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Transnationalization of Civil Society in Kosovo: International and Local Limits of Peace and Multiculturalism

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ABSTRACT   This paper examines the main features of the non-governmental sector in Kosovo engaged in peace building and multi-ethnic coexistence. It seeks to answer the question why this Western-designed civil society sector, well integrated in the flows of the transnational aid industry, has not so far developed significant leverage against the dominant ethno-nationalist politics in Kosovo. It argues that the main problem of this civil society segment—its lack of capacity to engage in defending and legitimizing the peace-building agenda—results from an incomplete analysis of local civil society in Kosovo before 1999. It also arises from the tendency in transnationally exported definitions of the practices of a 'good' civil society to neglect the limits imposed by the local context where, as in Kosovo, the parameters of state sovereignty are based on ethnic homogeneity and segregation. The paper concludes by proposing that plans for Western-style multiculturalism as a programme to stabilize Kosovo may inadvertently perpetuate nationalist (ethno-centred) state building agendas.

This paper sets out to outline the political relevance of a highly prioritized goal of foreign assistance in Kosovo: the development of a non-governmental sector in charge of peace building and what is customarily termed 'multi-ethnic coexistence' or 'multiculturalism'. Given the practical situation on the ground six years after the setting-up of the UN protectorate in Kosovo—a nearly complete individual and institutional segregation between Kosovan Albanians and Serbs—I seek to explain why the foreign-assisted and evidently increasingly transnationalizing (or Westernizing) civil society sector has not so far developed any significant leverage against the dominance of ethno-nationalist divisions in Kosovo. The most striking observation of this study is that the dramatic increase in the number of civil society-building non-governmental organizations (NGOs), subscribing, in both their proclaimed general goals and in their individual projects' objectives, to a multi-ethnic Kosovo, has not contributed to a more sustained involvement of ordinary Kosovans in civil society activities. Nor has there been a sustained impact on the part of civil society NGOs on the political reality of the UN protectorate.

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I begin with a discussion of the definitions and practices of civil society in the region and in Kosovo in particular. I then move on to summarize and interpret findings and observations from a number of surveys with the goal of support or objecting to the initial theses on the problems of a foreign-aided civil society in Kosovo *vis-à-vis* the goals of peace and multiculturalism. I argue that an incomplete analysis and knowledge on the part of Western aid organizations of the local civil society in Kosovo before 1999 has simultaneously contributed to the marginalization of many pre-existing civil society organizations and to the over-estimation of what a brand new internationally funded civil society can actually accomplish in the face of powerful political pressures stemming from the zero-sum game of Kosovan prospective state sovereignty (or its denial). In other words, Western actors have neglected the effect that deep political fissures, i.e. mutually exclusive state-building agendas, have had upon a previously politicized and forcibly ethnically segregated civil society. Further, I will demonstrate that civil society actors take enormous risks when questioning the moral and social legitimacy of ethnocentric state building, which may have little to do with local everyday-life practices of inter-ethnic relations, but quite a lot to do with NGO allegiance to ethno-centred definitions of the Kosovo statehood. In several ways, ironically, Kosovan NGO-ized civil society faces greater pressure from Western donors and mediators to implement peace building and multiculturalism than do the Kosovan political elites.

The paper follows the political opportunity structure approach (e.g. Tarrow, 1998), which is deemed far more helpful than the popular historicist–nationalist view of ethnic segregation in Kosovo for understanding why ethno-centred nationalist political agendas are still preferred by a great number of civil society groups as more reliable and safe 'master frames' of their relationship with Kosovan political elites. Simultaneously the same civic actors are well positioned in the transnational international aid industry: they incorporate the goals of a 'multi-ethnic Kosovo' in their projects' ideological universe. Finally, I will propose that plans for a transnational or Western-style multiculturalism—as a social and political programme that would stabilize Kosovo regardless of its future status—may inadvertently perpetuate the nationalist, i.e. ethno-centred state-building agenda, as in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina. I argue that the sort of multiculturalism that draws on the Western model of integration of minorities or immigrants in terms of 'majority-being-sensitive-to-minority' instantly demonstrates—in post-violence and state status-pending Kosovo—the ultimate 'nuisance' that the sheer multiple presence of minorities (Serbs in south-central Kosovo, Albanians in the Serb-controlled north, Roma everywhere) creates for the majority-centred concept of state building, which, in Kosovo, is still to be approved (or denied).

The Record of Local Civil Society

There is a broad consensus that a vibrant civil society is an essential component of any robust democratic infrastructure, and that reversing its relative weakness in Kosovo is vital for the establishment of a sustainable peace. So far this function has largely been carried out through the efforts of international organizations, which arrived at once and in large numbers following the 1999 NATO intervention, landing among local civic and political actors that had for long suffered from the deleterious impact of political violence, discrimination and isolation.

Kosovan civil society developed during the 1990s in the form of 'parallel structures', offering educational and health services to those whose access to government provision was impaired as a result of ethno-political discrimination. It also contributed, albeit to a lesser degree, to the development of awareness concerning human rights and gender issues. The majority of underground civil society activists were Kosovo Albanian professionals who during the late1980s and mid-1990s were dismissed from their jobs in state schools, universities, courts and hospitals, and replaced with Serbs. From 1988 ethnic apartheid was gradually institutionalized as the rise of Slobodan Milošević to power in the Serbian League of Communists was marked by the abolition of the constitutional autonomy of the two Serbian provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina). It seems reasonable to ask why, in the aftermath of the 1999 military intervention and the establishment of the rule of theUnited Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the 'parallel structures' did not become the foundation and the most valuable resource of the new internationally funded civil society? Answering this question requires a closer examination of pre-1999 civil society in Kosovo.

It is instructive to mention here the definitions of civil society that were upheld by local activists in Eastern Europe before 1989, since they also to some extent informed the ideology and practice of Kosovan 'parallel structures' during the 1990s. Civil society was regarded as a political project, to be carried out by informal groups who created opportunities for 'learning solidarity' beyond state control. In the famous formulation of George Konrad, 'antipolitics' (as synonymous with civil society of the time) was meant to hollow out the space of influence of the totalitarian state and prepare the ground for democratic development in the region (Konrad, 1984). Kosovan 'parallel structures' resembled the 'antipolitics' model to the extent that they operated entirely outwith Serbian state institutions, while the latter tacitly welcomed the fact that they took over nearly the entire sphere of social services provision for the Kosovo Albanian population. While in their earlier period the parallel structures espoused broader goals of democratic and social development, in their later stages the movement became focused on the struggle for Kosovo's independence from Yugoslavia and Serbia. This dynamic resulted from the increasing repression of the civilian population throughout the 1990s, which emptied all official institutions of Kosovo Albanians, while making it increasingly difficult to recruit qualified professionals into the ranks of the parallel structures (Maliqi, 1996). In this way, pressures to survive and resist the Serbian regime overshadowed the initial drive towards the democratization and pluralization of Kosovo, making the movement more rigid and autarkic by default, and increasingly delegitimized by the growing popular appeal of the plan for the violent ending of the Serbian oppression. Once the Serbian regime was driven out by the military campaigns of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and NATO, much of the entitlements of the parallel structures, whose many activities were previously supported by the solidarity funds collected from the Kosovo Albanian diaspora community, started to lose their rationale. In addition, and not surprisingly, a great number of former activists of the 'parallel structures was absorbed into the new Kosovo Albanian political parties and, later, into the institutions of provisional government. Partisan politics became the main investment in and agenda of public organizing, where the majority of younger leaders built their political capital not on the legacies of civic resistance, but on the success of their military campaigns and of their ultimate goal—state sovereignty.

During the 1990s the Kosovo Albanian system of parallel political institutions was coordinated by the League for Democratic Kosovo (LDK), founded in 1989, and led by the president in exile Ibrahim Rugova. The LDK based its mobilizational strategies on the pre-existing organizations of the Province's League of Communists, such as trades unions, and, especially in the rural areas, on a combination of the socialist-era and traditional patriarchal forms of authority and solidarity. Already in 1989 the LDK-led parallel structures had branched out into civil society voluntary associations, such as the Mother Teresa Society (still one of the largest local NGOs) and the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF). Other organizations established at this time included women's and youth groups, as well as the Kosovo Helsinki Council. Most of these early civil society groups were founded by the CDHRF, and operated as a social welfare system of the government led by the LDK. The CDHRF is still very active in Kosovo, and closely cooperates with the larger international NGO partners such as Amnesty International, the International Federation of Human Rights, and the International Crisis Group.

To sum up, during the 1990s Kosovo Albanian civil society developed its grassroots base and dense activities across the province. However, these organizations were not natural predecessors of the post-1999 NGOs: on the one hand, they were almost exclusively oriented toward service provision, while, on the other, they operated in the context of enforced ethnic apartheid and a growing no-dissent-considered consensus about the goal of Kosovo independence. Although from time to time they reached agreement with the Serbian government in Belgrade concerning the use of hospitals in Serbia, they were not normally involved in any cooperative or advocacy work with or against the Serbian government. This is hardly surprising given the fact that these developments were taken place before the demise of the one-party political system in socialist Yugoslavia. Thus, Kosovo Albanian civil society groups were akin to semi-underground social movement organizations subordinated in their ideological and practical agenda to the 'shadow government' of the LDK (Nietsch, 2004, makes similar observations).

Civil Society Since 1999: the Parallel De-politicization and Transnationalization of the NGO Universe

Immediately after the war new NGOs mushroomed in Kosovo because of the sudden influx of international donor funding. Since 2002–03, when the humanitarian relief stage gave way to the stage of development, and when a large number of major donors started phasing out their operations, local NGOs have been faced with difficult and often contradictory options: to change their focus and specialization and adapt to yet another set of (new) donors' priorities, or to insist on their own perceptions of the priorities and needs of their direct beneficiaries and the wider population (Nietsch, 2004). In all cases they had to start competing for funding in a shrinking donors' market, or joining forces with other local NGOs to form larger more durable NGO networks. Their choices and space for manoeuvre were aggravated by a number of rules imposed by donors and large international NGO partners. Based on the examples that I will present below, it is possible to argue that, while the acceptance of internationally agreed and uniform definitions of peace and multi-ethnicity may have led to the better incorporation of Kosovan NGOs in the transnational flows and networks of the aid industry, such a process simultaneously hampers the long-term commitment and contribution of the

local civil society to the development of political dimensions and institutions of multi- or inter-ethnic reality in Kosovo. The lack of political commitment of local NGOs to their stated goals of lasting peace building and its priorities is most strikingly manifested in the area of 'minority (Serb and Roma) returns'.

In the aftermath of the 1999 military intervention the most widespread practice pursued by the largest foreign aid donors in developing civil society in Kosovo was to create local NGOs as divisions of large international NGOs (Nietsch, 2004). More significant problems of autonomy of local NGOs, pertaining to priorities and methods of peace building, can be defined as problems of unequal 'partnership' with international actors. The same problem can be also said to affect NGOs' relationship with local elites, i.e. with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG).[1] While 'partnership' seems to include a wide array of relationships, ranging from local NGOs being in sole charge of applying ideas of peace and multi-ethnicity that originate outside Kosovo to including creative input on the part of locals, most arrangements, in reality, fall into the category of 'instrumental' partnerships.[2] Here local actors are recognized as indispensable in implementing and operationalizing peace-building programmes, but are not considered equal partners in terms of offering their own definitions of problems and methods of dealing with them (White, 1996; see also in Llamazares & Reynolds Levy, 2003).

The imposition of the donors' definitions of peace and multi-ethnic justice had a more lasting negative effect in terms of neglecting both the local dynamics of inter-ethnic coexistence before 1999 and the post-1999 ethnic 'un-mixing' and out-migration trends. Examples of this neglect abound in the area of minority persons return, which is otherwise a highly prioritized goal. While nearly all programmes of international assistance focus on the 65 000 Roma and Serb internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently residing in the northern municipalities of Kosovo controlled by Serbian authorities, the reintegration of 130 000 Serbs still remaining in local political and social institutions in the rural 'enclaves' in southern Kosovo has not been prioritized.[3] Meanwhile, in some areas with mixed or 'enclaved' populations in central Kosovo, such as Prizren and Gjilan/Gnjilane, there have been significant improvements in multi-ethnic relations: mixed private schools and kindergartens are now popular (and profitable for their owners). During 2004 the fact that it was precisely in towns such as Prizren and Gjilan/Gnjilane that inter-ethnic relationships received some of the heaviest blows presents international actors with another unlearned lesson: minorities in the southern part of Kosovo were left outside the universe of multi-ethnic peace and reintegration programmes for nearly five years, while all energy and imagination was focused on the IDPs in Serbia and their prospects of return. Comparison between various interviews with IDPs in Serbia and with Serbs in the enclaves, as well as with local NGO personnel, reveals some sociological facts that international actors have barely considered when recommending the transnationally certified methods of 'minority return' as part of peace-building and multi-ethnicity agendas. A large number of Serb IDPs currently residing in Serbia are of urban origin and currently have greater prospects of finding jobs in Serbia, and their partial or 'limited' return to Kosovo may be a better solution than a 'full return', although donors have explicitly defined them as 'failures' (Cocozzelli, 2004).

In light of the grave consequences of the March 2004 riots, which pushed some 4500 Kosovans out of their homes, the gap between local reality and transnational conceptions of peace and multi-ethnicity is becoming ever wider. The Serb communities and individuals in the southern enclaves (whose families had resided in Kosovo for generations)

targeted during the March violence were precisely those who had struggled to maintain the most neighbourly relations with their Albanian neighbours.

Unequal partnership, which accompanies the application of international concepts of peace and multi-ethnicity, also contributes to a peculiar role of Kosovan 'transnational' civil society in the local political arena. Cooperation between local NGOs and the PISG is still practically uncharted territory, even though most funding priorities for 'civil society participation' projects list the need for strong cooperation between NGOs and governmental institutions. In concrete terms lobbying and advocacy on the part of local NGOs *vis-à-vis* the PISG is considered part of the ongoing UNMIK policy of decentralization and devolution of powers. In reality, however, local NGOs express their reluctance to lobby or pressure their political elites on issues of multi-ethnic cooperation and minority return for a number of reasons:

1. Fears of appearing too political and too positive towards ethnic minorities, which may be read as jeopardizing the struggle for Kosovo independence;
2. Fears about openly siding with one or another political party;
3. Disagreement with the donor and international NGO view that local civil society must take the lead in inter-ethnic reconciliation (Llamazares & Reynolds Levy, 2003; Danida, 2004; Nietsch, 2004).

These responses may seem to be emanating from the past legacies of Kosovan parallel structures and their antipolitics or from a complete distrust of (Serbian, at the time) state authorities, as well as from local NGOs' continuous unconditional support for the political agenda of Kosovo Sovereignty (or, an unwillingness to provoke doubts about NGOs' commitment to that cause). Nevertheless, this explanation needs updating: given the severe UNMIK and EU-mandated limits on the activities and prerogatives of the PISG, especially in the sphere of minority return and integration and security issues, it seems hardly surprising that peace-building NGOs would see little reason to cooperate with or criticize the PISG. If local NGO actors were to push more openly for goals of multi-ethnic peace and integration, they would not be able to expect any reliable backing from the PISG. They might also become overly exposed and vulnerable to some 'less civil' sectors of civil society, such as the Kosovo Liberation Army veterans' associations, whose factions bear responsibility for the March 2004 violence (International Crisis Group, 2004).

There are more subtle reasons for the lack of cooperation between the NGOs and the PISG, which also demonstrate the economic and social stratification effects of the trans-nationalization of the local civil society sector *vis-à-vis* the rest of (non-transnationalized) Kosovan society. NGOs, on the average, employ people with higher educational and professional skills (prioritizing those with full proficiency in English) than those required by the PISG. NGO personnel also tend to receive two-to-three times higher salaries than their PISG counterparts. Consequently NGO staff may regard their colleagues in the PISG with contempt, while the latter may have reasons to doubt the NGOs' commitment to local-community or political goals. Ironically, but not surprisingly, many local NGO staff complain that they are overqualified for the tasks they are given by their Western managers. This aspect of the transnationalization of local civil society may be described as an invisible or internal 'brain drain'.

The fact that these various concerns and grievances of local NGOs and of the civil society outside them are not regularly voiced by the locals and that they pass unrecognized

by international actors remains a lasting problem of foreign assistance and its skewed transnationalization of the civil society agenda. In the concrete case of international aid to Kosovo's peace building and multi-ethnicity, the multi-levelled unequal partnerships result in the lack of local *ownership of peace*. There is a relevant pre-history of the problem emerging as a global or transnational phenomenon. The outcome of a number of massive international peacekeeping operations during the 1990s was that the most powerful actors in the process—the UN, NATO, governmental agencies, the World Bank, the US government—started coalescing around a shared definition of peace and subsequent policies to design and maintain it (Llamazares & Reynolds Levy, 2003). An important part of this definition, particularly evident in the case of Kosovo, was the lack of trust in the pre-existing local political initiatives with a simultaneous belief that grassroots peace-building participation can be created from scratch in the aftermath of organized violence and state collapse. Subsequently civil society organizations, most of which were created anew, were given the disproportionately difficult task of peace building and ensuring multi-ethnic justice, as in Kosovo, while local governmental institutions were left out of the same process for years. As a result, local NGOs were forced into accepting the internationals' 'peace manuals': even when they faced no serious risk by offering their own alternative visions of peace and multi-ethnic coexistence, the possibility of not getting project funding forced them to accept a given list of priorities and problem definitions. Hence a large number of peace-building projects and a few multi-ethnic NGOs in Kosovo focus on youth initiatives or 'conversation workshops', simply because they involve hardly any political risk or controversy while fitting the bill of internationally mandated peace priorities. In the area of minority returns, as mentioned above, the lack of attention to possible alternatives to 'full return' practices and the focus on Serb IDPs in Serbia has resulted in a number of hastily implemented and failed return projects, while neglecting the needs of the minority population that remained in the southern parts of Kosovo (Cocozzelli, 2004). Many newly built residential complexes stand empty in various parts of Kosovo as a testimony to the misguided plans for minority returns.

In his 'The end of transition paradigm', Thomas Carothers criticizes the currently globally espoused and practised definition of civil society as 'social capital', where Western aid is supposed to offer assistance to post-conflict communities to build networks of mutual trust without any interference from 'top politics'. Carothers argues that designating the NGO sector in post-conflict or 'transitional' regions as simultaneously a leading 'partner' of international agendas for democratization *and* a major recipient of Western financial aid severely cripples local political capacity building (Carothers, 2002). Change must take place in the political sphere proper: more attention should be paid to placing greater responsibility upon political elites for the creation of policies that promote justice, such as ethnically non-discriminatory and affirmative action practices. Accordingly political party and governmental sphere development must take place in congruence with civil society development, and be responsible for offering a safe public arena to civil society actors. If these developments are not set in motion, calls for the foreign-assisted NGO sector to be sincere and fear no one in its commitment to justice will fall on deaf ears or create a civil society with no firm commitment to justice. The 'social capital' pragmatic paradigm of the foreign-funded civil society also tends to mask a lack of imagination or will on the part of powerful international actors, despite their rhetoric, to engage with broader populations in debating 'sensitive' political

issues, such as the instability of political institutions in the aftermath of regime change, which may be, as in the cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, accompanied by the entrenchment of ethno-nationalist programmes. Instead, according to a US Agency for International Development (USAID) official in Belgrade, the realm of high politics is not a major concern for civil society: "The political issues at the top are amusing entertainment, but they do not really affect people's lives" (Gordy, 2003).

There are cases where local NGOs have succeeded in simultaneously making use of local initiatives and resources and incorporating their (transnationally validated) commitment to issues of ethnic non-discrimination or minority integration, while preparing for the phasing out of major donors. Fred Cocozzelli looks at the example of Mercy Corps in Kosovo. Its activities in the area of minority return and residential reconstruction combine initiatives aimed at enhancing solidarity, some would say 'traditional', actions on the part of its constituencies (requiring local in-kind contributions) with a firm stance of advocacy and communal protection of socially marginalized groups and individuals (Cocozzelli, 2004). These local action-stimulating projects stand in contrast to the activities of the Mother Theresa Society, the former leading local NGO in Kosovo, which seems to have continued acting as a charitable, commodity-distributing organization, while only switching from local donors (before 1999) to international NGOs. Llazares and Reynolds Levy offer several positive examples of proactive peace-building projects generated by women's rights NGOs or civil society think-tanks. They have often survived their former dependence on a single donor by joining forces with other groups with similar agendas, and by diversifying their range of potential donors while sustaining their focus on particular issues. This is the case with the Kosovo Civil Society Foundation, or Kosovo Women's' Councils (Llamazares & Reynolds Levy, 2003).

In the concrete political context of Kosovo, potential risks contingent upon the instrumentalization of civil society in pursuing tough political goals, as well as delayed corresponding action in the sphere of political institution building, have been aggravated by the inability of international actors to determine the final status of Kosovo. The top-down realization of particular definitions of peace here implies the UNMIK-mandated 'Standards [of European governance] before Status' course of action, which, while imagined as a mechanism of gradual state-building in Kosovo, is most often used as a tool for suppressing public debate on 'sensitive' political issues. Since the issues of multi-ethnicity and inter-ethnic cooperation are most susceptible to political repercussions, their transnationalization is, thus, accompanied in practice by the discouraging of local civil society groups to engage in any consideration of their serious implementation.

The most encouraging result of the enormous culpability that was laid on the shoulders of UNMIK and KFOR after the March 2004 violence was the pressure to reformulate the implications of the 'Standards before Status' policy. As the chronic lack of motivation on the part of local NGOs to engage in serious cooperation with the PISG demonstrates, local political institutions and Kosovo Albanian parties were granted little power and, subsequently, little responsibility to work on some of the crucial Standards areas pertaining to peace building, such as freedom of movement or sustainable returns. On the other hand, Serbs living in the north of Kosovo under the patronage of Serbia and their parallel institutions saw little benefit in participating in the fulfilment of the Standards. It is still unclear whether or not powerful international actors have recognized that the 'Standards before Status' do little to delegitimize the confrontational and ethno-centred political model of action in Kosovo. However, at least at the level of NGO-led debates, there is

some growing understanding, shared by both parts of Kosovo, that the final status agreement must incorporate and reflect the following real pressures:

● the inevitability and necessity of open borders between Kosovo and Serbia, given the economic and ethnic ties and mix;
● the dependence of both Kosovo and Serbia on the accession procedures of the European Union (EU).

One may hope that Kosovan NGOs will turn these newly gained certainties about where Kosovo stands into new definitions of peace building, which depend more on the feedback from their beneficiaries than on donors, and more on shared responsibilities with local authorities than on covert party allegiances.

Learning from Everyday Life and Economic Travails

As Thomas Carothers points pout, international aid-providing agencies must become involved in building political capacity in post-conflict or 'transitional' regions, which should replace or complement their insistence on 'social capital' as a product of non-politicized civil society (Carothers, 2002). Equally important, in the case of Kosovo, is the process of learning about peace and inter-ethnic coexistence from the realm of everyday life or non-institutionalized civil society.

In the city of Prizren, multi-ethnicity or a local version of multiculturalism, in the form of multilingual practices and non-segregated economic life, has survived the apartheid of the1990s and the violence of 1998–99. In the towns of Gjilan/Gnjilane and Lipjan/Lipljan a similar type of multiculturalism came about as the result of the combination of liberal local government, several successful multi-ethnic endeavours (schools and kindergartens, and a US KFOR-supported business association), and a relatively low level of war destruction. In the March 2004 riots these success stories and areas came under attack, which many interpreted as simply a manifestation of the fragility of local civil society. One should also observe that the severity of the violence in these areas might have been a sign of the deep disturbance that a bottom-up improvement in inte-rethnic relations and reintegration activities caused for the exclusionary agendas of the uncivil and armed segments of local civil society.

One finds the most striking examples of non-hostile inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo in its southeastern region of Anamorava, where 30% of the population is non-Albanian, and where little donor money has so far been spent, but where the dairy plant in the village of Kusce, belonging to an Albanian owner, has a multi-ethnic workforce and regularly attracts Serb farmers. The Borovci Brothers brick factory in the vicinity of Gjilan, a rare successful privatization story, also attracts a multi-ethnic labour force. The factory was bought from the Kosovo Trust Agency that carries the UN mandate for selling former state enterprises. The new owners had to fulfil the requirements of multi-ethnic staff composition. One explanation for not there not being more such success stories is that the 'Standards before Status' policies prevent the sale of a number of large industrial complexes whose facilities lie in both parts of Kosovo (Berisha *et al.*, 2004). Conversations with the unemployed former workers of the Trepča/Trepça mining complex, which used to employ tens of thousands of miners and workers across Kosovo until the late 1980s, and was closed down in 1999 because of environmental hazard issues, offer

an insight into the primary grievances of ordinary people being only indirectly affected by ethno-nationalist programmes.

What worries local business owners in eastern Kosovo, especially those in farming and dairy production, is less the state of ethnic segregation or sovereignty than the implications of the new relaxed customs regime with the European Union. The reality of the EU's lauded 'open doors' economic policy is that it has made it virtually impossible for local producers to compete with Western agricultural imports, while facing numerous sanitary and quality obstacles when trying to export to the EU (Gjurgjeala, 2005). The grim reality of local farmers lies between the EU rhetoric of open markets and its inability to offer subsidies to Balkan farmers similar to those enjoyed by their counterparts in the 'core' EU. It also rests with the weakness of governments, such as those in Serbia, UNMIK-Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Albania, that cannot undertake any serious restructuring of agriculture on their own.

Echoing examples from the arena of everyday life and economic practices, in particular those from the three municipalities of the Anamorava region, some local critics of the 'Standard before Status' policies in Kosovo emphasize that 'multi-ethnicity' and 'multi-culturalism' are irritating terms for locals, as they seem to imply that there was no multi-ethnic Kosovo before 1999, and that it can exist only as a standard to be tried and achieved before the decision on the final status of Kosovo. Some critics suggest that the fact that 'multi-ethnicity' has become part of the Standards before Status (and simultaneously a lasting fad for the NGO world) has also turned even the most banal instances of inter-ethnic communication into a hostage of high politics in Kosovo.[4] A startling example of such hijacking of multi-ethnicity issues is the use of the Serb (or Croat, or Bosnian) language in everyday life in the two largest cities of Priština/Prishtina or Mitrovica. While it may be spoken between non-Albanian speakers and Albanians in private settings, it is considered taboo in public spaces. In this way local practices of inter-ethnic relations have been gradually pushed out of everyday life. With respect to particular experiences of the most vulnerable groups, i.e. local Roma, their situation in the aftermath of the 1999 intervention and the change in Kosovo's status has been reduced to that of a non-state-constituent ethnicity (the lowest-class minority), which has resulted in their lasting neglect at the hands and in the minds of international donors and, consequently, of the transnationalized local aid industry. Inter-ethnic relations are thus continuously reconstituted as a fundamental part of the zero-sum game of ethno-centric sovereignty.

With regard to the use of minority and majority languages in everyday life, it is relevant to place them in the context of other informal patterns of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo. Informal intel-ethnic and cross-border ties work clandestinely but exceptionally well between powerful but illegitimate figures, such as smugglers of goods and people, which even improved in their density and cooperativeness during the war years, following the allure of profits that could be extracted through high-risk trans-border trade at the time, as Aida Hozic documents in her work on Balkan cigarette smuggling (Hozic, 2004), as well as in her article in this issue of Ethnopolitics. Somewhat less clandestine but also less shielded is the communication among people in the few legitimate economic enter-prises which employ multiethnic labor force, whom I described in the beginning of this section. The least protected and most unpublicized are private inter-ethnic contacts between (former) neighbors and friends, especially in cases where they had protected each other against acts of ethnic cleansing (as in the cases of Serbs sheltering Albanians

during the 1999 NATO bombing campaign and the Serbian Army-led expulsion of Albanian civilllllians).

Western donors-sponsored local NGOs organized meetings between people of different ethnicities, which mainly fall in the category of "reconciliation meetings", while receiving accolades for proving that Albanians and Serbs can talk to each other on conference panels, often bring together local Albanians and Serbs who do not live in Kosovo. Numerous projects targeting youth bring to Kosovo students from Belgrade or Macedonia, where all enjoy good time and vow to spread the spirit of tolerance in their home locales. These instances of misguided foreign intervention (alas, inadvertently) further the point that there is nothing hisorically "natural" or continuous about the negative attitudes that Albanians have toward Serbs and the other way around. There is a remaining lesson unlearnt in these "tolerance-teaching" projects that cultural and ethnic differences are not a problem per se, but that they are fed by the agendas of mutually irreconcilable projects of ethnicity-centered sovereignty which Western donors do not object to. Hence, if you live in Kosovo, public succumbing to top-down pressures not to communicate with ethnic "others" (minorities of today) may, paradoxically, coexist with privately held tolerant or even positive attitudes and memories of inter-ethnic coexistence.

It is also tempting to examine and compare trans-border exchange and consumption in the realm of popular culture, and popular music consumption in particular, as part of civil society exercise in inter-ethnic relations, between Kosovo and other regions of the former Yugoslavia that were at war with each other during the 1990s.[5] Just as Catherine Baker outlines in this volume, during the war in Croatia in 1991–1993, which coincided with its struggle for state independence, pop and rock musicians were at the cultural forefront of the efforts to vilify and "otherzie" the Serb enemy, as an alien presence both within and outside Croatia: writing and singing patriotic songs, some volunteering for the army. Nevertheless, following the war, pop and rock music industry has quickly acquired a relatively relaxed and oblivious stance toward its war-time nationalist endeavors, abandoning their vows to sever all ties-with the enemy ethnics.

The above transformation of popular culture protagonists should only seem as a paradox to those observers who were prone to believe that nationalist mobilization in the former Yugoslavia was a force from below, a bursting of the supposedly most widely shared desires for ethically homogenous states. Ten years later, when public opinion polls show that (former) nationalist politicians and other members of political and cultural elites display a more positive and relaxed attitude toward former "enemy ethnics" than ordinary people, these observers could seem to be right (Opacic & Vujadinovic, 2005). But one should not forgot to compare these polls to a number of other surveys conducted in Yugoslavia since the late 1980s until the outbreak of violence, which demonstrate that the stitting of ethnonationalist fears (first) and hostilities (next) went from top of bottom, involving, first and foremost, (ex-) Communist Party *nomenklatura*, and, second, the most influential Communist-era cultural and academic institutions, -while it took hold among ordinary people only after the erutpion of violence, such as the building of road blocks by Croatian Serbs in the Krajina region in the summer of 1990 (Hodson, Massey, & Sekulic 1993; Lazic, 1993, Devic, 1998).

We may then offer a diagnosis of the present distribution of cooperative and hostile inter-ethnic attitudes among the different social strata that differs from the one that attributes the outbreak of ethnoationalist wars to the long-seated inter-ethnic animosities. It may be that following the cessation of violence and the establishment of new states on

the ashes of Yugoslavia, the elite strata that had managed to preserve or augment their economic and symbolic capital during or even because of the war and state-building years would be the fist one to strive to benefit from reaching out to the former enemies, now re-emerging as neighbors. In the case of political elites, their new good relations with former enemy states (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina) also bring possibilities of advances in the realm of the new European Union-oriented (and dependent on it) hierarchies and organizations (various commissions in charge of the EU-accession proces).

In the sphere of popular music, its makers have benefited from and continued in the footsteps of the longtime Yugoslav pop and rock music market, and related networks of cooperation. Given the enormous popularity of major Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian pop, rock and turbo folk stars across the Dayton Triangle state borders, and the related strengthening of collaboration between the most successful song composers, lyric writers, and various managers who guarantee that that popularity continues to bring huge revenues in legitimate and controlled fashion, rather than falling in the hands of pirate music traders (as was the case during the war), it can be suggested that ordinary people in the region cannot follow their elites in displaying cooperative inter-ethnic attitudes simply because they lack adequate resources to do so. Among these resources the most important one is access to spatial mobility, which includes free movement across borders. Today, it requires much greater economic costs that it was the case before the war. The movement is also hampered by political and administrative barriers, such as visa regimes (visas between Croatia and Serbia were abolished only two and half years ago), and the lack of interest among major local news media in disseminating information about the neighboring parts of former Yugoslav popular culture celebrities and consumption excess of all nouveau riches in the region). It comes as no surprise, then, that enormous trans-border consumption of the same ex-pan-Yugoslav popular music product becomes the sole manifestation and a "sublimated" proxy of cultural ties between the ordinary people in the region. To what extent this sublimation can be repeated in Kosovo, where forced inter-ethnic segregation has lasted for nearly 20 years (since the advent to power of Slobodan Milosevic) and were the struggle for ethno-centered state sovereignty is far from being over, remains to be seen. In the meantime, one must deplore the poor interest and investment of foreign donors in the realm of popular culture market and traditions of its consumption in the region.

Conclusion: Some Caveats of Exporting Multiculturalism to Post-socialist States

As a proposal for reconsideration of the links between ethnicity or ethno-nationality and the civil society agenda in Kosovo, I will now consider the applicability of the concepts and norms of liberal ethno-multiculturalism in post-socialist multi-ethnic spaces, such as former Yugoslavia or states formerly belonging to the Soviet Union. Just as the previously mentioned 'coalescing definition' of peace building of the international peace brokers in Kosovo stifles local meanings of peace that may be informed by everyday life experiences and grievances, so the export of liberal multiculturalism to post-violence zones often neglects both the local realities that preceded the violence and alternative practices of inter-ethnic relations that may not seek to institutionalize the majority–minority divide (for typical a–sociological advices on how to define–cum–manage majority–minority relations in the post–socialist region see, for example, Kymlicka, 2001a; 2001b). It is not difficult to see that, in both ethno-nationally politicized settings in

Kosovo and among international actors promoting liberal multiculturalism, inter-ethnic relations on the ground are defined as a 'problem to be treated'. This formulation of *the* problem tends to obscure rather dramatic differences between the practice of inter-ethnic relations on the ground in Kosovo, and 'multi-ethnicity' as a problematic internationally mandated standard to be met. The following question, then, may be put. Can the theory and policies of liberal ethno-multiculturalism offer a model for institutionalizing justice in the post-socialist East–Central Europe when the transition to democracy has been preconditioned by conflicts organized along ethnic lines, which achieved an unprecedented ethnic un-mixing and homogenization, creating 'majorities' and 'minorities' in the region where they did not exist before.

No region, and southeastern Europe is no exception, is a blank slate of neatly separated culturally homogeneous groups. The most discomforting question, perhaps, for advocates of exporting liberal ethno-multiculturalism to Eastern Europe is: how do groups become homogeneous and separated? How do their cultural institutions acquire a political character and, thus, endow culture with a conflict potential? When one faces the course and consequences of the violence of the past decade in the former Yugoslav region, harrowing answers to these questions overshadow and tarnish any enthusiasm for an ideal space of groups having an equal and divided 'ethno-cultural ownership' of the state:

> The various efforts to forcibly change the distribution of ethnic populations in the region (whether we label these efforts as 'ethnic cleansing,' 'genocide,' or some other term) have been, for the most part, successful. More so than before, the region is characterized by a series of relatively homogeneous enclaves to which refugees are largely unwilling to return—the exceptions are places that were not directly affected by violence. Although areas that are under international governance are seeing the imposition of a kind of structured multiculturalism (imposed with some limited success in the Federation entity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and with no discernible success in Kosovo), in other areas the domination of majorities has become established in a way that is only weakly contested. (Gordy, 2002)

The question that ought to be asked is: in what ways can we be assured that post-communist nationalisms will not stray into illiberal forms? Should we not first suppose that the causes of inter-ethnic violence and subsequent ethnic un-mixing of the region are possibly *not* rooted in the communist-era suppression of ethnic organizing and the institutionalization of ethnicity? As Katherine Verdery (1998) and Roger Brubaker (1996) show, ethnic violence and state re-mappings in the aftermath of 1989 have been facilitated by the pre-existing long-time confederal organization of multi-ethnic socialist states into 'national republics' led by local ethnic cadres. Communist parties in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union introduced this organization of political space several decades before the breakdown of communism—as a proxy for and solution to the deficits of proclaimed democratization and the alleged pinnacle of the will for freedom of their people that would later be turned into the will of people*s*![6] In other words, the post-1989 redrawing of state maps was charted by the socialist-era cultivation of 'ethnic cadres', who then reinvented themselves as post-communist ethno-political 'entrepreneurs' (to use Katherine Verdery's and Ronnie Lipschutz's (1998) term).

The success of these ethnic entrepreneurs was, ironically, additionally facilitated by international pressure for democratization. In the absence of any developed democratic

constituency and a plural political arena, claims for the institutionalization of ethno-nationality and the subsequent division of citizens into majorities and minorities have become the main instruments of maximizing votes. In the Yugoslav context:

> In a society that had been characterized by a complex long-time social and economic crisis, such as the one that pervaded the Yugoslav society during the 1980s, ethnicity became a vehicle of the consolidation of patronage networks of political control during the transition from the Communist to pluralist political framework. (Oberschall, 2000)

Numerous accounts of the violent and organized character of the protracted breakdown of the Yugoslav state place serious doubt on the applicability of the thesis that ethnic autonomies and ethnic politics are the best remedies for the democratic deficit in post-socialist and post-violence multi-ethnic states. Even if we accept the package of 'ethno cultural justice' as a useful impetus for protecting minority languages and cultural institutions, we ought to be reminded that in the areas and periods where individual rights and economic existence are precarious, insistence on collective rights tied to ascribed ethnic markers of citizenship may act as further hindrance of democratic participation. The politics of ethnicity in the post-Yugoslav space, such as in Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or in the former republics of the Soviet Union, shows that the interest of local elites in the tenets of liberal multiculturalism–nationalism may be motivated less by their democratization agendas than by their need to bypass the imperatives of broader political participation of their constituencies. These imperatives are, instead, redefined in terms of a balance between 'state-constitutive' ethnic majorities versus ethnic minorities.

There are, then, two main problems with liberal multiculturalism that bear relevance to both multi-ethnic post-socialist 'transitional' states and Western industrialized societies. One is the identification of ethnic identity with all culture, or prioritization of ethnicity above all cultural traits, and the other is the assumption that such ethnicized culture is the primary basis for the political organization of ethnic minorities in democratic societies (Vermeulen & Slijper, 2002). In the context of the post-socialist states of East–Central and southeastern Europe these erroneous premises achieve a state of dangerous affinity with the interests of nationalist elites who, during the past decade, have striven to redraw state boundaries and justified their agendas with claims of defending 'their own' communities. In the realm of culture in post-socialist societies, identification of one ethnicity with all cultural life and with the paramount political interest serves to deny both the reality and possibility of inter-ethnic identities, as well as broader venues for alternative or oppositional political mobilization.

For local post-socialist elites, that is, ethnic entrepreneurs, liberal multiculturalism and liberal nationalism simultaneously affirm their own (violently) homogenized imaginings of political space and satisfy prescriptions for democratization coming from the West. They help deny or neglect the evidence that before the outbreaks of violence there existed some long-standing forms of multiculture, which could be defined as unstructured multiculturalism, rooted in everyday life and indicating the existence of alternatives to liberal multiculturalism (Gagnon, 2001; Gordy, 2002).

It may not sound at the moment like a realist politician's preferred option, but it is nevertheless compelling to imagine and propose that the inhabitants of post-socialist multi-ethnic states could wrestle out, and be assisted in building, a kind of citizen

membership and public space that draws upon the realities of their own recent past.[7] The restoration of multiculturality in the Kosovan political space would necessarily involve an articulation of alternatives to the imagining of individual persons as primarily ethno-nationals. Until then there is another reminder of the misguided and unjust social and economic projects in the region pertaining to multi-ethnic coexistence: the trans-ethnic and truly multinational character of illegal trade networks in the post-socialist Balkans, which simultaneously cross borders while thriving on their post-cold war multiplicity, offer their own twisted image of citizens liberated from ethno-national programmes, as masterfully illustrated and explained in their relation to global economy by Aida Hozic in this volume. My analysis of the misconceptions about local civil society, which inform the agenda of western aid to peace and multiculturalism in Kosovo illustrate and support Hozic's theses on misrepresentations of the Social role and the stigmatization of Balkan illicit trade networks, which simultaneously attempt to make inter-state borders porous, while thriving on their post-Cold War multiplicity. The flourishing (but also precarious) illicit trade, (now mostly) legal cross-border popular music market, as well as the secret, unpublicized and unpopular private inter-ethnic ties within and across Yugoslavia's successor states, are simultaneously opposing, while being dependant on (or suffering from) the newly erected nation state boundaries and European Union re-bordering practices. Hozic's powerful "global merchants" trade protectionism and new obstacles to migration (which is defined as "right to free movement"-for Western citizens only), which marginalize both Balkan small merchants and ordinary people, serve to sim-ultaneously respond to and mock, as one of the weapons of the weak, the global asymme-trical access to transnational resources and identities, embedded, as Hozic demonstrates, in the contradiction between state sovereignty and meta-national flows of capital and culture. This study sought to demonstrate how the local civil society, whose potentials and historical (dis)continuities have been largely unrecognized and even weakened by Western aid agencies, at least, serves to question and sabotage the alleged immutability and autarky of local ethnonational identities.

Notes

1. Local government institutions have been in place since 2002 as part of the devolution of power from the UN to local authorities. Foreign policy, minority return, military sector and security issues are still prerogatives of the UN, NATO and the EU organizations.
2. This typology of societal participation in projects of Western civil society assistance was developed by Sarah C. White (1996).
3. For these estimates, see the European Stability Initiative (2004) report.
4. I draw here on my interviews with and personal communication from Leon Malazogu, research director of the Kosovan Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED); Fadil Maloku, executive director of the Institute for Democracy and Ethnic Relations of Kosovo; and Enver Hasani, a professor of international law and international relations at Priština University.
5. Even though at the first sight it may seen that the comparison may be flawed since popular music is written and sung in the same language across the Dayton Triangle, we should be reminded that during the war and state-consolidating years in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the language that was previously considered the same and shared under the name of Serbo-Croat, had become divided into three languages (now, with the independence of montenegro, it will be four) each claiming and forging Substantial differences from its former parts (which were previously termed as dialectical and regional varieties).
6. Susan L. Wodward (1995) details the process of decentralization or devolution of political rule from federal to republican and municipal levels in the socialist Yugoslavia. She demonstrates how in a

one-party regime and in the absence of political pluralism, where each federal republic had one (or three, in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina) 'titular' ethno-nationalities, decentralization led to the emergence of economic and political autarky and latent rivalry between the nationalist republican leaderships.

7. Chip Gagnon (2001) explains how Western aid efforts have so far impeded instead of assisted the rebuilding of multicultural spaces of everyday life in southeastern Europe. Gagnon argues that Western imaginings of a liberal polity have rested upon the often violent practice of ethnic homogenization which accompanied Western state-building projects.

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