Human Security & Global Understanding:
Towards New World Relations

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Abstract

The semantical as well as the practical implications of 'human security' need to be re-adapted due to the constantly changing kind of vulnerabilities of all people around the planet, independent of their place, culture, status or beliefs. Today major threats are of global nature, which can affect anybody. With this, the international organization of the efforts to combat them is not anymore a sufficient strategy. Improving the security of all citizens of the planet calls first for bridging the gap in understanding between global problems constellations and the local everyday living conditions in cultural, social, economic and natural respect. Such a perspective encompasses an understanding of the local as well as cultural conditions in new ways, related to its impregnation by global processes and grasping the global consequences of everyday actions locally. A timely approach to human security needs to prepare transdisciplinary and trans-sectoral as well as transnational cooperation. To improve human security for all under globalized conditions, effective solutions must be based on a subjective perspective. Related, democratically shaped bottom-up actions need to be fostered first by regional action centers in that respect; globally coordinated top-down measures should always complement these efforts. All in all, a shift from a top-down approach to a grass-roots bottom-up approach in identifying the most urgent needs of security by citizens of the planet is needed to reach global sustainability, and with it, the improvement of anyone's security in the spirit of The Jena Declaration.[*]

With the ongoing Digital Revolution and the corresponding globalization of the relations to the world, today we experience a new expansion of the spatial scope of action and the subsequent acceleration of social life. These imply a deep transformation of living circumstances, also the local ones. On that basis, virtually every domain that shapes our everyday lives politically, economically, socially, and ecologically has been altered dramatically over the last few decades for most inhabitants of the planet.

It is important to understand that the spatial and temporal living conditions established anew are closely related. By this, the feelings of security established so far are radically undermined on a broad front. New technologies now allow us to easily override spatial distances for many everyday practices without much or no time investment. That way, far-flung places and people are in ever-closer contact, either way—constructive or destructive,

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[*] https://www.thejenadeclaration.org/

as life improvement, life hazard or better: fife risk. At the same time, new kinds of personal global communities and networks are emerging. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the importance of the local. Even if in many ways the local seems to be completely at the mercy of global processes, it keeps its relevance. In fact, in some respect, it gains even in importance.

Mainly, based on the Digital Revolution and global climate change, local communities, regions, and even nation-states continue to lose dramatically their independence from broader events and interrelations in nearly all respects. Places, regions, and nations are no longer well-defined and delimited containers of living. They are rather becoming transit stations of globally connected processes. Thus, while the determination and identification of the place, region, or nation remains important for communication and many practical activities, the content of what happens at and through these stations is less so, not only— but also—in respect of human security and socially not much less important: in respect of feelings of security.

On that basis, an exclusive focus of security policies on spatial constellations and political configurations at national scales misses important dimensions of today's geographical, economic, social, and cultural realities. Consequently, a recalibration of the perspective on human security is badly needed: we need to turn away from the representation of human security inside of nationally fenced, and accordingly statistically reproduced life-worlds towards grasping security requirements for locally contextualized ways of living that is embedded in global processes in nearly every respect.

Such a perspective helps to reach an appropriate understanding of the global condition of human security so urgently needed. And such a global understanding is required if we are to find pathways to capture and contain new types of security issues and contextualize the old ones adequately. To reach the 'to be protected' subjects with their real-world problems and at the place they are approachable, at the local level, specific strategies need to be locality-focused designed from a global perspective and implemented accordingly.

The most visible example for the first one is perhaps the loss in the significance of the barrier at the border for the constantly growing part of digital form exchanges, for instance in the form of capital and information flows. This loss is marking the vanishing of the so far well-established state's scope of control and protection in these societal areas. With the replacement of material carriers of symbolic values by digital transactions, the basis of previously known forms of territorial control is significantly weakened.

An example of the second one is perhaps the removal of protection and control that children's rooms offered growing up. Impermeable walls and doors have changed from concrete, plaster, or wood to a kind of crystal porous reality, now penetrable by digital content even by closed doors. These and similar kinds of changes are pulverizing well-established ontological securities, undermining not only long-time established routines and habits but also the basis for trust in wanting to feel safe.

1. Cornerstones of the New Strategy

It is evident that humankind now is confronted with unprecedented situations and with new, profound demands on security and feelings of safety. The world's climate, ecosystem, biodiversity, and economic and socio-cultural wellbeing are at stake. Those already most vulnerable will bear the brunt of the impacts. To improve their security level, it is imperative that first the gap between global problems and national, regional, and local interests and decision-making be bridged.

> *"A widespread awareness of how everyday actions are exposed to global and local security threats is necessary. This includes the ability to understand connections between actions that may seem disconnected across time and space."*

Today's most pressing existential problems—including security issues—can only be addressed through an inclusive, global perspective that encompasses an understanding of the conditions and consequences of everyday actions. Finding solutions for global challenges requires new alliances and approaches which include innovative partnerships across a wide range of fields of competences, including scientific disciplines, as well as collaboration with local communities, and all sectors of civil society. Consequently, and secondly, an approach that can bridge inclusiveness and independence is indispensable.

Taking all these necessities into consideration, a new and timely approach to human security needs to reach out, thirdly, not only for transdisciplinary cooperation but also for trans-sectoral as well as transnational cooperation. Collaboration with local communities requires, fourthly, addressing the global nature of most of the pressing challenges, and how everyone's security issues are affected onsite by these (global) challenges.

Taking these four elements of a new strategy together calls fifth for the broadest possible bottom-up approach. In brief: Effective solutions must be based on the subjective perspective of the concerned citizens, on bottom-up decisions and actions, and should then be enabled and promoted by related, coherent top-down measures.

2. The Approach

Given the fact that the ongoing globalization processes constantly open up new fields of human security requests, perhaps in a never before reached scope, intensity, and rhythm, we need to conceptualize the approach to human security according to this new nature of challenges.

The *first step* of this approach lies in raising awareness. Everyday practice is where the local and global become one, arts and humanities can expand views and understanding, and where scientific insights are applied. Therefore, a widespread awareness of how everyday

actions are exposed to global and local security threats is necessary. This includes the ability to understand connections between actions that may seem disconnected across time and space. Grasping the global condition of local and regional living contexts of one's own life in this way constitutes the awareness of the globalized living conditions, its global understanding.

"Human security is much more than just a political agenda."

Especially due to the accelerated rhythm of changing security requests, making citizens aware of the changing ontology of the present world and its security implications is the primary order. The widespread application of digital technologies with the implied drastic change of the spatio-temporal conditions for human action, as well as the exuberant power of the transformation of natural conditions in the time altar of the Anthropocene, also have unsettling implications for most of the citizens. Consequently, one of the important tasks for an adapted approach to human security is to develop and promote a locality-related understanding of the new, global condition everyday life-worlds is confronted now around the globe, and to foster a sufficient sensitivity to the endangering implications: Raising awareness is the primary pre-condition for an encompassing human security survey under constantly changing conditions.

The *second step* of the proposed approach is the consequent application of a subjective perspective with all its facets. The immediacy of the hazardous effects of technical innovations due to the new spatio-temporal conditions is asking for a strategy with a high degree of promptness and immediacy of access to the citizens. Therefore, such a strategy shall allow us to detect dimensions of human security that are not so far thematized, neither by the (social) sciences, engineering, the press, the media, nor even the arts. Such requirements are fulfilled by a subjective perspective approach. That implies revealing the subjectively experienced forms and dimensions of lacking security, before developing forehand an "objective" catalog of requirements, or even benchmarks for achievable situations. The second step of this approach lies in therefore reaching a thick description of types of threats to human security in a constantly changing world, by paying sufficient attention to their cultural and local embeddedness. Cataloging the key types of threats in all realms—culturally, socially, economically, politically, and ecologically—is therefore the constitutive feature of the second step of the survey. Therefore, despite the highest relevance of the subjectively experienced component, human security is a comprehensive and strongly science-based concept. Consequently, human security is much more than just a political agenda.

The *third step* calls for a science-based evaluation of the subjectively experienced menaces of human security. This strategy implies transdisciplinary cooperation, including the cooperation of citizens with social and natural sciences as well as the humanities.

Working at the citizen level first and foremost is about building relationships of trust with communities. To get heard at all, the abstract institution of "science" needs to be represented by real people—human faces. Being on-site and taking time for instigating dialogue is critical for transdisciplinary research and evaluation. Community members will much more likely

be willing to engage if they are dealing with a researcher they know and who has a credible interest in their concerns. The phrase "No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care" reflects this need for relationships based on integrity and true interest. In particular, scientists engaged in transdisciplinary research must learn to understand the community's perception of the problem that is to be addressed, the members' values and self-perceptions, and the motivations, interests, and emotions that drive their actions.

A deeper understanding of the experienced threats by a community not only helps to better comprehend the problem at hand, but is also necessary to translate scientific knowledge relevant to the case in a language that is understood and to evaluate scientifically experienced threats. For this, the cooperation of a wide range of scientific disciplines, including the humanities, social and natural scientific disciplines as well as medicine and engineering is at stake and needs to be coordinated. In short: The *third step* is geared toward overcoming the widely established barriers between the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities on the one hand, and between the everyday world on the other. Joint work should, whenever possible, be carried out in partnership with engaged citizens promptly and directly.

The *fourth step* concerns the implementation. The results of the transdisciplinary cooperation need to be translated to a comprehensive political agenda and a strategic implementation plan. But not only that it needs to be translated further for use in classrooms at all levels, but also into broader public awareness campaigns through easy-to-understand publications, computer games, movies, documentaries, TV programs, podcasts, social media campaigns led by influencers, drawing and story map competitions, arts events of all types, and the like.

In sum: Addressing a practice-centered approach to human security is calling for establishing an inclusive perspective in the form of

a. raising awareness for existing threats to human security,
b. identification of its *conditio sine qua non*, by applying the approach of subjective perspective,
c. a science-based evaluation of the indicated threats in transdisciplinary cooperation, and
d. the implementation of the surveys' collected data.

3. Organizational Targets and Structure

Meeting the challenges for human security in the 21st century calls for transdisciplinary, trans-sectoral, as well as transnational cooperation, in new ways. This includes not only knowledge production in the form of data collection, about the state of the art of human security, but even more so for knowledge dissemination about existing and potential threats, and implementation of the conclusion and recommendations. Finding solutions for the mastering of global challenges for human security is calling for new alliances of partners from the above-mentioned realms: a wide range of different societal sectors from all parts of the world, of scientific disciplines, but also a direct collaboration with citizens.

Taking all necessities together calls for a well-prepared bottom-up strategy, cross-cutting the established order of international top-down division of competences. As all relevant realms in science, education, politics, and civil society are still not prepared, solid conditions for this must be first established. The rapidly changing nature of human security is calling for a monitoring process, ongoing over decades. Therefore, a careful and well-thought out organizational structure for a long-term process for monitoring human security issues is needed, coordinated by a global platform including all partners.

Such a platform needs to fulfill specific requirements such as

- Drawing attention to these major issues of the global community, that is concerned by it existentially.

- Contributing to solving global problems above the international level to enable universal peace.

- Careful elaboration enabling its functioning over several decades based on a financially well-supported program at all levels, global, regional, as well as local.

- Leading to identifiable and practical results for the short as well as long-term implementation.

The groundwork will be done by local partners, and citizens around the world, organized in the form of Regional Action Centers. The Regional Action Centers (RACs) will give the human security campaign a presence and an identity at the regional and local levels. The hosting institution of the RAC is preferably a well-established and reputable university. The RAC will plan the human security-related a ctivities in cooperation with the educational institutions and the schooling system, as well as civic engagement organizations, local and regional authorities, etc.

The RAC's aim is to include all societal, economic, political, and cultural levels and sectors in the planning and implementation of the survey, the dissemination of the information of its outcome, and the implementation of the derived strategies. The RACs will mainly act as hubs to coordinate the human security communication networks and action patterns at the regional level. The hub concept is related to the bottom-up structure of the program. The activities encompass several types of action fields linked to the basic guidelines of the program's rationale and objectives.

All in all, the human security campaign includes five program lines: survey, evaluation, information, teaching, and implementation.

The *survey* will reveal citizens' claims for human security and various threats to it in a rapidly changing world. For the evaluation of the results, a transdisciplinary approach will be applied, bringing together citizens, and social, human, and natural scientists to identify the biggest deficiencies of the current situation, and the measurements to be undertaken.

The *evaluation* of the survey result is the second basic program element for all the follow-up actions. It has to detect first the key threats in the different areas of everyday life,

identify the proposed measures by concerned citizens, the human, social and natural sciences as well as engineering adapted to the local and regional levels. To prepare the ground for adaptation of such recommendations and translation into new ways of living, the third step is of central importance.

Learning will focus, first of all, on making the global condition of all citizens better understandable. The campaign will focus on the first strategic action line, the elaboration of a master program on 'Global Understanding – Educating Leaders for a different Future'. Subsequently, it is intended to develop a global network of 100 prime universities in global understanding, offering a specific master's program, based on a transdisciplinary practice-centered approach. A second strategic action line focuses on the elaboration of teaching materials for all levels in classrooms throughout the world.

Information about the outcomes of the survey will be provided in cooperation with strong partners from the private sector to increase public awareness using, for example, social media, print media, computer games, social networks, digital platforms (www.global-understanding.info), social media, and TV programs.

For the monitoring and coordination of the long-term *implementation* of the survey's results, a powerful digital platform for action needs to be established that will be made at disposal free of charge to all the partners linked to one of the Regional Action Centers. It will be the global hub under the auspices of the relevant organizations of the survey in cooperation with the relevant UN organizations such as FAO, ECOSOC, WHO, UNESCO (with its UNESCO Chairs network), OCHA, ILO, UNEP, Security Council, and others. With their cooperation, the Regional Action Centers will be the key agents for implementation—together with the local, regional and national political authorities, the enabler of the initiatives based on the survey.

4. Concluding Remarks

The shift in perspective and action to improve human security in the age of the Anthropocene includes therefore a series of additional programmatic shifts that need all to be as coherent and complementary as possible. To these requirements counts certainly the shift from a diplomatic top-down approach to a grass-roots bottom-up approach in identifying the most urgent needs of security by citizens of the planet. The shift from an ecology-driven concept of sustainability to a cultural and societal approach is one of the important consequences of the radical inclusion of the citizens onsite into global security strategies. That focus on the regional and local will allow the establishment of an encompassing network of Regional Action Centers, the de-central nodes of the whole endeavor.

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