Collection of papers

Disaster, construction, and reconstruction: Essays on ethical and social perspectives

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Zbornik radova

Katastrofa, izgradnja i rekonstrukcija: Eseji o etičkim i društvenim perspektivama

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The edited volume, *Disaster, Construction, and Reconstruction: Essays on Ethical and Social Perspectives* is a product of the international conference held at the Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade in May 2023. Overall, this international and multidisciplinary collection of essays offers a thought-provoking examination of the ethical and social dimensions of disasters, with a timely focus on the COVID-19 pandemic. Edited by Veselin Mitrović and Dónal O'Mathúna, this volume brings together diverse voices to explore various aspects of disaster studies, providing valuable insights for navigating future challenges. Scholars, policymakers, and practitioners will find this edited volume to be a valuable resource in their quest to address the complex issues surrounding disasters and their aftermaths.

Besides the introduction, the edited volume is divided into two main parts. One of them focuses on disaster studies from a social and ethical perspective regarding COVID-19. The other part examines discourses and concepts of law and politics related to COVID-19.

The multifaceted nature of disasters and their implications across various scientific disciplines have been explored in the introduction. It includes the social sciences, medicine, ethics, and geophysics. The main emphasis is placed on the methodologies and perspectives brought forth by these disciplines, underscoring the epistemological and ethical differences in defining basic concepts within disaster studies. The discussion is introduced by framing disasters as events that disrupt societal norms and have significant impacts on human lives, regardless of whether they are caused by natural phenomena or human actions. The unexpected and shocking nature of disasters often necessitates revisiting and revising the conceptual frameworks to comprehend their complexity adequately. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic serves as a

contemporary example that prompts a reconsideration of the conventional notions of disaster. The global spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the resulting pandemic challenged traditional understandings of disaster by blurring the boundaries between normalcy and crisis.

While disasters are typically perceived as events diverging from everyday life, the pandemic highlighted how certain social groups, such as the homeless and marginalized communities, experience ongoing catastrophes as a part of their daily reality. Moreover, the chapter explores how disasters unveil underlying socio-political dynamics, questioning the legitimacy of political systems and governance structures. Inadequate preparation and response to disasters can expose systemic weaknesses and prompt authoritarian measures that encroach upon individual freedoms. By tracing the emergence and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the chapter underscores the global scale and interconnectedness of modern disasters. Overall, this chapter serves as a thought-provoking exploration of the evolving nature of disasters in the modern world, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary collaboration and ethical reflection to navigate the complex realities of disaster management and response. The introductory section provides a comprehensive overview, laying the groundwork for the subsequent discussions.

The second part of the volume incorporates scientific papers related to the ethical and social perspectives on important questions such as vaccination, clinical studies, the position of the marginalized groups, and human security during the pandemic. One of the standout contributions in these fields is the paper "A Scoping Review of Ethical Arguments about COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates" by Zia Haider (Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia), Annie Silleck (The Ohio State University, USA), and Dónal O'Mathúna (College of Nursing and Center for Bioethics, The Ohio State University, USA), which examines ethical arguments surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine mandates. This essay navigates the intricate ethical terrain of public health policies, shedding light on the tensions between individual autonomy and collective responsibility. Authors explained that vaccines stand as pivotal public health tools, crucial in averting diseases and combating pandemics. The development of COVID-19 vaccines amidst the throes of the pandemic's most intense and devastating phase represents a monumental scientific milestone. However, the availability of these vaccines has precipitated intricate public health and ethical deliberations concerning their equitable distribution. The initial morbidity and mortality rates upon vaccine availability underscored the imperative for the COVID-19 vaccine mandates to attain maximal vaccination coverage. Ethical discourse emerged both in favor and against such mandates. To shed light on these ethical dilemmas, the authors conducted a scoping review encompassing articles published in English between January 2020 and September 25, 2021. Their analyses extracted pertinent ethical considerations, which were subsequently scrutinized to elucidate the overarching, principal ethical arguments surrounding the mandates for and against COVID-19 vaccines.

Miroslav Radenković's (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Medicine) paper "Ethical Challenges and Hesitancy Associated with (Mandatory) Vaccination against COVID-19" tackles the ethical challenges and hesitancy associated with COVID-19 mandatory vaccination

policies, offering critical insights into the complexities of public health decision-making. It begins by acknowledging the World Health Organization's recognition of vaccination hesitancy as a significant global health hazard, juxtaposed against the crucial role vaccines play in preventing serious illness and death. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic's declaration as a global health emergency, the text examines the ethical justifications for mandatory vaccination, emphasizing the importance of balancing public health imperatives with individual rights and autonomy. A key point raised is the role of misinformation and misconceptions in fueling vaccine hesitancy, underscoring the need for robust public health communication efforts to address concerns regarding vaccine efficacy, safety, and duration of protection. The text advocates for a nuanced approach to understanding vaccination hesitancy.

Similarly, Zoran Todorović (the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Medicine, University Medical Center "Bežanijska kosa", Belgrade) and Dragan Hrnčić (the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Medicine) delve into research ethics issues during the pandemic in the paper "Research Ethics Issues in Basic and Clinical Studies during the COVID-19 Pandemics", highlighting the ethical considerations inherent in basic and clinical studies. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light numerous research ethics challenges. Initially, investigations into the virus's origin raised questions of moral responsibility that were analyzed in this paper. Authors indicate that the concerns over the safety of medicines and vaccines persist, fueled by ongoing clinical trials and relaxed trial standards. This balance between speed and reliability has been scrutinized, prompting a

reevaluation of bioethical principles in public health research. Both basic and clinical studies unrelated to COVID-19 have also faced disruptions, from funding shortages to shifts in research priorities. Ethical debates surrounding resources' allocation and termination of the studies have emerged, while the demand for rapid knowledge production has led to flexibility in the peer-review process. These developments underscore the critical role of research ethics in guiding biomedical research during the pandemic and beyond, which is one of the main points of this paper.

Veselin Mitrović's (Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade) contribution to detecting resilience issues among marginalized groups underscores the importance of a bioethical approach in addressing the disparities exacerbated by disasters, as presented in his scientific paper "Detecting Resilience Issues among Marginal Groups as a Bioethical Goal". The article delves into the intricate interplay between ethical judgments, medical and political practices, and the living conditions of marginalized groups, particularly amidst the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a dual lens of normative bioethics and empirical analysis, the author explores the resilience of marginalized social groups, hypothesizing that vulnerability is exacerbated by structural inequalities, rather than by pre-existing medical issues. The author highlights the profound impact of racism and discrimination on the resilience of marginalized communities, elucidating how these factors render them more susceptible to disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The article underscores the imperative of addressing systemic inequalities to enhance the resilience of marginalized groups and prevent their profound suffering during

crises. With a nuanced examination spanning five sections, the author's valuable insight is valuable to bioethicists and clinicians alike, emphasizing the pressing need for a holistic approach to address the ongoing challenges faced by marginalized populations.

In a similar vein, Slađana Ćurčić's (Institute of European Studies, Belgrade) essay "Rethinking Human Security in the Post-COVID-19 World-Lessons Learned from the Human-centric Approach to Health Security" reimagines human security in the post-COVID-19 world within the framework of the health-security nexus, a topic gaining increasing prominence in security studies. Focusing on the human-centric approach to health security, the paper aims to examine the relevance of this perspective in understanding COVID-19 as a health threat and its implications for future health security challenges. Methodically structured, the paper opens with an overview of academic perspectives on health security before delving into the analysis of COVID-19's impact on human security through seven dimensions of the human security concept. Drawing on academic literature and secondary data analysis, including the Human Development Index, the paper offers a nuanced understanding of how COVID-19 has threatened various aspects of human security. Furthermore, the paper concludes by advocating for a rethinking of the human security concept in the post-COVID-19 era, arguing that this could enhance our understanding of health security and lead to meaningful policy and strategic solutions.

The third part of the edited volume focuses on the discourses and concepts of law and politics in COVID-19. Michael Buckley (Lehman College, City University of New York) delves into the discourses and concepts of law and politics amidst the COVID-19 crisis in his paper "Constructivism in Times of Political Crisis", providing valuable insights into the evolving nature of governance during times of uncertainty. The text addresses the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on societal structures and the necessity for political philosophers to reevaluate traditional approaches to justice and stability. It argues that human-induced risks, exemplified by the pandemic, are no longer distant threats, but integral components of contemporary societal functioning. The paper contends that prevailing concepts of stability, such as overlapping consensus, lack resilience in the face of such hazards, particularly when exacerbated by pernicious polarization. By elucidating how human-induced risks contribute to societal destabilization and the breakdown of consensus, the text advocates for a reconceptualization of social resilience to fortify existing notions of stability. The author provides thought-provoking insights into the evolving dynamic of societal resilience and stability in the context of contemporary challenges.

Karen da Costa (School of Global Studies, Gothenburg University, Sweden) and Shlomit Zuckerman (Department of Emergency and Disaster Management & Bioethics and Law Center Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Israel) examine the intersections of human rights and ethics in the management of the pandemic in their paper "Human Rights and Ethics in the Management of the COVID-19 Pandemic: the Experiences of Brazil and Israel", drawing on the experiences of both countries to illuminate the ethical dilemmas inherent in public health policymaking. The paper offers a comparative analysis of Brazil and Israel's responses to the

COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on human rights and ethical considerations. Through meticulous documental analysis of primary and secondary sources, it explores how these nations navigated the pandemic while upholding human rights and ethical conduct. In Brazil, the paper highlighted a confluence of health emergencies and governance crises, resulting in a high death toll and the need for learning from past mistakes. This underscores the recent shifts in rhetoric towards a more human rights-friendly approach under President Lula's new government, emphasizing dialogue and lessons learned from the pandemic. In contrast, Israel's trajectory is marked by a right-wing government's proposed judicial reform, raising concerns about democratic principles and sparking public protests, particularly from healthcare professionals. The reform is criticized for potentially undermining human rights, notably the right to health, and disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups. The paper underscores the global impact of COVID-19, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humanity and the need for global cooperation in pandemic management. Despite differing national experiences, the study advocates for global collaboration in addressing future pandemics, offering valuable insights into the complex interplay between pandemic management, human rights, and ethical considerations.

Pavle Nedić's (Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade) and Marko Mandić's (Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade) paper "Between Securitization and Desecuritization: The Shifting Discourse on the COVID-19 Pandemic in Serbia" explore the shifting discourse on the COVID-19 pandemic in Serbia, navigating the complexities of securitization and de-securitization in the context of public health emergencies. The text analyzes the Serbian government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of securitization theory, which suggests that issues were framed as security threats to garner support for emergency measures. It outlines how the government had initially downplayed the pandemic's severity but later declared a state of emergency, which coincided with the parliamentary elections in June 2020. The text highlights a pattern of shifting between securitization and desecuritization processes, with attempts to secure the issue losing momentum after an unsuccessful move in July 2020 (first unsuccessful securitization process). The authors argue that these fluctuations in the security discourse led to a loss of authority for the government, confusion among citizens, and were influenced by the political context, particularly the upcoming elections. Overall, the text provides insights into the complex interplay between political decision-making, security framing, and public perception during a global crisis.

Mirjana Dokmanović's (Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade) contribution raises critical questions about global health governance and the implications of pandemic responses for state sovereignty and individual liberties in her paper "Toward Global Health Governance or Toward Global Control of States and People?". This paper critically examines the ongoing reform efforts aimed at establishing a binding Pandemic Treaty and revising the International Health Regulation within the global health regime. Through a human rights perspective, the analysis reveals potential negative implications of the proposed regulation for both individual human rights and sovereign decision-making in health-related

issues, as well as the potential strengthening of corporate influence through the inclusion of the corporate sector in the Global Health Treatises Council. The author cautions against the proposed centralized global health governance, warning of potential abuses and the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of a select few.

Jovo Bakić's (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy) analysis of far-right organizations' attitudes towards the pandemic measures in Serbia offers valuable insights into the intersections of politics, ideology, and public health, highlighting the challenges posed by extremist movements in times of crisis. In his paper "The Attitude of Far-Right Organizations towards Measures against the COVID-19 Pandemic in Serbia 2020–2022", the attitudes of far-right organizations towards the measures implemented by the Serbian authorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are explored. Drawing on previous research indicating a general skepticism among right-wing groups towards the virus, the text examines how these organizations reacted to the government's pandemic containment efforts. While one might expect harsh criticism from the far-right groups toward the strict measures, the reality is more nuanced. Some organizations, such as "Srpska desnica" and "Levijatan", either welcomed the measures or remained silent, while others, like "Srpska akcija" and "Narodne patrole", harshly criticized them. This reveals a complex interplay between political ideology, authoritarianism, and pandemic response, highlighting the diverse responses within the far-right spectrum.

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