influential not only among the political thinkers but also in the pop-culture. The common assumption is that, in the face of disaster, when the social contract embodied in the state breaks down, this natural condition will quickly be reinstated. From novels such as 1956 *The Death of Grass*, to extremely popular shows like *The Walking Dead*, this idea was reiterated repeatedly, reinforcing the position of anthropological pessimism – the idea that human nature is violent, egotistical and, perhaps, evil. This is, however, not uncontroversial. On one hand, it can be argued that Hobbes himself was not an anthropological pessimist. On the other hand, others have successfully argued that violence and conflict in human communities stem from technological developments (which, in Marxist view, lead to the emergence of the private property). In recent years, however, grows the opposing narrative – when disaster hits and there is no help from the state, people are acting in solidarity and helping each oth-

er, and they direct their anger and aggression toward the inefficient government, not towards each other. We have seen this in the face of natural disasters, such as floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes. This was reflected both in the scholarly literature and in new artistic movements like solarpunk. This shift, I think, is worth exploring, as these optimistic apocalypses can be used, if not as blueprints, at least as ideologies for living through climate change.

**Keywords:** anthropological optimism, state of nature, apocalypse, solarpunk