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A FIRE IN A RURAL AREA, HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA [ПОЖАР В СЕЛЬСКОЙ МЕСТНОСТИ, ПОВЕДЕНИЕ ЧЕЛОВЕКА И РОЛЬ СМИ]

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Резюме. В данном исследовании рассматриваются формы поведения людей во время пожара, который произошел в сельской местности. Авторы взяли тексты, опубликованные в 1930 и 1931 в котором белградская газета "Vreme" сообщали о пожарах, которые произошли в бывшей Югославии. В большинстве текстов описали действия с тремя различными фазами: эвакуация (если пожар угрожает домохозяйства), спасательные движимого имущества и скота, локализации и локализации пожара. Паника как форма группового поведения, описанного в отчетах о пожарах в котором внезапное изменение ситуации произошло, будь то пожар внезапно исчезающих с лица(лиц) или неожиданно расширились активов, которые не были им затронуты.

Ключевые слова: пожар, поведение людей, анализ текста, СМИ.

Introduction

The common characteristic of human behavior in the circumstances including unexpected and sudden events such as earthquakes, floods, fires, is the need to decide when pressed for time. When making decisions in a situation where the life and property are threatened at the same time, individuals sometimes act independently, and sometimes their behavior is modified under the influence of other people who are close by. Behavior of people during

sudden events sometimes may take on a form of collective behavior. [1]

In this study, we took into account the reports of the fires that had occurred at the beginning of the 1930's in the former Yugoslavia. We reviewed all the numbers of "Vreme" daily newspaper, which was published at the time in Belgrade. Total of 33 reports of fires was found that have occurred in the rural areas in 1930 and 1931. For comparison we used 155 reports of fires that have occurred in cities.

In the descriptions of fire, people's behavior came to the fore aimed at rescuing the property since the fires occurred in homes and farms, and evacuation of people was not the problem. It often happened that the property caught by fire was partly or almost completely destroyed because the buildings were poorly constructed and inadequately secured from fire. In addition, fire protection was not developed, and at the outbreak of the fire the villagers were primarily directed at themselves.

Behavior model

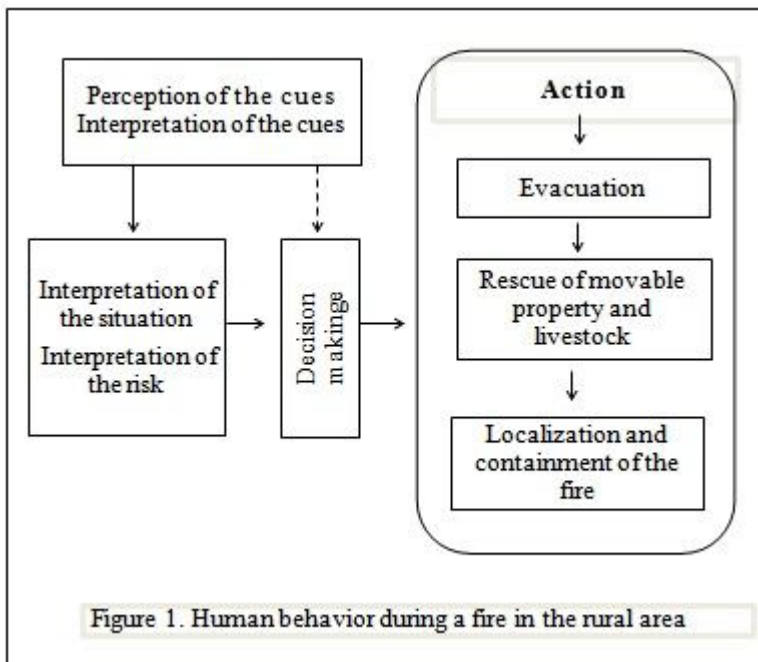
In the reports on fires in rural areas that we had in mind rational behavior was evident. If a fire broke out in the residential facilities, personal risk usually was not great because these were one-storey houses that could be easily and quickly emptied. Efforts were directed at minimizing the damage and rescue assets.

The fire is quickly followed by the cues: smoke and flames. When a person is near, they will be recognized as the cue of a fire, but from greater distance they must become more pronounced. When recognized, cues of fire will cause a sudden change in individual behavior (Figure 1). One interrupts any activity he/she was engaged in at the moment a, draws attention to the cues of fire addressing other people if there are any. Sometimes it is necessary to identify from where the cues come, in which place they are located. It is a process of interpretation, which has three components: "interpreting the cues received, interpreting the situation (i.e. as a fire), and interpreting or defining the risk to the self and / or others" [2]

The cues of fire (smoke, flame) that break out at a farm immediately would launch into action the members of the household and soon after the close neighbors would come to help. Large fires were also described, in whose restraint further neighbors and even people from other villages were coming to

help. When a fire occurs and is spotted, usually lot of people had gathered around the spot. Behavior of people usually took on a rational form: in a situation where there were no threatened individuals, the first step was to rescue the movable property and livestock, and then to localize and put out the flames. These were situations in which the best options and line of action were easy to recognize. This behavior is shown by the model in Figure 1.

In the description of some major fires, within the group of people who participate in containing the fire there was an emphasized special role of some individuals. These are one or two or three "sane persons" whose behavior affect others and establish coordination in the group that participates in the rescue of property. When it is in the village, the assembled people know each other and it facilitates communication.



Collective behavior

There were descriptions of the fires in which the situation changed significantly during the fire. A new interpretation of the situation caught off-guard the people who were involved in containing fire, and collective behavior took on the form of panic. Such was the situation described during a fire in the village Begej: "The flames had spread to the buildings, stacks of hay and straw. There was panic, bells from churches and sirens from firemen caused even more fear. Nobody knew where to start putting out. In a quarter of an hour, about 50 houses were in flames."

In the reports on fires in the countryside, the behavior was also described in which selected option obviously was not the best. The first option was to start to put out the flames as the villagers did. However, they did not take into account the possibility that in windy weather the fire can quickly spread. The fire spread behind their back and engulfed houses in which children and older persons were: "But the wind was tossing lighted torches of straw on the roofs of village houses and after a few minutes the village was turned into a focal point. Distraught mothers, who were rescuing grain at the threshing floor, and whose children were in the village, started to faint from fear. There was the eerie wailing and helpless cries of children and the elderly."

In some fires the collective sense of powerlessness before the destructive power was described; people, paralyzed by fear, were watching the destruction of property that could not be saved by any action: "People were in agony, helplessly watched fire devouring their property."

The risk perception "before the alarm" and the role of media

Sometimes in assessing the role of the media, besides its contribution to the advancement of fire protection, the possibility of unintended consequences is mentioned. From the current time position it is difficult to judge whether the reports published in the "Vreme" newspaper could encourage some potential arsonist. It should be borne in mind that this was the period of the economic crisis and that there were malicious arsons by the owners of the insured property. The press informed their readers about suspicions that a fire was set, and about the courts proceedings.

In the "Vreme" newspaper reports on the fires were given enough space, and besides the title, many reports also contained a headline or subtitle. The

reports often communicated the estimated amount of damage, as well as information whether the destroyed property was insured. The reports which said that fire department arrived on time, localized fire and contributed to the reduction of damage, pointed out to the significance of firefighters and the level of their technical equipment.

In the reports about the fire in "Vreme" we noted the presence of picturesque expression, the use of epithets, similes and metaphors. Here we will pay the attention to the imagery in media reports about fires, bearing in mind the reflection of the reporting on risk perception "before the alarm" for wider readership. Use of epithets contributed that the reader got a distinct image of the fire and what was happening at the site of the fire. There are three groups of epithets. A first group are those that occur in conjunction with nouns which mean the fire itself: smoke, flame, fire, embers. Another group of epithets occur in conjunction with nouns to designate the place: scene, image, burned remains. A third group of epithets came in conjunction with nouns which described the behavior of the people: groaning, wailing, shouting, panic.

"Frantic cries for help", "eerie wails", "helpless cries", "desperate screams", "distraught mothers", "terrifying sight", "appalling image", "enormous charred shell", "horrible images", "desperate woman's cry", "terrible fire", "terrible scene", "tremendous panic", "big flame", "huge blue flame", "red flames", "huge flame", "hot coals", "thick column of smoke", "thick jet smoke", "great fire", "unprecedented fire", "disastrous fire", "catastrophic explosion", "mysterious fire", "huge clouds of black smoke"

Comparisons were used in the picturesque description of the fire as well as in the description of the way in which something was burning. There are characteristic short comparisons in which only one word was used as a standard, a noun: "burning like a torch"; "burns like gasoline"; "dust burning as magnesium"; "vast amounts of material; [...] which were burned as paper". Use of the short standard enhanced the picturesque expression. Such reports on fires may lead the reader to think about how safe his own assets are. This affects their perception of risk "before the alarm." The longer standard appears in picturesque descriptions of the situation and the fire itself: "Rushed to the scene like a madman"; "Embers began to fall around like a fiery rain"; "Looking like the volcanic crater had opened."

In assessing the way in which the newspaper "Vreme" and their reporting contributed to raising the general level of safety, we should bear in mind that it had also reported on other important issues: the causes of some fires, the substandard construction of buildings, the state of fire protection in the country, on the work of the fire service at some places. They have been publishing statistical data on the occurrence of fire. "Vreme" newspaper invited experts and fire commanders who were giving advice on handling the situation when the fire occurs and how to protect yourself from it. It should be borne in mind that the newspaper "Vreme" reported about the large fires that have occurred in other countries too. On the whole it can be assessed that the newspaper "Vreme" in their reporting on fires contributed to raising general level of fire protection, and therefore had increased personal safety of people in their communities and the safety of their property.

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Abstract. This paper is considering the forms of behavior of people during a fire which occurred in the countryside. We took the texts published during 1930 and 1931 in which the Belgrade newspaper "Vreme" reported about the fires that have occurred in the former Yugoslavia. The most of the texts described the conduct with three discernible phases: evacuation (if a fire threatens household members), rescue of movable property and livestock, localization and containment of the fire. Panic as a form of group behavior is described in the reports on fires in which the sudden change in the situation occurred, whether the fire suddenly endangered a person(s) or unexpectedly widened to assets that had not been affected by it.

Keywords: fire, human behaviour, text analysis, media.

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