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Right to the City as a New Paradigm within the Concept of Human Security

Abstract: Cities have been researched mostly in terms of its economic, technological, and social value and significance. Despite some changes in this respect, there is still a need to research cities as a fascinating phenomenon, also in respect of its capabilities to increase human security on a local and global scale. In this context, the article examines the new paradigm of urban development within the human security, namely the right to the city. The author indicates to the growing role of cities for human security and to mutual relations between the right to the city and the concept of human security. The subject matter is indeed as fascinating as fascinating are cities themselves. They are dynamic, energetic, innovative and constantly evolving. The general thesis of the article is that cities adopting the adequate model of urban development such as the one envisioned in the right to the city may and do greatly contribute to human security.

Keywords: city; right to the city; human security; urban development

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

European Urban Charter II
Introduction

The problem of development of cities and their future has been gaining in importance. Cities are the main means of solving many social-economic development problems of the contemporary world. On the other hand, they are the source of the most flagrant occurrence of such problems (European Urban Charter II). Cities are our destiny. Although they generate many economic, social and ecological problems, it is in the cities that solutions are being found. Cities are able to adjust to dynamically changing realities. This is evidenced by the history of cities dating back to the ancient times – since then cities emerge, evolve, grow, sometimes shrink and disappear but the idea endures. Thus, if there is no alternative to cities, it is necessary to create conditions enabling a healthy, comfortable, productive, safe and simply happy life in the city. This aim should be served *inter alia* by the concept of intelligent cities. It is also a way to overcome the problems brought by urbanization (Szymańska & Korolko, 2015, p. 25).

In 1925, only 25 % of the global population lived in cities. By 2050 this percentage will have been about 75. Every week about 1,3 million people move to the cities all over the world (Florek, 2013, p. 78). Today more than a half of the global population lives in cities (World Charter for the Right to the City, p. 1). The problems and challenges that cities of developing and developed States are dealing with include: unemployment, poverty, overpopulation, lacks in infrastructure, environmental degradation, housing, providing social housing, problems with city transport, with water provisions and waste removal. Cities are places where people live, work, entertain and spend their leisure time. Thus, it is so important to make cities safe, resilient and vibrant.

The structure of the article is as follows: section 2 deciphers the meaning of the right to the city. In order to do that it was necessary to define the city itself. Section 3 clarifies the concept of human security and its genesis as well as explains its relation to the right to the city. Finally, in the Concluding remarks the author attempts to answer the question whether there is a need to articulate an independent human right – the right to the city. The aim of the article is to explain the mutual relations between human security and the right to the city. The latter is more seen as a new paradigm of urban development, and as such, it may also be viewed as a new paradigm within the human security concept. The author mainly analyses the United Nations and European Union documents pertaining to the right to the city, future model of urban development and human security. As the paper is of theoretical character, the

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1 There are however controversies on the number of people living in cities and the general capability to establish this number – for more details see: (Lange, 2016).
thesis on mutuality of relations between human security and the right to the city will be verified by the analysis of the contents of the mentioned documents and the components of the two title concepts.

The Meaning of the Right to the City

The right to the city has its roots in the works of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey. H. Lefebvre regarded the right to the city as a cry and demand:

[t]he cry was a response to the existential pain of a withering crisis of everyday life in the city. The demand was really a command to look that crisis clearly in the eye and to create an alternative urban life that is less alienated, more meaningful and playful (Harvey, 2012: x; Lefebvre, 2012: 195; Marcuse 2013).

David Harvey (2012, p. 5, 25; 2008, p. 23) on the other hand perceived the right to the city as ‘some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade’ and as a right to change and reinvent the city so that it suits the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable and not only the rich and the privileged. Hence, the right to the city was seen as a tool of revolution that will destroy the segregation (the poor and the rich, the privileged and the underprivileged) and bring back the centrality of the city meaning that the centre of the city will be open to everyone and not only the privileged ones (it may be termed as the appropriation by the inhabitants of the space in the city (Purcell, 2013, p. 149)). This has actually been happening in many cities through, for example, revitalizing the centre, restricting the urban sprawl, reducing the city traffic, creating more open and green spaces as well as more pedestrian areas and implementing the policy of renting flats instead of purchasing them.

Currently the right to the city refers not only to the adequate quality of the direct place of living and its surroundings but it should include the adequate standard of living at the scale of the whole city and its rural surroundings. The right to the city understood in this way is to be a mechanism of protection for the people living in cities or regions of rapid urbanization (World Charter for the Right to the City: 1). Art. I of the World Charter for the Right to the City (hereinafter: the World Charter) states:

All persons have the Right to the City free of discrimination based on gender, age, health status, income, nationality, ethnicity, migratory condition, or political, religious or sexual orientation, and to preserve cultural memory and identity in conformity with the principles and norms established in this Charter (World Charter for the Right to the City, p. 2).
Furthermore, the provision indicates that the right to the city also pertains to equitable usufruct of cities according to the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice. It constitutes a collective right of the inhabitants of the cities, particularly those belonging to the vulnerable and marginalized groups. As such, it legitimates the activities of the inhabitants of the city and organizations representing them and all this in order to ensure the right to self-determination and adequate standard of living. The right to the city is interdependent meaning that it includes all internationally recognized human rights – civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental, in other words human rights of the three generations (World Charter for the Right to the City, p. 2; HABITAT III Policy Paper 1 – Right to the City and Cities for All, p. 3).

It is worth pointing out to the broader understanding of the term ‘city’ which affects the meaning of the right to the city itself. This term includes ‘a culturally rich and diversified collective space that pertains to all of its inhabitants’ as well as its physical character, the city is every metropolis, village, or town that is institutionally organized as local governmental unit with municipal or metropolitan character. It includes the urban space as well as the rural or semi-rural surroundings that form part of its territory. As public space, the city is the whole of institutions and actors who intervene in its management, such as governmental authorities, legislative and judicial bodies, institutionalized social participation entities, social movements and organizations, and the community in general (World Charter for the Right to the City, p. 3).

Citizens of the city are ‘all the persons who inhabit a city, whether permanently or transitionally’ (World Charter for the Right to the City, p. 3).

The report issued under the auspices of the European Union (EU) Cities of tomorrow – Challenges, visions, ways forward indicates the different understandings of the term ‘city’. It may be regarded as ‘an administrative unit or a certain population density’ or ‘an urban way of life and specific cultural or social features, as well as functional places of economic activity and exchange’ (Cities of tomorrow. Challenges, visions, ways forward, 2011, p. 1). There is also a functional city area which embraces the core city and its surroundings like communities connected by common aims and interests (Toczek, 2013, p. 72).

It is worth noticing that Art. II section 3 (2) of the World Charter states that cities should implement public policies that ensure respect for human rights, especially for women (Right to the City, p. 4). It should be mentioned here that many cities undertake actions implementing the UN Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and counteracting discrimination of women. For
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example, San Francisco and Los Angeles included in its local law the above mentioned Convention (despite the USA not ratifying it) (Frug, Barron, 2006, p. 22, Nijman, 2011, p. 222–223). Jan Nijman predicts that in the future cities will play a growing role in implementing international law, human rights including (2011, p. 224), which may result in improvements of human security of the inhabitants of the cities.

The World Charter defines the right to the city through enumeration of human rights, such as inter alia: the right to public information, the right to freedom and integrity, the right to political participation, the freedom of assembly and association and of democratic use of the urban public space, the right to justice, the right to public security and peaceful, solidarity and multicultural coexistence, the right to water and to access and supply of domestic and urban public services, the right to public transportation and urban mobility, the right to housing, the right to work, the right to healthy and sustainable environment (World Charter for the Right to the City, p. 6–9).

The right to the city should be treated as a new paradigm for urban development that is supposed to respond to the major challenges to cities and human habitats such as: rapid urbanization, poverty reduction, social exclusion and a risk of environmental degradation (Habitat III Policy Paper 1 – Right to the City and Cities for All, 2016, p. 2).

Interestingly, internal law of some States such as of Brazil (Art. 2.1 of the Brazil’s City Statute of 2001) and Ecuador (Arts. 30–31 of the 2008 Constitution) establish the right to the city (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1 – Right to the City and Cities for All, 2016, p. 4). Brazil even set up the Ministry of Cities (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1, 2016, p. 34). In Canada in 2006 Montreal adopted a city charter, Charte Montréálaise des Droits et des Responsabilités (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1, 2016, p. 34). Mexico adopted the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1, 2016, p. 37). The right to the city was also included in Art. 1 of the Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City adopted in 2011 by the cities’ network United Cities and Local Governments² (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1, 2016, p. 37).

² Cities form global networks. The most important city networks include: United Cities and Local Governments, International Union of Local Authorities, World Association of Major Metropolises, National League of Cities, ICLEI (founded in 1990 as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives), C40 Cities, Eurocities, U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, Megacities Foundation, CityNet, and City Protocol. One should also mention Cities Alliance convened in 1999 by the World Bank and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) which ‘is a global partnership for urban poverty reduction and the promotion of the role of cities in sustainable development’ (Cities Alliance, on-line). The most important of them is UCLG. The primary goal of the UCLG is ‘[t]o be the united voice and world advocate of
Taking into account all the above indicated understandings of the right to the city, one should notice that this right is a collective and a diffuse right belonging to all the present and future generations of the citizens/inhabitants of the city, analogously to the right to clean environment in the framework of sustainable development that is also granted to the present and future generations of people (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1, p. 4). The right to the city is a collective right as it is accorded to all the inhabitants of the city on the basis of their common interest, and a diffuse right because it pertains to the present and future generations (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1, p. 6). Hence, one may define the right to the city as the right of all present and future citizens (inhabitants) of the city to live, use and create just, inclusive, safe and sustainable cities being common good necessary to adequate standard of living. To sum up, the right to the city embraces the just use of the city in the framework of sustainable development, democracy, equality and social justice. It is a collective and diffuse right of the inhabitants of the city which may legitimize their activities in order to achieve the full enjoyment of the right to self-determination and an adequate standard of living. The right to the city is interdependent of internationally recognized human rights (all civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental right which are codified in international treaties on human rights). Implementation of this right is the responsibility of national and local governments and the citizens themselves; it also gives citizens the right to demand and promote this right (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1, p. 4). For successful implementation of the right to the city, the alliance between the key urban actors (including the city citizens) is indispensable. Special needs and opinions of women, marginalized and poor should be taken into account (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1, p. 4).

democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community’ (UCLG, on-line). Its activities aim at increasing the role and influence of local government and its representative organizations in global governance and at becoming the main source of support for democratic, effective, innovative local government close to the citizen. In its Constitution of 2004 UCLG states that it is aware ‘that the traditional role of the State is profoundly affected by the above trends and that States cannot centrally manage and control the complex integrated cities and towns of today and tomorrow’ (UCLG, on-line). See the Constitution of the World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments (2004).
Human security and its relation to the right to the city

The concept of human security has its roots in the United Nations, in the famous president Roosevelt Declaration of 1944 and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948. The *Universal Declaration* states in the preamble that ‘[…] recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world’. For the first time the concept appeared in the 1993 *Human Development Report*. It was included as one of the five pillars of the world order concentrated on man (Human Development Report, 1993, p. 2). Then in 1994 next *Human Development Report* was published (by UNDP – United Nations Development Programme), where the whole concept was developed. In the Report it was indicated that

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

As it is clearly seen, many of those threats are generated in the cities. Human security embraces two fundamental components – freedom from fear and freedom from hunger (Human Development Report, 1994, p. 24). The entire Chapter II of the 1994 Report is devoted to the human security. There it was claimed that ‘[t]he concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust’ (Human Development Report, 1994, p. 22). According to the Report, the following features characterize the human security concept:

1. Human security is a universal concern as it affects people all over the world. It is connected to the fact that the threats are universal as they are common to all people. Such threats include unemployment, drugs, crime, environmental pollution and degradation and human rights violations;
2. The basic elements of human security are interdependent. It means that when the security of people is endangered in one part of the world, all States and nations may be endangered. The effects of threats to human security in any part of the world may be felt in another part. Threats such as hunger, disease,
environmental degradation, drug trafficking, terrorism, organized crimes, ethnic conflicts and social disintegration are no longer isolated events and their consequences are transnational;

3. It is easier to ensure human security through early prevention than later intervention. It is the expression of a well-known maxim ‘better prevent than cure’;

4. Human security concentrates on people – on their lives, their functioning in a society, on their autonomy, access to the market and social opportunities. It is also concerned with the state of peace, which is a necessary condition for human security (Human Development Report, 1994, p. 22–23).


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

In the subsequent years, numerous UN organs, including UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), acted as a forum for debate, expression and promotion of alternative concepts of security. UN organs and agendas such as UNHCR and Secretary General considered the new concept in their actions. Hence, UN became a key instrument for legitimizing the new concept of security (Thakur, 2006, p. 91).

In 2003, the Commission on Human Security published its Human Security Now report, which defined human security as ‘to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life’ (Human Development Report, 1994, p. 4). In 2004, the concept of human security was given a prominent place in the UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. A more secure world: our shared responsibility (High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change A more secure world: our shared responsibility, 2004, p. 17; von Tigerstrom, 2007, p. 114) and in 2005 also the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) published a report Common Purpose
Towards a More Effective OSCE. Final Report and Recommendations of the Eminent Persons on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE (2005, p. 16), which referred to the concept of human security.

Bearing in mind the above considerations one should try to define human security. Human security is a state and process that aims to ensure the certainty of survival and existence and the opportunity of development as well as meeting the most elementary needs of human beings. It is a process because security is not given forever, it evolves and fluctuates and constant efforts must be undertaken in order to maintain it. Human security means people may live in peace and safety in their own State, in which people enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination. As a concept that should be implemented in practice, human security places human beings and their needs in the centre of its interest and analysis. National and international security is instrumental for human security, thus ensuring the former should ultimately serve people. ‘The best guarantee of human security is a strong, efficient, effective, but also democratically legitimate state that is respectful of citizens’ rights, mindful of its obligations and responsibilities and tolerant of diversity and dissenting voices’ (Thakur, 2006, p. 90). For that reason, human security should not be regarded as contradictory to national security and should not replace it. Those two dimensions of security are complementary (Thakur, 2006, p. 89). From the perspective of the human security, national security is valuable but treated as one of many tools used for promoting individual’s interests (Kutz, 2009, p. 233–234).

Cities have a very important role to play in improving human security. Among the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015, Goal 11 urges to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Sustainable Development Goals, on-line). ‘Cities are hubs for ideas, commerce, culture, science, productivity, social development and much more. At their best, cities have enabled people to advance socially and economically’ (Sustainable Development Goals, on-line). Hence, cities may and do play a significant role in implementing human security. The problem of cities and their role for human security, including their growing role in many spheres of international cooperation, human rights and environmental protection which are components of human security, is indeed fascinating as fascinating are cities themselves. They are dynamic, energetic, innovative and constantly evolving. Various international or transboundary activities of cities are on the increase and they contribute to closer ties between people and nations and, as a result, to international peace and understanding. On the other hand, a lot of challenges exist to maintaining cities in a way that continues to create jobs and prosperity while not straining land and resources. Common urban challenges include congestion, lack
of funds to provide basic services, a shortage of adequate housing and declining infrastructure. The challenges cities face can be overcome in ways that allow them to continue to thrive and grow, while improving resource use and reducing pollution and poverty. The future we want includes cities of opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transportation and more (Sustainable Development Goals, on-line).

The vision of future cities and their sustainable development includes creating jobs in the economy based on knowledge, eradicating poverty and social deprivations, ensuring effective environmental protection, dealing with demographic changes, preserving cultural diversity and preventing social conflicts (Karwińska & Brzosko-Sermak, 2014, p. 70). By increasing the quality of urban life, ensuring opportunities for development and self-fulfilment cities clearly may and do contribute to human security. Activities of cities in areas of human rights, sustainable development and environmental protection clearly evidence the growing role of cities in the sphere of human security. Cities are also centres of civil society and as such, they empower their inhabitants, make their voices heard. Many cities undertake initiatives aiming at increasing social participation in the form of consultation with inhabitants (Cities of change, 2015, p. 8). In this way, inhabitants are given meaningful voice and participation in decision-making process in their own affairs. The right to the city embraces a right to a safe city, safe in economic, social and ecological terms. Therefore, cities undertake various international and transnational activities aimed at increasing socio-economic and environmental human security.

**Concluding Remarks**

City should be understood broadly – in a holistic and complex way – first of all as a local political and social community, as a lifestyle but also as an administrative entity. The titular right to the city envisions respect for human rights for all, full exercise of citizenship for all inhabitants; the social dimension of land, property, and urban assets in cities and human settlements; transparent and accountable political participation and management of cities; inclusive economies, with rights to work and secure livelihoods; responsible and sustainable management of the commons (natural environment, built and historic environment, cultural assets, energy supplies, etc.); sufficient, accessible and quality public spaces and community facilities; cities without violence, particularly for women, girls, and disadvantaged groups; the promotion of culture as a lever of social
cohesion, social capital, self-expression and identity, memory and heritage, and a balanced relationship between cities and towns within national jurisdictions, and between human settlements and their rural hinterlands (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1 – Right to the City and Cities for All, p. 3)

The right to the city encompasses a model of urban development that prioritizes the welfare of the city inhabitants and not only economic growth. Economic development strategies that are aimed mainly or only at the economic growth usually result in the negative consequences of growth such as displacement, environmental degradation and social conflict. In the new strategies, wellbeing or welfare ‘should superpose purely economic growth objectives’ (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1 – Right to the City and Cities for All, p. 12). The right to the city places welfare at the centre of all activities, strategies and agenda (similarly to the human security). As stated in the HABITAT III Policy Paper 1 – Right to the City and Cities for All: ‘three core dimensions of wellbeing include: meeting universal human needs; achieving socially meaningful goals in different cultural, social, and economic contexts; and increasing happiness and quality of life’ (p. 12). The key element of the right to the city is the safe city, which is connected to the right to personal safety. This right is undermined by violence and criminality in cities which to a higher degree affect women. The rising level of criminality and a lack of security results in inter alia ghettoization and spatial division of the city (districts of richness or poverty, dangerous areas), in establishing protected and fenced settlements, social isolation and alienation, hostility towards migrants and refugees (HABITAT III Policy Paper 1 – Right to the City and Cities for All, p. 12). In this context, the concept of ‘social eyes’ of Jane Jacobs springs into mind (for more details see: A New Way of Understanding ‘Eyes on the Street’).

As already indicated the right to the city is linked to the concept of human security, which places the human being in the centre of interest, analysis and activities. Human security in the narrow meaning includes the rule of law and human rights and in the broader meaning also prevention and reaction to international crimes (war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide) (Hampson, 2012, p. 228). In the broadest meaning human security deals with all the basic socio-economic needs of people, it is aimed at providing them to those deprived. In this context it was stated in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities that

[w]ithin one city, considerable differences may exist in terms of economic and social opportunities in the individual city areas, but also in terms of the varying quality of the environment. In addition, the social distinctions and the differences in economic development often continue to increase which contributes
to destabilization in cities. A policy of social integration which contributes to reducing inequalities and preventing social exclusion will be the best guarantee for maintaining security in our cities (2007, p. 5).

It clearly stresses the need to provide the inhabitants of the cities with the fundamental social services and to reduce social inequalities.

Human security encompasses activities aimed at ensuring existence, survival and (self)development of human beings. Majority of the population live in the cities and this number is still on the rise. The right to the city serves to implement the components of the human security. The latter is a broader concept as it pertains to inhabitants of other than cities human settlements. On the other hand it envisions the assurance of only the basic (and non-derogable) human rights such as the right to life and to be free from torture or other inhuman and degrading treatment necessary to allow the human being to survive and develop. Human security does not focus on the more sophisticated or advanced ones such as the freedom of expression or the freedom of peaceful assembly, which are granted when the individual is already safe. The right to the city is complementary to human security. Cities are/may/should be areas of socio-economic development and innovation with due respect for environment. An adequate model of urbanization – including the models of intelligent (or smart) and green cities\(^5\) - is capable of increasing human security. Such a model is envisaged within the new paradigm of urban development in the form of the right to the city.

In this place, one should pose the basic question: is there a real need for articulating the right to the city as an independent human right? It could be regarded as a specific human right of the third generation (collective or solidarity right), especially that it is defined as a collective and diffuse right. Making that assumption, the right to the city – being not codified in any binding treaty similarly to other third generation rights (like the right to the peace or the right to the clean environment) – it could not be legally enforceable. It is rather an umbrella rule – a programme norm whose implementation is assured when the remaining human rights are respected (Purcell, 2013, p. 144). At present, the right to the city is not a separate human right but a political concept of a postulated character. In fact, respect and protection of human rights enumerated as elements of the right to the city will equal implementation of the right to the city. As the right to the city is restricted to only inhabitants of the city, it makes it difficult to be regarded as truly a human right which is just another argument against establishing such a separate and independent human right. In particular, one has to take into account the controversies regarding the global number of people

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\(^5\) For more details see: Cities of tomorrow – Challenges, visions, ways forward, p. 44.
living in cities (Lange, on-line). For the purpose of this article I used, most of all, the sociological and functional definition of the city encompassing a collectivism of people and urban lifestyle, no matter the controversies on the number of the population of the city. Those controversies aside, clearly not all people live in the cities so – to stress again – it is impossible to construe the right to the city as a human right. All that said, still the right to the city may be a useful tool/slogan/motto that can unite different entities, including urban social movements, in their fight for better living conditions in the cities.

Within this new paradigm of the right to the city within the concept of the human security, it is crucial to invest in human capital, especially in the social capital. The latter means not only education and skills but also the ability to trust other people, to be willing to cooperate and to engage in social dialogue and networks. Social capital is important for social innovation and development. It makes cities more attractive and safe (Cities of tomorrow. Challenges, visions, ways forward, 2011, p. 52).

References:


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