

**TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO
FIND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN
ALTRUISM AND SAFETY****AZ ALTRUIZMUS ÉS A BIZTONSÁG KAP-
CSOLATA: TRANSZDISZCIPLINÁRIS
FOGALMI KERET**VALOCIKOVÁ, Cyntia¹ – VELENCEI Jolán²**Abstract**

Analyzing the human side of various procedures are not that far from safety and security sciences. However, there is not yet such a broad literature connected with the field of social sciences. This study seeks to understand the real processes through the lens of transdisciplinarity and find connections between altruism and safety. The conceptual framework of transdisciplinarity are disordered, so the study examines the question based on loosely defined concepts that assume coherence, whether can altruism fit into the world of safety sciences? By escaping the cages of disciplines, some connections can be found which help us to understand the real processes.

Keywords

reciprocal altruism, philosophy of safety, trust, human security

Absztrakt

A biztonságtudománytól nem áll messze a különböző folyamatok humán oldalának vizsgálata. Azonban a társadalomtudományok területéhez kapcsolódóan még nem áll olyan széles szakirodalom a rendelkezésre. A tanulmány a transzdiszciplinaritás lencséjén át igyekszik megérteni a valós folyamatokat és összekapcsolni az altruizmust a biztonsággal. A transzdiszciplinaritás fogalmi kerete rendezetlen. Így a tanulmány összhangot feltételező, lazán definiált fogalmak alapján keresi a választ arra a kérdésre, hogy vajon hogyan illeszkedhet az altruizmus a biztonságtudományok világába? A diszciplínák ketrecéből kimenekülve olyan kapcsolatok találhatók, amelyek segítenek megérteni a valós folyamatokat.

Kulcsszavak

reciprok altruizmus, biztonságfilozófia, bizalom, humán biztonság

¹ valocikova.cyntia@phd.uni-obuda.hu | ORCID: 0000-0003-3541-4222 | doktorandusz, Óbudai Egyetem Biztonságtudományi Doktori Iskola

² velencei.jolan@kgk.uni-obuda.hu | ORCID: 0000-0003-0040-3494 | egyetemi docens, Óbudai Egyetem Keleti Károly Gazdasági Kar

INTRODUCTION

The international academic literature analyzes altruism from several perspectives. The definition of altruism is a subject to further discussion, as it is diverse between disciplines. There is no difference in case of defining safety. While altruism is more typical for researches in social sciences, safety is mainly concerned with engineering and safety sciences. As it is difficult to bring together these diverse fields, we invoke the research strategy of transdisciplinarity. According to Basarab Nicolescu [1] transdisciplinarity examines territories beyond different disciplines. *“All observers are the slaves of their disciplines, which force them to see through the lens of their concepts and methods. The big question is, whether it is necessary for us to stay within the cage of our existing disciplines. If we want to name reality, then we should escape our cage, but must avoid slipping into the glorified mainstream cage, or any other. It is logical for the majority to recommend everyone being in the same cage, and then there will be no arguments”* [2, p. 866].

Therefore, we seek the answer to how the broadly understood concept of safety can be related to the field of social sciences in a transdisciplinary approach. The present study is a theoretical research that brings together various relevant literature to frame altruism and safety. We first look over the classic presence of altruism in certain cases, after we examine the concept of safety in such a way that we can finally present the intertwining of two essentially different areas.

ALTRUISM AS A WAY OF TRUST

Altruism is a prosocial behavior, *“which can be interpreted as a helping lifestyle, a loyal activity that serves the interests of both parties, influenced by prosocial tendencies, and helps the other party”* [3, p. 199]. According to Hewstone & Stroebe [4] there are three levels of assistance; helping behavior, prosocial behavior and altruism. Help is usually work-related and can be done not only by individuals, but also by an organization. Prosocial behavior is individual and the way of support is voluntary, while in the case of altruism, the helper is guided by empathy and long-term goals. [4].

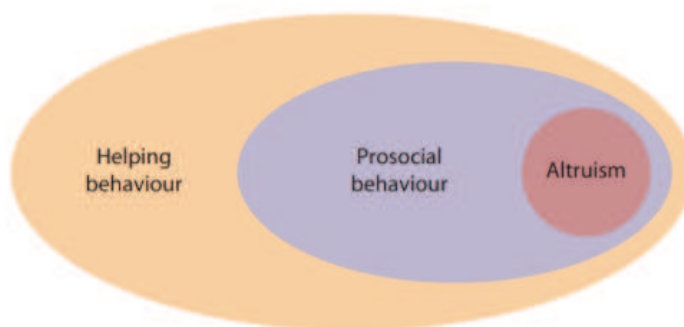


Figure 1. Relationship between the concepts of helping, prosocial behavior and altruism [5, p. 179]

The 19th century French philosopher Auguste Comte formed the creation of altruism as a concept. In his view, altruism is an instinct that is opposed to egoism and is related to selflessness. However, the definition of altruism varies from discipline to discipline. According to psychologists, altruism is a kind of hidden selfishness, while biologists associate

it with behavioral genetics. Sociologists see this type of behavior is a motivating factor for improving the well-being of others. There are also different transdisciplinary approaches. Bonnie Benard [6] in her work about resilience described altruism as the “*highest form of social competence*” [6, p. 16]. According to Ann S. Epstein [7] altruism develops in childhood as soon as we experience empathy. “*Empathy is the ability to understand another person’s feelings by experiencing the same emotion oneself. Empathic behavior is demonstrated through caring, compassion, and altruism*” [7, p. 35]. Here and now, we are building upon economic view; however, it is closely related with sociological view. In the economic approach, according to Balázs Hámori [8] altruism can be defined as the withdrawal of others' prosperity into the individual's welfare function [8]. In another study [9], Hámori points out that, according to the development of economics over the last two to three decades, it examines the motivations of »beyond self-interest« and cases of propitiousness and viciousness. Onto the characters of the economy particularly the underdeveloped one, the envy and wicked joy changes individual utility functions and creates a connection between individual utilities. In the same way, altruistic and compassionate economic actors, whose survival has been questioned for a long time, not only exist, but with their manner »magnetize« the behavior of selfish actors who contact them. As a result of this cooperation, they act »as if« they are selfless [9].

Altruism has different criteria. Kahana & Midlarsky [10] in their research highlighted that one of them is the adequate motivation (care, morality, social sensitivity, etc.), the other criteria is the rate of cost (the participant loses more than he/she invests), then the rate of volunteerism (voluntary assistance), and finally the extent of the possibility of alternative actions (there are real alternatives to action). According to the authors, it is rare for all criteria to meet at the same time, so a scale has been set up with a low rate of altruism at one end and a high rate at the other end [10]. In addition, altruism has different forms of appearance that are related to framing taken from different approaches in different disciplines (like kinship altruism, selfish altruism, etc.). One of the most common of all is reciprocal altruism, a type of “gift exchange” where the individual expects a return in the future in exchange for selflessness. According to Hámori one of the most important components of reciprocal altruism is trust. Reciprocal altruism can be described as a kind of exchange relationship, more precisely as a clearing system for charities, but it is also a community of risk. Reciprocal altruism can also interpreted as risk sharing. In order to guaranteed the benefits of mutual favors, in most cases we need to belong to a well-defined network. The bigger and tighter the net, the safer [8]. These types of networks can emerge not only among market players, but also between organizations and consumers, friends, acquaintances or even university groups. Trust can also reduce the costs for actors, as cooperation in the other party awakens respect and propitiousness, and those who are respected can acquire financial benefits [11] [12]. Trust also led to the so-called “opportunistic behavior”. In such cases, advanced trust results lasting relationship, and the parties do not assume that either of them could abuse the situation. Breaking up a long-term relationship of trust is far more unfavorable than fraud for instantaneous profit, because if either party notices, trust-based cooperation leads to failure. It is beneficial of both participants to ignore situations that bring momentary benefits but undermine cooperation in long run. Trust is a premise for reciprocal altruism at networks. As Hámori quoted Putnam [13], trust can be defined as a legitimate expectation that others will do the right thing [8].

The concept of trust is not solid in the literature. There are a number of approaches, as in the case of altruism, depending on the discipline. Currently, the risk-based approach is closest to the goal of our study. In a level of risk management, its purpose is to provide the highest possible level of security, based on the identification and ranking of risk. Risk is an uncertain event or activity, what occurrence may affect the expected result in a negative way [14]. Delimiting trust points out to the relationships between trust and risk. However, nor in this case we provide a congruent definition, rather different scientific framings. According to Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman [15] trust is “*the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party*” [15, p. 712]. The authors allude to trust as an action whose outcome is uncertain because the trustee cannot control the interaction. They make a distinction between trust and trustworthiness. In the case of trust, it can be assumed that we have outlined and also we are aware of the possible outcomes of the events, still we take a voluntary risk, even though we become vulnerable by the other participant. While trustworthiness is the certainty of the other participant’s responsible behavior what based on experiences. The essential difference is that while trust is an expectation, trustworthiness is a concrete certainty connected with experience [15].

In another approach, Das & Tang [16] in their joint work revealed “*at the subjective trust level, trust is not a subclass of risk but rather a mirror image of risk. [...] In fact, both subjective trust and perceived risk represent the assessment of outcome probabilities of the same event. The crucial difference is that, whereas subjective trust portrays the assessment in a positive light — that is, the probability that the outcome will be what is desired — perceived risk describes the situation in disquieting hues — the probability that the outcome will be what is feared. In actuality, they are the mirror image of each other, evaluating the same situation from two distinctly different perspectives of hope and concern*” [16, p. 110]. In this case, trust and risk are not highlighted as obvious contrast pairs, but these two completely different constructs were identified as theoretical opposites. While we hope for a positive outcome in event of trust, the outcome for risk can be negative. Risk-based approaches suggest that trust is relevant where risk typify the relationship between the participants. In a domestic study by Gelei & Dobos [17] demonstrated that in cooperative relationships, the level of trust influences risk appetite. The stronger the trust between partners, the greater the willingness to take risks in risky situations [17].

Returning to altruism, therefore, trust is necessary to create reciprocity as a condition. Individuals for whom trust is anticipated reveal a high level of altruistic behavior, and the level of altruism increases in parallel with the level of anticipated trust [18]. Although trust is risky, while these are working as mirror images. When trust is low between participants, risk is observed as high and backwards. In this approach, the benefit of high trust should indemnify for the risk taking [16]. In the following, we examine the conceptual framework of safety and then map the relationship between altruism and safety.

PHILOSOPHY OF SAFETY

Safety is also a concept that is difficult to define precisely due to its diversity. Safety is challenging to interpret and since the middle of the twentieth century it has become more complex as it can also be a measure of a changing and complicated situation. Safety can be

interpreted in a complex way, taking into account the combined effect of several factors. Its field of application is also diverse; we can talk about political, social, societal, ecological safety, etc. It can also vary in scope, as safety can be interpreted globally or regionally, but also to countries, small or large communities and individuals [19].

A detailed analysis of the concept of safety would go far back to antiquity, but it would also be very long to list definitions that are relevant nowadays. The practice of creating, maintaining, and guaranteeing safety is the responsibility of safety sciences. According to Lieutenant Colonel Imre József Hadnagy [19], safety is a complex system of knowledge summarizing the theoretical elements and practical experiences determining the success of the activities of national, federal, regional and international organizations aimed at eliminating and minimizing the challenges, threats and risks affecting national safety in the broadest sense [19, p. 5].

The traditional military and state-centered approach to safety has been the subject of more serious criticism in the early 1970s, especially in the wake of events such as the oil crises in 1973 and 1978. By this time, the concept of safety was broadened, at the economic and environmental level, and the broadening of the concept kept going ever since [20]. According to Berek et al. [21], safety always covers a condition that is sometimes threatened by different factors, and safety can be interpreted in conjunction with this risk factor. In their complex, general framing, safety is the state of persons or organizations determined by the interaction of intentional unlawful behavior that endangers their existence or proper functioning and the protection resources applied to them [21, p. 5].

Safety is affected by a number of indirect (legal environment, management, institutional system, economic factors, etc.) and direct (illegal behavior or quantity and quality of protection resources) factors. In addition, its' complexity lies in the fact that the subject of safety - be it an object or even an individual - can be described by different characteristics, which are often jeopardized by completely independent threats. Due to the complexity of safety, creating and maintaining is a difficult task and can only be achieved using appropriate security tools [21], [22]. A more precise interpretation is obtained by assigning it to certain fields such as personal-, property-, environmental-, economic security, and so on. However, it can also be examined in a human approach, which means a poise, what keep risky situations away from the protected person [19]. However, one of the most relevant field of safety is human security, which focuses not on the state but on the individual. The basic concept of human security is the protection of the individual, which is realized through the protection of the interests and values of the individual in different ways [23]. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in their report from 1994 defined and specified *human security* first. However, literature differs security and safety from each other, [24] in this case, framing of human security provide excellent base. UNDP has gone beyond the conceptual framework of national and military security and opened a new dimension to human security. The concept of it has been focused more on people rather than nations, as they said: „*For most people, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Will they and their families have enough to eat? Will they lose their jobs? Will their streets and neighborhoods be safe from crime? Will they be tortured by a repressive state? Will they become a victim of violence because of their gender? Will their religion or ethnic origin target them for persecution?*” [25, p. 22]. The report perceive on human security as integrative concept what appreciate

the “*universalism of life*”. As the main characteristics of it, UNDP framed four concepts. First, human security is universal, as there are many threats what are common to every people. Second, it is interdependent, as dangers of human security are no longer isolated events. Furthermore, is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention. Last, but not least human security is people-centered, referring on way of living, independence or opportunities. It also means “*protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life, whether in homes, in jobs or in communities*” [25, p. 23].

Human security also has several categories, like economic, food, health, personal, community security etc., but each categories are focusing on people. United Nations in their Human Security Handbook [26] defined, as “*people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people and all communities*” [26, p. 6]. Human security system ensure the right of people to live in dignity, free from despair and poverty. It is a comprehensive approach what face challenges of people, including three components: freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity. Shielding people from threats is a central task, and handle insecurities in a preventive, systematic and comprehensive way [27]. Challenges, dealt by human security are complicated, especially at international communities. Some of the basic challenges, what this field deals with are presented in Table 1. [26]. Although in a transdisciplinary approach, types of insecurities have much deeper meanings and much more factors that should be dealt with, also these are mutually reinforcing. Processes like globalization, multiculturalism or development of technology etc. provide new challenges that human security has to cope with [27].

TYPE OF INSECURITY	ROOT CAUSES
Economic insecurity	Persistent poverty, unemployment, lack of access to credit and other economic opportunities
Food insecurity	Hunger, famine, sudden rise in food prices
Health insecurity	Epidemics, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to basic health care
Environmental insecurity	Environmental degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters
Personal insecurity	Physical violence in all its forms, human trafficking, child labour
Community insecurity	Inter-ethnic, religious and other identity-based tensions, crime, terrorism
Political insecurity	Political repression, human rights violations, lack of rule of law and justice

Table 1. Types of human insecurities and possible root causes (own editing based on [26, p. 7])

A European Union approach to human security in 2003 Barcelona Report highlight the need of respect of human rights. It is crucial to enable communities to create the condition of stability and peace, which means intensive communication with civil society. “*Security is often viewed as the absence of physical violence and regarded as part of the political-military realm, while development tends to be considered part of the economic and social realm, and human rights are largely considered part of the civil/legal realm. Yet these distinctions are misleading. Development is more than material wellbeing, just as human rights must include economic and civil rights. Likewise, ensuring Human Security under circumstances of extreme vulnerability means a concern for both physical and material wellbeing. It is about helping people to feel safe in their homes and on the streets as well as ensuring they have what they need to live on*” [28, p. 8]. Although it is worth noting that framing human security has not reached any consensus yet. This is a concept that can be interpreted in many ways, in countless variations, and its explanation exists in many forms [29]. Sydney University professor Paul James [30] studied human security in a new dimension and reframed the approach by analyzing its strength and weaknesses. As a result, the author defined human security “*as one of the foundational conditions of being human, including both (1) the sustainable protection and provision of the material conditions for meeting the embodied needs of people, and (2) the protection of the variable existential conditions for maintaining a dignified life*” [30, p. 87].

Relying on the definition, the author emphasizes the importance of risk analysis as it is necessary to respond for events or processes that have an extensive and intensive impact in existential vulnerabilities of people. Two categories were listed of human security: the positive and negative human security. While positive human security means maintaining a “vibrant” human life in various areas of social life, negative human security means fighting against violations of fundamental human rights [30]. With analyzing the different approaches and forms of safety, further we try to find connection between altruism and safety.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ALTRUISM AND SAFETY

Altruism is a helping behavior that is based on pure selflessness, kinship, or even reciprocity. One of the basic components of altruism is trust and its anticipation, which is risky, especially if there is no prior experience with the relationship [16]. Both altruism and safety are complex concepts, which contains many factors. In addition, the concept of safety has expanded in recent decades. It is intended to protect the undamaged operation of a state, system, or object, but this framing cannot describe the whole process. Safety is subjective; it can be specified by attaching it to certain aspects, situations or areas. The constant new challenges (social, economic, environmental, etc.) further broadened the theory of safety [19]. The human security – as detailed in the previous chapters - is a people-centered concept aimed at protecting the individual and ensuring the basic conditions for a dignified environment and quality of life. The concept is no longer based solely on whether the state can avert a military threat or create physical security for public. The concept is based on the responsibility of the individual, a freedom of control what can adapt to new challenges e.g. as a consumer, can I decide to buy genetically modified produces? As a citizen, can I decide which political party to trust? [31].

Sociologist Frank Furedi [32] in his work Culture of Fear detailed the conceptualization of risk and the causes of losing trust. According to the author, “*risk is shaped by*

how society regards its ability to manage change and deal with the future” [32, p. 18]. The society finds a connection between the concept of risk and the concept of danger, what is worth to ignore. Fear is now not just a response to a threat, but a viewpoint in general that plays a decisive role in influencing human behavior. According to the author, the main goal of society is safety and security, as fear of everything has become a basic element of culture, which also puts its mark on initiative, risk-taking and trust. *“Today, the problem of trust is not restricted to one or a number of distinct relationships. It is not merely a question of workers not trusting their employers. The situation has reached the point where colleagues regard each other as potential enemies and where neighbors are perceived as threatening. Thus, in contrast to the past, the problem of trust exists within a setting where at all levels of society there is a manifest lack of confidence about the working of society”* [32, p. 144]. According to Carel Anne Heimer [33] the two basic elements of relationships of trust are insecurity and vulnerability. Insecurity manifests itself in the other's intentions and outcomes. Vulnerability is the risk that comes from the entrustors side in the event of a negative outcome. Modern society is characterized by distrust strategy, which means rather reducing vulnerability than reducing insecurity [33]. Analyzing vulnerability or risk are both important components of safety activities [34]. Due to the diversity of risk analysis methods and the limitations of this article, we do not detail the methods of risk analyzes, however, based on the presented researches, it can be said that it plays a big role in examining both trust and safety.

As mentioned several times, altruism is a helping behavior. In modern society, supporting altruism leads to a more stable environment and it also reduces aggressive behavior. Altruistic behavior contributes to human well-being and to physical or mental health [35]. Altruism is closely related to various volunteer and supportive activities such as charity or community-based programs. According to the humanitarian security concept - human security can be achieved by strengthening international law, coordinating international action, severely restricting weapons and tools of destruction, and preventing and severely punishing genocide and war crimes. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), established in 1998, oversees UN humanitarian and disaster response activities. Among its many activities, OCHA provides information on emergencies around the world and organizes international actions to mobilize donations and provide emergency assistance to those in need. OCHA's members and partners include governments, civil and humanitarian organizations, UN agencies, foundations and the Red Cross. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) is a humanitarian fund established by the General Assembly in 2006 to help those affected by natural disasters and national conflicts. Governments, private sector, foundations and individuals upload it annually. In 2013 Hungary became a member of UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination [36].

UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs created *“COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan”* and *“COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund”*, as a joint effort to fight global health crisis and appealed to governments to support these plans. Their main strategic priorities are first of all, „preparing and being ready” by decreasing the risks and protecting vulnerable groups. It is necessary to decrease deterioration of human rights and assets, as much as livelihoods and social cohesion. The plan also draw attention to prevent discrimination or violence against communities and enhance understanding and

awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic. Humanitarian work, not only from individuals but also from governments are more necessary nowadays, than ever before [37].

CONCLUSION

Concepts like altruism and safety could be obvious for ordinary people; however, deeper analyzing and framing provided a wider result. Both concepts were hard to puzzle out due to their complexity; however, we provided an overview – without being exhaustive – about their appearance in several forms and fields. It would be much longer, more complicated and probably impossible to reveal every form of altruism and safety. Although our purpose with this study was not to detail in so many words these concepts, but to find connection between them.

Trust, is a significant component of altruism, but it also holds risks, and these components are working as mirror images. By demonstrating several studies we revealed, how these are acting in various scenes [15] [16] [17] [32] [33]. Risk management is a term, what plays important role in safety as well. However, it is worth to mention, we did not deal with specifying the different methods of risk-analysis, so as a first step for our following study, we will examine risk management in an angle of human security. Altruism could be infiltrated in the word of safety, since humanitarian work is an important part of human security. In this study, we also get a nearer view of humanitarian work from the aspect of United Nations. As our second step for our following study, we would like to take a closer look on volunteerism and humanitarian programs, not only from the corporate side, but also from the side of civilians. The UN and OCHA plays leading role in bringing together selfless actors and to create a culture of protection, but the strain of each individual could the inducement behind work.

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