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REVIEW

Natalia Moch, Bezpieczeństwo miasta wobec współczesnych wyzwań[1]

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According to Ben Wilson, cities (…) *despite their enormous successes, are harsh, merciless environments. They offer prospects of education and higher earnings, but they can corrupt the soul and the mind, and poison the lungs. One must learn to live in them, to put up with the noise, the smog and the stifling cramped conditions*[2]. Nevertheless, their population is steadily increasing, as confirmed by statistical data[3].

What has always attracted people to cities is the opportunity to be part of urban culture, and nowadays this also includes access to many smart

[1] N. Moch, *Bezpieczeństwo miasta wobec współczesnych wyzwań* (Eng. City security in the face of contemporary challenges), Warszawa 2025, Difin, 465 p. The book is available only in Polish.

[2] B. Wilson, *Metropolis. Największy wynalazek ludzkości* (Eng. Metropolis. A History of Humankind's Greatest Invention), Warszawa 2022, pp. 15–16.

[3] United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Urbanization Prospects 2025. Summary of Results*, New York 2025, https://population.un.org/wup/assets/Publications/undesa_pd_2025_wup2025_summary_of_results_final.pdf [accessed: 3 VIII 2026].

systems, medical infrastructure and everything that contributes to a high quality of life for the individual. Consequently, in recent years there has been a growing interest in the course and dynamics of urban processes, which is reflected in both public discussion and scientific discourse[4]. Researchers and publicists discuss various aspects of the urban universe. A city requires them to carry out comprehensive analyses and propose modern solutions, because it is constantly evolving, and the direction of the changes taking place within it is dynamic.

Natalia Moch undertook a thorough assessment of one of its elements, namely security. Her scientific activity focuses on issues relating to national security system, crisis management and city safety. In 2025, her publication *Bezpieczeństwo miasta wobec współczesnych wyzwań* (Eng. City security in the face of contemporary challenges) was released by the Difin publishing house. The author points out that the existing legal regulations, strategic documents and crisis management plans do not facilitate a comprehensive assessment or the development of appropriate policy in this area. In her view, the current narrative lacks a holistic approach to this issue. The research she conducted and the conclusions drawn from it could in the future assist city authorities in preparing solutions to improve the level of security.

The author set herself five specific goals and posed the following questions:

1. What is the context of urban security research?
2. How did the need for security influence the formation and development of cities?
3. What are the challenges to the security of modern cities across all spheres of their functioning?
4. How the issue of city security is presented in international and national legal and doctrinal literature?
5. What tools enable a security assessment and, consequently, the formulation of the national security policy?[5]

The author's use of research method triangulation in her analysismade it possible to obtain high-quality results. The review and assessment of city's security

[4] See also: C. Moreno, *15-minutowe miasto. Jak uratować nasz czas i planetę* (Eng. The 15-minute city: a solution to saving our time and our planet), Kraków 2024; D. Szymańska, *Inteligentne miasta* (Eng. Smart cities), Warszawa 2023; S. Gzell, *Urbanistyka XXI wieku* (Eng. Urban planning of the 21st century), Warszawa 2020; A. Majer, *Miasto według socjologii. Wybrane tematy* (Eng. A City from the sociological perspective), Łódź 2020; D. Wantuch-Matla, *Przestrzeń publiczna 2.0. Miasto u progu XXI wieku* (Eng. Public space 2.0. The city at the dawn of the 21st century), Łódź 2016; W. Graham, *Miasta wyśnione. Siedem wizji urbanistycznych, które kształtują nasz świat* (Eng. Dream cities: seven urban ideas that shape the world), Kraków 2016; J. Kowalczyk, *Bezpieczeństwo przestrzeni współczesnych miast. Przykład Wielkiej Brytanii* (Eng. Security in modern urban spaces. An example of the United Kingdom), Warszawa 2020.

[5] N. Moch, *Bezpieczeństwo miasta…*, pp. 16–17.

provided an answer to the main research question relating to the issue of ensuring security in the face of identifiable threats. The pages of the monograph convey the conviction that all interested parties – that is, the residents, city authorities as well as public and private entities – should be involved in this process. Only the collective efforts of all groups can ensure comfortable functioning of the city across various spheres of life and influence the level of security.

The first chapter of the monograph is the answer to the question about the conditions of research on urban security. The author begins this part by describing the evolution of city and its impact on the individual. She emphasises that researchers have so far been unable to arrive at a single definition that would fully capture its essence, which makes it necessary to draw on studies from various scientific disciplines[6]. In this regard, she cites the opinions of philosophers, sociologists, geographers and urban planners who focused on this issue in their research. Moch points out that urban centres have always differed in size, location, population and functions. Then she lists the features that describe contemporary city and the criteria for their distinction. In the monograph, she explains the phenomenon of the dynamic development of contemporary urban centres. The author's perspective, drawn from her own academic discipline, complements the research carried out to date by academics from other fields of study. The author's interdisciplinary insight into the nature of the contemporary city facilitates both an understanding of it and of the processes taking place within it, which make it a unique system co-created by various stakeholder groups. This system consists of infrastructure, environment, resources and local legal regulations. In her opinion, the city as a subject of research is heterogeneous in nature and can be examined from various perspective: empirical, humanistic, environmental and social, as well as in the real and conceptual domains.

Moch points out that as with determining what city is, it is difficult to define the security of urban centres. Nowadays, it is not limited to providing protection against crime and activities of a strictly policing nature, but also encompasses many aspects of city life. This is because, for the individual, safety is the second most important need of Maslov's pyramide[7]. Zygmunt Bauman also pointed this out and claimed that (…) *civilised man has exchanged a portion of his possibilities of happiness for a portion of security*[8]. In the field of urban security studies, cities are

[6] See also an overview of definitions provided in: S. Baraniewicz-Kotasińska, *Smart City. Kto rządzi w inteligentnych miastach?* (Eng. Smart City. Who rules in smart cities?), Warszawa 2023, pp. 21–28.

[7] A. Maslow, *Motywacja i osobowość* (Eng. Motivation and personality), Warszawa 2009, pp. 65–66.

[8] Z. Bauman, *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień* (Eng. Postmodernity and its discontents), Warszawa 2000, p. 7.

both the subject and the object. According to contemporary researchers, they remain a key element of global security. They are the scene of many of the problematic situations facing the modern world, stemming from the rise of organised crime, the threats of terrorism and cyberattacks, as well as climate change, migration, and economic and energy crises – and also from the fact that are increasingly becoming theatre of war[9]. Therefore, city centres should be resilient to threats and capable of responding to changes. The author believes that they will then live up to the hopes placed in them regarding safety. In her opinion, both the involvement of all groups of stakeholders from the area in the activities being carried out and the use of innovative and traditional tools will be helpful in achieving this state.

Having discussed issues relating to the city as an object of study in the security sciences and as an agent and guarantor of security, Moch describes the history of the city's own formation in the second chapter. This overview, spanning from ancient times to the present day, provides an insight into cities that have for centuries been (…) *the driving forces behind social and cultural change, technological progress and the exchange of goods, people and ideas*[10]. The author characterised the city-forming factors, including: environmental, economic, defence-related, transport-related, social and legal, as well as urban layout. In addition, she analyses the concepts of city security that have evolved over the centuries, and she concludes her discussion with the present day, when the concept of security began to be examined in a context of public, community and social safety. She discusses the key theories, including Oscar Newman's defensible space theory from 1972[11] and Clarence Ray Jeffery's concept of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)[12]. Moch provides a brief overview of them, which helps to better understand these researchers' views on issues relating to city security. Then she discusses new perspectives embedded in the CPTED II concept by Gregory Saville and Gerry Cleveland[13], as well as the CPTED III concept by Mateja Mihinjac and Gregory Saville[14]. Moch points out that the latter is closest to the concept of a sustainable city, developing towards smart city. The author then introduces

[9] S. Graham, *Cities as Battlespace: The New Military Urbanism*, "City" 2009, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 383–402. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810903298425.

[10] N. Moch, *Bezpieczeństwo miasta*…, p. 67.

[11] O. Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*, New York 1972.

[12] C.R. Jeffery, *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*, Beverly Hills 1971.

[13] G. Cleveland, G. Saville, *Introduction to 2nd Generation to CPTED, pt. 2 – continued from the last issue of CPTED perspective*, "CPTED Perspective: The International CPTED Association Newsletter" 2003, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 4–7.

[14] M. Mihinjac, G. Saville, *Third-Generation Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)*, "Social Sciences" 2019, no. 6, pp. 1–20. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8060182.

readers to the Secured by Design initiative implemented by ACPO (Association of Chief Officers, currently NPCC – National Police Chiefs' Council), establishing accreditation system for products used in public spaces (e.g. doors, windows, locks, wall systems). Its basic assumption is to improve safety of the buildings and surrounding area by implementing appropriate standards. This is particularly important in cities striving to be smart, where also architecture fosters a sense of safety. In the monograph, she also refers on several occasions to the very concept of smart city, which was introduced into academic discussion in 1992, and has not yet been unambiguously defined[15]. Moch points out that security in cities is dynamic in nature, and measures to ensure it make use of new technologies, which allows, among other things, for monitoring the condition of critical infrastructure in real time, planning equipment maintenance or taking rapid action in crisis situations. Nowadays, the sense of security in public space is fostering, among other things, by smart lighting systems, city surveillance, transport systems and solutions in the field of cybersecurity, particularly regarding data protection. Furthermore, the author draws attention to the growing importance and number of various types of applications used by modern centres, enabling, for example, the mapping of crime in real time, smart video surveillance, early disaster warning or alerting via smartphones. The concepts and technological solutions described in this chapter show that issue of the city's security has long been a matter of concern to the researchers and those in power. In the face of global crises, the need for a safe city has grown even further in recent times.

In the course of her multifaceted considerations, the author often returns to the recommendation to involve all stakeholders utilising urban space in development of a safe city, as they are the ones grappling with the daily challenges and threats in its particular spheres. According to Moch, conducting research in this area is essential, primarily because of the changes that cities are undergoing, their complexity, uncertainty and dynamism. In addition, urban processes can cause a sense of uncertainty and even insecurity among city dwellers. The researcher points to the need for city authorities to make decisions aimed at the early identification of hazards. She argues that lessons learnt from these events can be helpful in developing strategies for cities. The third chapter of monograph is devoted to this subject. In it, the author not only describes specific areas and gives examples of risks, but also lists tools for ensuring security.

[15] B. Tundys, K.H. Bachanek, E. Puzio, *Smart city. Modele, generacje, pomiar i kierunki rozwoju* (Eng. Smart city. Models, generations, measurement and areas for development), Kraków––Legionowo 2022, pp. 67–127; A. Korenik, *Smart Cities. Inteligentne miasta w Europie i Azji* (Eng. Smart cities. Intelligent cities in Europe and Asia), Warszawa 2019, pp. 20–21.

Firstly, she discusses the sphere of urbanisation and spatial planning, where problems arise from the ongoing urban processes. Their uncontrolled course can lead to economic, environmental and organisational-political difficulties, and necessitate a fresh perspective on city management, including its safety.

In turn, phenomena such as exurbanisation and wild urbanisation can lead to difficulties in another sphere – economic and infrastructural. They are manifested in a shortage of housing, municipal and public services that do not meet residents' needs, and poor transport, energy, telecommunications, water and sanitation infrastructure.

Developing cities also give rise to problems in the socio-cultural sphere. A city is home to people of varying social status, from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. The significant diversity can lead to social conflicts and divisions that municipal authorities must contend with. In addition, contemporary cities are grappling with the problem of urban poverty resulting from a lack of jobs, theft, robbery, burglary, vandalism, hooliganism and the fear of terrorism. The suburbs, which were supposed to be synonymous with safety, are creating an increasing number of risks, linked, among other things, to an unhealthy lifestyle leading to lifestyle-related diseases and social alienation[16]. The author discusses the issues related to this area in detail and points out that preventing them – given the area's vast size and a city population – poses a challenge for the urban security system.

These two elements also influence the way security is designed with regard to the environmental and natural sphere. The analyses conducted by researchers confirm that measures to prevent negative phenomena or eliminate their effects require a significant investment of resources and effort in urban areas because (…) *cities live at the intersection of dynamic environmental, economic, metabolic, social, and cultural systems*[17]. When discussing the risks in this area, the author does not merely describe the likelihood of them occurring in Polish cities, but also provides examples of solutions that can help to mitigate them. In her opinion, in order to tackle these challenges, contemporary cities should build a resilient system that would enable them to recover if necessary.

The following issues relate to the technical and technological sphere and concern the risk of a cyber attack. Cities currently collect large amounts of data that make everyday life easier. In the wrong hands, this information could pose

[16] Ch. Montgomery, *Miasto szczęśliwe. Jak zmienić nasze życie, zmieniając nasze miasta* (Eng. Happy city. Transforming our lives through urban design), Kraków 2024, pp. 136–137.

[17] J.F.P. Rose, *Dobrze nastrojone miasto. Współczesna nauka, starożytne cywilizacje i ludzka natura: czego mogą nas nauczyć o przyszłości życia w miastach* (Eng. The well-tempered city: what modern science, ancient civilisations, and human nature teach us about the future of urban life), Kraków 2019, p. 242.

a threat. The author highlights the need to ensure protection against such attacks, as they result in the paralysis of public authorities and the services provided by cities. Moch recommends the use of tools such as: artificial neural networks, expert systems (specialised software) or unmanned aerial vehicles, which can be used, among other things, for forecasting and modelling urban processes or for risk assessment. At the same time, she recommends exercising caution when using them and considering, in each instance, the potential benefits and possible harms associated with their use.

The author goes on to recommend cooperation between the civil and military authorities as well as joint exercises aimed at preventing risks in the military sphere and eliminating them. Cities have played a significant role in military operations for centuries, as demonstrated by the examples the author cites, including those from World War II and the modern era, such as: Grozny (1995–2000), Mosul (2016–2017), Marawi (2017). At present, the dense urban fabric facilitates defensive operations, limits the possibility of an attack and enables combat to be conducted at various levels. At the same time, the infrastructure is, for the most part, ill-equipped to fulfil a protective role for the civil population. In addition, implementing specific defence and protection measures may be complicated by the fact that local communities are inadequately prepared for the possibility of a life-threatening situation. The disinformation that is common in such situations breeds panic and can cause a great deal of damage in various areas. Therefore, Moch points out that a modern city is (…) *the most difficult and complex battlefield*[18], and the military sphere is very important in the context of its security.

The proper functioning of each of the above areas influences the assessment of a city and, as the author points out, is essential to ensuring its security. It may be helpful in this regard to draw up a city security policy based on identification, analysis and evaluation, while taking into account changing circumstances, so that urban systems become more integrated, resilient and flexible.

Jane Jacobs wrote, that (…) *cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody*[19]. Therefore, activities on their behalf are being carried out by, among others: the United Nations, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) or the European Union. The processes currently taking place in cities – which, due to their sheer number and rapid pace, can leave the individual feeling lost. In such a situation, it is essential to establish a protective framework, which

[18] N. Moch, *Bezpieczeństwo miasta*…, p. 211.

[19] J. Jacobs, Śmierć i życie wielkich miast Ameryki (Eng. The death and life of great American cities), Warszawa 2014, p. 249.

in developed centres consists of: culture, communication, coherence and shared responsibility[20].

Moch devoted the penultimate chapter of the publication to these issues, in which she analysed the international and national legal framework from the perspective of city security. She began her overview with a description of the initiatives being carried out by the UN's agencies, such as: the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). The concepts implemented by these specialised units, among other things, are intended to make cities sustainable and socially inclusive, with local communities actively involved in these activities through training, programmes and the exchange of experiences. Furthermore, these agendas support countries in the fight with drugs, corruption, terrorism and crime. Poorly governance of cities where access to social services is limited, and where violence and fear prevail, has a negative impact not only on their reputation and the daily lives of their residents, but also on the image of a given country. The author analyses in greater detail the elements of urban security management identified by the UNODC, as well as the recommendations of the UNDRR on building resilience, in the context of occurrence of the natural disasters. Summarising the UN's activities, the author draws the reader's attention to the fact that, despite significant effort on the organisation's part, the issue of city security remains unresolved.

The initiatives put forward by the World Bank mainly relate to improving the planning system and the local capacity of cities, strengthening fiscal and financial systems, promoting territorial and spatial development, building climate and urban resilience, and investing in low-income and marginalised urban communities. The author discusses them in detail, just like analytical tools and services designed to help meet the requirements of urbanisation. She emphasises that the World Bank, in order to increase the level of security in the city, focuses on building public–legal partnerships, engaging local communities, creating knowledge bases for the exchange of the experiences as well as offers various methods of financing and supports the transformation of centres into smart cities.

Later in the chapter, the author also presents the action strategy of the OECD for building a safe city. She points out that this institution reviews national urban policies, draws up standards and guidelines for them and – through dialogue forums – facilitates the exchange of information and experiences. She presents tools which help cities to achieve a sustainable development. She describes in detail the cooperation between the OECD, the UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance,

[20] J.F.P. Rose, *Dobrze nastrojone miasto*…, p. 28.

as well as the National Urban Policy, which enables the monitoring of urban policies and the reaching of a common position on development of these areas[21]. The analyses carried out by the author confirm that city security is not a key issue in the programmes implemented by the OECD. Despite various problems modern cities grapple with on a daily basis, they do, however, have the resources to rebuild after a crisis as well as the tools to prevent them in the future.

The final international organisation discussed in the book that is involved in building secure city is the European Union. With reference to the key EU documents regarding this matter, the author discusses the options set out therein for cities to achieve a satisfactory level of security, which is one of the fundamental characteristics of the cities of the future. She points out that urban planners formulating special policy as well as people and institutions directly engaged in these activities play an important role in this process. The implementation of advanced information and communication technologies and the pursuit of social integration policy aimed at preventing inequalities and exclusion are also important aspects of this process. The documents cited in the monograph, including *the New Charter of Athens 2003 – Vision for Cities in the 21st century* (2003), *the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities* (2007), *the Toledo Declaration* (2010), *the Cities of tomorrow. Challenges, visions, ways forward* (2011), *the Urban Agenda for the European Union* (2016), *the Action Plan to support the protection of public spaces* (2017), *the Action Plan – the Urban Agenda Partnership. Security in Public Spaces* (2020) and *the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2030* (2020), confirm the need for those responsible for managing public spaces to ensure their protection. Based on an analysis of EU documents, the author concludes that the use of various tools to build a secure city and the involvement of stakeholders in this process at both national and local levels will yield positive results and contribute to urban resilience.

In this section, she also discusses the activities of standardisation institutions and private individuals who, as part of the services they provide and based on the standards they have developed, build safe cities. The author concludes her deliberations with an analysis of documents of political and strategical nature – found in Polish doctrinal and legal literature – that address this issue. Her review of the activities of the organisations mentioned and the legal regulations indicates a lack of documents and methodologies that comprehensively address the issue in question. In her opinion, their scattered nature makes it difficult for local authorities to respond to challenges and threats, both current ones and those that may arise in the future.

[21] See also: *What is National Urban Policy?*, https://unhabitat.org/programme/national-urban-policy [accessed: 3 VIII 2026].

In the last section, Moch recommends the tools useful for assessing safety and developing security policies. She suggests basing it on objective and subjective data, which will enable to develop comprehensive concept that forms part of the city's development strategy. In her opinion, decision-makers should bear in mind that urban centres are multifunctional social, spatial, economic and cultural entities, with a specific history that shapes their identity and universal spatial and functional characteristics. It is worth bearing in mind that many processes are taking place in modern cities, which makes it difficult to pinpoint their future and direction of development with any certainty. In addition, the growing population means that fostering a sense of safety requires a wide range of measures and the engagement of all stakeholders. Therefore, the author recommends that the attention of policymakers focus on reducing uncertainty and existing threats. She sees the planning, preparation and coordination of activities as an opportunity to increase the city's resilience to identified and future crises. She believes that safety of such centres should be viewed in the context of analysing both routine situations, such as recurring events, and sporadic ones, such as incidental occurrences. She proposes that an annual review be carried out, which should facilitate the development of appropriate policies and urban safety strategy as well as the monitoring of changes. The sample survey questionnaire attached to this publication, which covers the issues that need to be taken into account when drawing up such a policy, may facilitate its implementation, monitoring and the elimination of weaknesses.

According to Moch, the city's safety must be viewed holistically, limiting oneself to a single aspect can lead to fragmented management and a lack of coherence, with the result that what was previously a challenge may turn into a threat. She suggests developing a security policy over a 5-year horizon. It should be characterised by a cross-cutting, holistic approach and should relate to various spheres of the city's functioning in the context of security. The examples of specific policies provided, along with a detailed description how they should be drafted, may be helpful when city authorities prepare them for the first time. Currently, few of them decide to take such a step, even though they are the first to face the threat. Making this effort will pay off for cities, as they are the future of civilisation and their population already exceeded that of rural areas in 2007 and is likely to exceed 60% globally by 2030[22]. Our planet is being taken by cities where new ideas take shape and spread, and the ongoing processes of urbanisation are one of the manifestations of the modern civilisation.

[22] M. Degórski, *Suburbanizacja a środowisko – kontekst dobrostanu człowieka* (Eng. Suburbanisation and the environment – the context of human well-being), in: *Suburbanizacja. Człowiek – zmiana – przestrzeń*, M. Grochowski (sci. ed.), Warszawa 2023, p. 98.

The book under review is distinguished by an interdisciplinary, holistic approach to the subject matter. It is supplemented by charts and tables as well as appendices concerning the definition of the concept of a city, the calculation of indicators for measuring security in the city, and a survey of residents' sense of safety. These additional materials help the reader to understand the issue in question and assist the city authorities in drawing up appropriate documents, including a security policy for a given urban centre. The author cites examples relating to both Polish and foreign cities, and presents this complex issue in an accessible way. The research carried out not only makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in the security sciences, but also enables the identification of gaps in documents, methodologies and policies, as well as facilitates the development of uniform standards for assessing security levels, which may influence the effectiveness of the solutions applied. The publication may also serve as an academic textbook. The analysis of city security and associated contemporary challenges was carried out using a wide range of scientific methods, which may help with further research into this phenomenon and, for those encountering this topic for the first time, makes it easier to navigate this complex subject. Further research into this topic will be necessary, as the cities of the future are constantly changing. The research Natalia Moch carried out aims to create people-friendly urban space and a sense of safety among residents, who may currently be concerned about various threats affecting their lives and day-to-day existence.

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