Tonka Kostadinova

Aid for the reconstruction of cultural heritage in Southeast Europe: A peace-building model?

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Lifelong Learning

Tonka Kostadinova holds a PhD in International History and a Master degree in International Relations from the University of Sofia as well as a Master degree in Southeast European Studies from the University of Athens. Dr. Kostadinova has been an Advanced Academia Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study Sofia and a research fellow at the Department of General History at Charles University, Prague. She is the author of a book on German foreign policy after reunification and of numerous articles in the field of international relations and contemporary developments in Southeast Europe.

Aid for the Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage in Southeast Europe:
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Executive Summary

The paper examines policies of international assistance to the post-conflict reconstruction of cultural heritage as peace and society-building model in war-affected states. Drawing on three country-studies (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99) the article provides a general framework of external aid as important security factor aiming at long-term stabilization and democratization of regions affected by war. Policies of international assistance for the reconstruction of cultural heritage as a peace-building model will be addressed in a multi-faced dimension according to the concept of peace-building as a triangle of strategies addressing local roots of hostility, the degree of international commitment available to assist sustainable peace, and the local capacities for change. Primary attention will be paid to the renovation of religious sites due to their key role in identity politics. The paper will challenge pre-given definitions on the Balkan 'traditional' multiculturalism and will seek to answer questions on how is culture constructed and abused for political purposes and what are the practical implications of the institutionalized (re)invention of the past[1].

Keywords: Southeast Europe, cultural heritage, conflict, foreign aid, international community

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The new interventionism and the politics of external aid

After the end of the Cold War threats to global peace and security emanating from the multiplying cases of state-failure and inter-ethnic conflicts prioritized externally imported peace and state-building strategies as major elements of international relations. The 'new wars' of the 1990s questioned assumptions that conflicts between states constitute the core challenge to international security - of the 111 conflicts that occurred between the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the new century, 95 were purely intrastate and pressed for outside actors and international institutions to intervene (Nye 2003: p. 150). The so called 'new interventionism' conceived as a direct response to the changing nature of conflicts implied that the sovereignty of the state should no longer be regarded as sacred, and opened the perspective of institutionalized external involvement in domestic affairs. The UN Charter, which until 1991 strictly limited international intervention in local conflicts, reinterpreted the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs allowing for intervention on humanitarian grounds. Furthermore it introduced the concept of a 'complex emergency' as 'a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing United Nations country program' (Teijgeler 2011: 89, 93-94). The UN Charter amendment legalized trans-national aid, and externally imported funds, technical support and institution reforms became an integral part of peace and state building and an institutionalized crisis response in complex emergency situations. Non-state actors operated as humanitarian agents allocating aid not only to prevent violence and maintain peace, but also to address local roots of conflict, to reverse the consequences of war, and to reconstruct the social symbiosis that had hold war-affected societies together. In this process culture played primary role since the belligerents in the 'new wars' often defined themselves along cultural lines such as language, religion, shared memories and shared symbols (Nye 2003: 151). Moreover, modern warfare often applied military strategies on strictly ethnic terms using the targeted destruction of the cultural identity of the 'other' as ethnic cleansing tool. In this respect many scholars raised voices that abuses to cultural rights should be grounds for international intervention in the same way that the violation of human rights was viewed by humanitarians (Teijgeler 2011: 105). The 1990s wars modified the essence of external intervention, and led to the rise of new constructivist approaches to peace and state building. Yet the social and cultural dimension of the new interventionism has remained relatively unexplored in international bibliography. The examination of culture as a matter of public policy has been one of the most underdeveloped fields of global governance research, which still lacks conceptualization and theorization. This gap explains why international efforts on building peace and strengthening democracy in war-affected states via culture and its agents have remained inefficient, unfocused, and in some cases even counter-productive.

The paper will examine policies of international assistance to the post-conflict reconstruction of cultural heritage as peace and society building model in the war-affected states of Southeast Europe. In a comparative perspective it will analyze three case-studies on reversal of war effects and rebuilding of sustainable multi-ethnic societies in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Policies of international assistance to the reconstruction of cultural heritage as a peace-building model will be addressed in a multi-faced dimension according to the concept of peace-building as a triangle of strategies addressing local roots of hostility, the specific degree of international commitment available to assist sustainable peace, and the local capacities for change (Doyle and Sambanis 2000: 779). The paper will examine international efforts to the reconstruction of heritage through each of the three dimensions of peace-building in the (post)complex emergencies of Southeast Europe.

Local roots of conflict and the international assistance to the reconstruction of cultural heritage as a humanitarian crisis response in the Western Balkans

'Shattering people´s sense of pride and identity is one very effective way to destroy their culture's common history. This has now become part of modern warfare...'[2]

The Balkan region inherited by various ethnic and cultural groups has been often perceived as a micro-projection of the concept of culture as a bridge between societies. This notion has been justified by the tangible embodiment of multicultural cohabitations evident in the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the peninsula - a legacy from Roman, Byzantium, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian presences in the region. The first attempts on framing the common culture into state structures succeeded after the end of WWI as a response to the general process of disintegration of empires. Ideas on the unification of all South Slavs drew on notions of shared cultural background and culminated in the creation of the first Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918. In the post WWII period Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia committed to further unification within the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavian social engineering propagated the common culture as main unifying factor, and even tried to foster a common identity based on common language and shared traditions.

Although speaking the same language, however, the six ethnic groups of Yugoslavia had followed different historical trajectories and their cultural identities had been shaped by different influences and traditions (Belloni 2008: 18). The political instrumentalization of

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[2] 'Cultural Heritage without Borders Information Brochure: Cultural Heritage, Reconciliation, Reconstruction, Hopes for the Future', p.1, accessed on February 3, 2013, www.chwb.org.

culture converted it into a powerful dividing force and a convenient translator of national political agendas. Already in late 1980s culture and religion became a catalyst for the mobilization of the different groups on ethnic and religious ground. The policy of the Yugoslavian communist party aiming at rapprochement with religious (and opposition) elites advanced the process of re-evaluation of national identities, and the opening of new churches and mosques provided with the opportunity for nationalist demonstrations and massive politicization on religious basis to take place (Bougarel 1996: 94-96). The rise of ethno-nationalism and the inability of the federal authorities to respond to the challenges of the new world order culminated in bloody inter-ethnic wars, which marked the developments in Southeast Europe for more than a decade.

Belligerents in the Yugoslav wars sought to justify their own existence and to (re)define territories by demolishing or suppressing the identity of 'the other'. This led to intense ethnic cleansing unknown in postmodern times, and culture as main bearer of collective identity became primary target of each fighting side. Historical and cultural sites in Southeast Europe were dismantled on particularly large scale for purely political and military purposes. The wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo eradicated nearly 75% of the common heritage and evolved as a cultural catastrophe for all the communities involved in war (Baumel 1993: 3).

Consequently transnational actors prioritized the reconstruction of cultural heritage as part of the peace-building efforts aiming at stabilization through reversal of war effects and promotion of inter-ethnic reconciliation. The process was perceived as central to the issue of restoring multicultural civil societies, because without guarantees of cultural security, including the rebuilding of destroyed houses of worship and cultural institutions, hundreds of thousands of refugees would never have had the confidence to return to the communities from which they were expelled during the wars (Riedlmayer 2002: 18). The Southeast European heritage was continuously promoted as the tangible and long-lasting evidence of the Balkan 'traditional' multiculturalism. The international aid to the reconstruction of religious institutions, museums and historical sites was institutionalized on supra-national level when UNESCO integrated the relevant policies in its agenda and bridged the efforts of intergovernmental and non-governmental (NGO) actors in the region. This in turn facilitated a genuinely high degree of foreign involvement in the post-conflict reconstruction of cultural heritage as a peace building model in the Western Balkans.

International commitment to the reconstruction of cultural heritage in Southeast Europe

> **'***The past is not preserved but it is socially constructed through archives, museums, school curricula, monuments, and public displays'.***
>
> Brian S. Osborne[3]

The international commitment to the Western Balkans' cultural heritage emerged in the mid 1990s when UNESCO adopted three patterns of action (prevention, integration and reconstruction) as part of its global cultural heritage policy. The first pattern incorporated Balkan heritage sites into UNESCO's 'World Heritage List in Danger' pointing out armed conflicts and war as first potential destructive threats. UNESCO created national lists of monuments in danger for each of the Southeast European countries including important sites such as the Mostar Bridge in Bosnia and the Patriarchate of Peć Monastery in Kosovo. The initiative constituted a pilot effort to transfer the protection of cultural heritage on supra-national level in order to prevent war-time abuses and destruction of significant historical and religious monuments. As part of the second pattern of action UNESCO addressed the integration of international policies into the local capacities for change seeking to facilitate efficient institutional reforms and to create legal frameworks for the protection and restoration of cultural heritage on local level. With the support of foreign experts Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99 passed their first cultural heritage legislation and provided legal basis for the protection of cultural monuments. The significance of this second pattern of action grows in the light of increasing instability in the Western Balkans, particularly in Northern Kosovo and the Presovo Valley. Finally, the third action field envisaged the tangible rehabilitation of key cultural sites damaged during the Yugoslav wars. This pattern prioritized the renovation of religious monuments, historical sites and other cultural institutions (national libraries, museums and archive centers) through direct foreign aid. For the purposes of reconstruction UNESCO created a World Heritage Fund and a Rapid Response Facility to generate and allocate funds from member-states and private donors. In addition, the institutionalized legal basis opened the perspective for numerous NGOs to enter the Western Balkans providing extensive financial aid and technical support for the reconstruction of heritage. Already in 1995 politicians and experts launched the 'Cultural Heritage without Borders' foundation as a reaction to the acute and massive aid that was needed due to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The foundation developed as 'one of the most long-lasting attempts to create an all-embracing mechanism for direct emergency relief aid in the area of heritage conservation'[4]. In 1996 the large-scale destruction of cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina triggered the establishment of an International

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[3] Osborne, B. (2001) 'Landscapes, memory, monuments and commemorations: Putting Identity in its Place,' in: *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* 33(3): 36-77, p. 45.
[4] 'Cultural Heritage without Borders Information Brochure'………p.7

Committee of the Blue Shield, currently known as the 'cultural heritage Red Cross'. The Committee of the Blue Shield initially targeted the protection of cultural heritage only in former Yugoslavia, but later established national Blue Shield Committees in countries all over the world aiming to provide domestic and international aid for the protection cultural heritage at times of natural disasters or armed conflicts. Blue Shield Committees have been active in a great number of complex emergencies including the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Egypt.

At the intergovernmental level the Council of Europe and the European Union appeared as the most proactive donors, and even bound the process with policies of conditionality and pre-accession mechanisms. In 2003, for example, the two organizations launched a joint action called 'Integrated Rehabilitation Project Plan/Survey of the Architectural and Archaeological Heritage' which supported the rehabilitation of several sites in the Western Balkans with a general envelope of up to EUR 10-15 million during the period 2008-2010. In its 2010-2011 Enlargement Strategy the EU stated that it will continue to support the rehabilitation of cultural heritage in the context of the Ljubljana Process and will establish a Task Force on Culture and Society, supported by a permanent secretariat benefiting from EU pre-accession financial assistance[5].

This intense (sometimes even hectic) involvement of non-state actors to cope with the local roots of conflicts often came on the expense of the proper evaluation of the micro-political and micro-social environment. Policies formulated by international organizations tended to be based on priori constructed definitions and security interests rather than on an in-depth understanding of the different components of inter-ethnic conflicts. International community's efforts to build sustainable peace by recreating the notion of the common cultural past were hampered by the insufficient local capacities for change in each Southeast European state. The next part of the paper will address three case-studies attempting to reveal the interactions between local and international politics in the (re)construction of religious heritage as main bearer of ethnic and cultural identity.

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[5]'IPA National Programme 2011 for Bosnia and Herzegovina', accessed on March 29, 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/bosnia_and_herzegovina/ipa/2011/12_ipa_2011_demining_cultural_heritage_final.pdf.

Local capacities for change and the policies of aid: country-studies from Southeast Europe

> '*A society first of all needs to find landmarks....it is necessary that those sites most charged with religious significance stand out against all others*'
>
> Maurice Halbwachs[6]

> '*At this moment, the immense effort is not only the fact that we try to preserve our sanctuaries and a small number of people in Orthodox faith, but also the evidence that we exist in this region*'
>
> Dalmatian Bishop His Grace Fotije[7]

Croatia

Croatia declared independence in June 1991 but Serbian and Croatian nationalistic campaigns led to a long-lasting conflict, which marked the political, economic and social developments in the country for several years (Kasapovic 2009: 217). Both Serbia and Croatia sought to create ethnically homogenous areas within the contested territories (mainly Slavonia, Baranya and parts of Bosnia), and used the expulsion of population and the intentional destruction of the cultural identity of the 'other' as tools to inscribe Serbian or Croatian 'identity' to the disputed areas.

In the first half of the 1990s several international investigation missions in Croatia reported massive reprisals against Serbian cultural heritage (both monuments and religious art works), and estimated the total number of damaged church buildings at nearly 350[8]. A 1994 Council of Europe Information Report pointed out that 'both ethnic and cultural cleansing had taken place on a significant scale against the Serbs of Croatia'[9]. Slavonia and Baranya suffered the highest losses in human lives, infrastructure and cultural heritage with more than 120 church buildings damaged or completely destroyed. Orthodox monasteries in Dalmatia also experienced substantial damages and lost many icons, valuable books and archives, while Serbian Orthodox priests were forced to flee the region for good.

After the end of the war the restoration of Serbian Orthodox heritage in Croatia was addressed as a promoter of inter-ethnic reconciliation and an incentive for the thousands of Serbian refugees to come back to their homes. The UN agency

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[6] Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, p. 222.

[7] Interview of Dalmatian Bishop His Grace Fotije, 4 October 2002, accessed on February 2, 2013, http://www.eparhija-dalmatinska.hr/Episkop-Intervju-E.htm.

[8] 'War damage to the cultural heritage in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina', Council of Europe 4th Information Report, 19 January 1994, accessed on June 18, 2010. http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc93/EDOC6999.htm#II.%20Croatia

[9] Ibid.

administrating the contested areas of Slavonia and Baranya, UNTAES, created a special cultural heritage division to manage aid to the reconstruction of religious monuments and cultural sites. International efforts in Slavonia and Baranya, however, were seriously hampered by the lack of donors willing to invest in a region whose political status had not been settled, and most of the destroyed sites remained unattended for years. In 1997 a team of European cultural experts visited Slavonia in order to identify a blueprint for overall cultural development, but only registered 'low interest' among local and international authorities to engage in cultural policies[10].

Developments in Dalmatia followed the same pattern, and members of the Orthodox Church shared that they received little or no support by the Croatian government in their efforts to preserve Orthodox heritage and the evidence of Serbian existence in the region. In an interview from October 2002 the Dalmatian Bishop Fotije complained that 'in the places where we turned for help to reconstruct our church buildings, we mostly did not get any kind of response'. Asked whether the reconstruction of cultural heritage had been supported by the international community the Bishop responded similarly: 'all of them gave us the same answer - that their mission is not to support institutions (meaning the Orthodox Church), but only persons in need'[11].

The coalition of pro-Western parties that came to power in 2000 registered the first progress in Croatian cultural heritage policy. With the help of foreign actors the Croatian government elaborated and adopted 'Framework for Croatian Cultural Policy', which foresaw the integration of the Croatian policy into the international cultural know-how and the implementation of initiatives aiming at overcoming the consequences of the Homeland war. The overall aim of the framework was to re-image Croatia in the eyes of the international community and to change perceptions of Croatia as a country that was exclusively nationalistic thus paving the ground for international involvement (in terms of funds and technical support) in cultural projects and the renovation of cultural heritage (Landry 1998: 39). Within the framework Croatia addressed the local roots of conflict integrating a special theme titled 'Cultural crossroads' that targeted the promotion of interethnic cooperation through three main action lines - stimulating multicultural understanding, providing a focus for community identity, and breaking down barriers between communities, religions and geographical areas. It envisaged the establishment of a Museum of Reconciliation and Peace and an educational Reconciliation Center based in Slavonia (Landry 1998: 39-41).

The local authorities' will to work towards reversal of war effects resulted in higher international commitment both in terms of technical support, and direct funding and investments. The Croatian EU perspective provided more systematic aid for the

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[10] 'Eastern Slavonia summery report on cooperation with UNTAES in the field of education and culture', Council of Europe, 2 July 1997, accessed on July 8, 2012, https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.
[11] Interview of Dalmatian Bishop His Grace Fotije, 4 October 2002, accessed on February 3, 2013, http://www.eparhija-dalmatinska.hr/Episkop-Intervju-E.htm.

reconstruction of cultural heritage. In 2009 the EU and the Council of Europe launched a joint project on cultural heritage ('*Heritage as a Means of Development: Reconstruction of Architectural Heritage in Vukovar Town Centre – Sustainable Revival and Development of a war-torn community*') aiming to 'contribute to reconciliation between the different communities in Croatia through the cultural, social and economic reconstruction of the Vukovar community'[12]. The project was funded from the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) and aimed to enhance intercultural dialogue within the community of Vukovar. The project was part of the larger *Ljubljana Process,* which supported the rehabilitation of several sites in the Western Balkans with a general envelop of EUR 10-15 million during the period of 2008-2010.

A critical analysis of Croatian cultural policy however shows that, apart from the internationally famous and economically strategic old town of Dubrovnik, the reconstruction of cultural heritage has been hampered by international and local reluctance for investments and has followed much modest pace than the process implied in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina was an ethnically heterogeneous area inherited by three major ethnic groups (Serbs, Croats and Muslims). With the collapse of the federal state the very foundation for the existence of a multiethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina was seriously undermined and the province suffered three years of bloody interethnic war (Burg 1997: 125). Between 1992 and 1995 Bosnia and Herzegovina became the most contested area in the nationalistic programs of Serbs, Croats and Muslims and experienced levels of destruction and ethnic cleansing that shocked the world.

Bosnia and Herzegovina suffered the most severe and systematic destruction of cultural heritage with an estimated 1,200 Mosques, 150 Catholic Cathedrals, 10 Orthodox Churches, 4 Synagogues and more than 1000 other monuments of culture demolished within three years of war (Riedlmayer 2002: 98). Other important common cultural institutions situated in Sarajevo (the National and University Library, the Oriental Institute and the National Museum) survived the war but suffered substantial losses with more than 1 million volumes of their collections burned or destroyed (Riedlmayer 1995: 1).

Such numbers justified arguments that the wartime destruction of cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina was used as a collateral ethnic cleansing tool and aimed to erase the collective memory of the peaceful coexistence between Serbs, Croats and Muslims. According to Andreas Riedlmayer (1995) '*throughout Bosnia libraries, archives,*

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[12] 'Western Balkans cultural heritage - overview of past and ongoing assistance (EU / international financial Institutions / bilateral and national assistance), including lessons learned and donor coordination', accessed on January 25, 2013, https:// wbculturalheritage131266/history#_ftn1.

museums and cultural institutions have been targeted for destruction, in an attempt to eliminate the material evidence that could remind future generations that different ethnic groups and religious traditions once shared a common heritage' (p.8).

Consequently, the role of cultural heritage as a means to recreate notions of the common/shared past between the different communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina was prioritized in the agenda of all international organizations involved in the region. Numerous UN evaluation reports stressed that the breakdown of shared identity between citizens in Bosnia was largely a result of the war, and addressed the reconstruction of a multi-ethnic society as the core of peace and state-building efforts[13]. The rehabilitation of religious heritage became main instrument in the international community's policies to promote reconciliation and to (re)create multi-ethnic civil society in the country.

The legal base for the restoration of heritage was provided in the Dayton Peace Agreement (Annex 8), which foresaw the establishment of an independent International Commission to Preserve National Monuments and to incorporate cultural heritage into the process of reconciliation and rebuilding civic trust[14]. The international body, however, was entitled only to determine sites as 'national monuments', and did not have prerogatives to implement reconstruction policies. The lack of funding and the weak legal system in the federation further prefigured the inefficiency of the unit. Foreign donors preferred to channel aid through UNESCO or NGOs elaborated programmes and projects. The fact that Muslim countries like Turkey, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Jordan provided substantial amounts of financial aid to the restoration of mosques, while Orthodox countries (Greece, Serbia) sponsored the reconstruction of churches indicated well enough the politicization of the process and the purchase of national political agendas.

The intense involvement of national governments in the post-conflict (re)construction of religious institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina reflected a tendency that distinguished the Bosnian country-case from developments in Croatia. The generous financial aid offered by Muslim governments has been often interpreted as cultural policy aiming at promoting Islam and Islamism in Europe. These claims have been triggered by the particularly high level of post-conflict (re)construction of mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina: according to data of the Center for Islamic Architecture of the Bosnian Islamic Community, by 2008 3/4 of the destroyed or damaged mosques had been renovated with the help of the international community and different Muslim states[15]. Moreover, plenty of newly constructed mosques whose architecture and size resembled

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[13] http://www.undp.ba

[14] The General Framework Agreement: Annex 8, art. V, line 5, accessed on July 23, 2012, www.ohr.int/dpa.

[15] Accessed on January 28, 2013, https://thebosnianwarfactstimelinehistorygenocidecriminals.wordpress.com/tag/remembering-over-1000-destroyed-and-damaged-mosques-in/

more the environment in rich Muslim countries like Dubai and Saudi Arabia rather than the traditional Ottoman heritage of the Balkans emerged in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the other hand the restoration of churches followed far more modest pace. The Church of the Holy Trinity in Mostar, which is considered one of the most important Orthodox monuments in the Balkans, remained unattended for more than 16 years due to the lack of any foreign (and domestic) aid.

Such tendencies reveal that the transnational aid to the post-conflict reconstruction of religious institutions transcended its cultural dimension on macro, and on micro political level. On macro-political level aid tended to serve as a tool promoting state policies through methods that conventional diplomacy failed to apply. On domestic level it often provided a means to mark political presence - even domination - of a particular religious (ethnic) group. Thus mosques and churches in Bosnia and Herzegovina replaced any national flags that might have marked an ethnicity's territorial control immediately after the war (Aksamija 2008: 4).

The politics of international aid to the (re)construction of religious heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina bore another important distinctiveness - they were aimed to create new, supra-ethnic Bosnian identity and over-emphasized (even idealized) the shared cultural past. This is most evident in the process of reconstruction of non-religious sites such as the Old Bridge in Mostar or the National Library and Museum in Sarajevo. On micro-social level, however, even non-religious heritage was ethnized - today Croats of Mostar do not perceive the Old Bridge as part of their own cultural history, but as evidence of increased Muslim presence in the town. The architectural historian Azra Aksamija (2008) has pointed out that 'the postwar construction of mosques became a catalyst for the Muslim quest for national identity and those who survived ethnic cleansing built or rebuilt Mosques as means of asserting material evidence of their existence while simultaneously recovering from traumatic experience' (p.7).

Currently transnational actors have adopted more practical approach and emphasize the need and the importance of the *simultaneous* renovation of ethnic religious institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2008 a new $ 8 000 000 project 'Improving Cultural Understanding' has been launched to strengthen cross-cultural tolerance, and in 2010 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) decided on the first 'cross-ethnic' project envisaging simultaneous reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka, the Orthodox Cathedral of Mostar and the Franciscan Monastery of Plehan setting up a $200 000 package for each of the three monuments[16].

NGOs have also been particularly active aid donors in Bosnia and Herzegovina and have launched a series of projects aimed at promoting cultural heritage for the sake of the

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[16] The project was implemented under the joint Programme 'Culture for Development' funded by the Spanish Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund in partnership with UN agencies UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina, http://www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=7&RID=623

inter-ethnic tolerance and understanding. In 2006 NGO representatives from all over the region met in Sarajevo and addressed the need of closer cooperation and the creation of a network for joint promotion, preservation and sustainable usage of cultural heritage. Twelve NGOs then signed a commitment statement to develop and strengthen the NGO regional network. The initiative is today known as the Southeast European Heritage Network - SEE (SEE stands for South East Europe, but also for to see, to recognize, to acknowledge, to look at the problems of cultural heritage), and is the largest NGO network working on the preservation and (re)construction of cultural heritage in the Balkans.

Kosovo

Inherited predominantly by Albanian population, Kosovo enjoyed relatively high level of self-governance within the Yugoslavian federation. Ethnic tensions between Serbs and Albanians escalated after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the emergence of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) - a paramilitary organization, which sought to secure rights for the Kosovo Albanians using methods of violence and terror. Several attempts on internationally imported agreements failed, and the Kosovo conflict culminated in the 1999 NATO military intervention against Milosevic. After the end of the war in June 1999 the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 established international administration to govern the region (the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, UNMIK), and NATO peace-keeping forces (KFOR) entered Kosovo go maintain peace and to secure stability.

Debates on the (re)construction of religious heritage in Kosovo began in the autumn of 1999 when the Serbian Orthodox Community published a booklet titled 'Crucified Kosovo' claiming that between June and October 1999 Kosovo Albanians had destroyed 76 religious monuments through acts of vandalism and intentional burning[17]. UNESCO's evaluation missions that were immediately sent to the region registered numerous damages to Serbian Orthodox Heritage due to 'intentional destruction of dynamite, shelling and fire, as well as vandalism and looting'[18]. The Council of Europe, in turn, responded by issuing a declaration and calling for the international community to assume responsibility to protect and rebuild places of worship in Kosovo 'in order to contribute to reconciliation and peaceful coexistence between the ethnicities'[19]. In the

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[17] Exemplifying is the Monastery of the Holy Trinity - an Orthodox monument built in the 14th century and housing a valuable collection of manuscripts from 14th until 18th century and a collection of icons from the 19th century. One month after the end of the war in June 1999 Albanian extremists dynamited the Monastery church. The collection of manuscripts and icons was destroyed in the flames. '*Protection of the Cultural Heritage in Kosovo*', Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Information Report, Committee on Culture, Science and Education, 5 April 2004, accessed on November 18, 2012, http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc04/EDOC10127.htm.

[18] 'Cultural Heritage in Southeast Europe: Kosovo', accessed on November 18, 2012, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001344/134426e.pdf.

[19] 'Declaration on the protection and rebuilding of places of worship in Kosovo and the wider Balkans adopted by the Committee of Ministers', 18 July 2001, accessed on July 12, 2012, http://www.coe.int/.

external evaluation reports the deliberate destruction of Serbian Orthodox heritage was attributed to Albanian perceptions of Orthodox monuments as 'political churches' built by Milosevic as a pro-Serbian propaganda seeking to secure full Serbian control over Kosovo, as well as to dominant presumptions that the Serb Orthodox monasteries were originally Albanian Catholic, but were eventually 'colonized' by the Serbs[20]. External investigation missions reported particularly high level of destruction of mosques too - during the 1998-1999 campaign of massive expulsion of Albanians from Kosovo religious sites associated with Islam were often targeted for destruction, and approximately 200 of the nearly 600 mosques in Kosovo were damaged or destroyed.

The high level of intentional destruction of heritage necessitated more organized forms of protection, and, apart from its peace-keeping functions, KFOR was mandated to guard also religious sites. Thus the protection of cultural heritage was directly incorporated into peace-keeping not only on conceptual, but also on empirical level.

KFOR's mandate to protect religious heritage appeared even more necessary since acts of violence and terrorism continued after the 1999 cease of fire. In fact the most systematic destruction of religious heritage in Kosovo took place after the end of the war and represented an act of Albanian 'revenge' against Serbia, rather than ethnic cleansing policy as was the case in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In March 2004 inter-ethnic clashes between Serbs and Albanian intensified again and led to the damage of another thirty five cultural and religious monuments. According to UNESCO 'it was not only monuments, but also memory and cultural identity that were being destroyed'[21]. After the 2004 acts of violence against cultural heritage UNESCO presented a 'Plan for Restoration of Kosovo's Religious Monuments' and prioritized the reconstruction of both Albanian and Serbian religious sites aiming at 'improving reconciliation between local communities through the awareness and respect of cultural heritage'[22]. In the next years forty eight Orthodox and fourteen Islamic religious institutions in Kosovo were renovated with foreign aid channeled through the project[23]. Furthermore the international community focused on technical and institutional support to provide effective legal sanctions against potential threats to religious heritage in Kosovo. In 2006 the Council of Europe assisted the local Albanian authorities to elaborate a Law on Cultural Heritage, which addressed issues of vandalism and intentional destruction of cultural property. Since the 2008 Kosovo's declaration of independence the Albanian authorities have been trying to secure more sustainable image of the province in order to increase chances for international legitimation and the

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[20] 'Protection of the Cultural Heritage in Kosovo', Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Information Report, Committee on Culture, Science and Education, 5 April 2004, accessed on May 20, 2012, http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc04/EDOC10127.htm.

[21] Accessed on May 20, 2012http://www.unesco.org/new/en/venice/culture/safeguarding-cultural-heritage/capacity-building/cultural-heritage-kosovo/.

[22] Ibid

[23] Accessed on May 20, 2012http://www.unpo.org/article/3329 , accessed on May 20, 2012.

Serbian cultural and religious heritage did not suffer additional losses due to Kosovo secularization move and the further fragmentation of the region.

Foreign aid, however, bore apparent political colorings. In 2004 the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) established a subsidiary in Kosovo to organize and manage the restoration of mosques. According to TIKA's data, in 2008 Kosovo ranked 7th place in the Top 14 beneficiary countries chart having received $26 580 000 financial aid just within a year (Bosnia and Herzegovina ranked 11th with $16 000 000 received in 2008[24]). The Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan visited Kosovo several times to personally open some of the (re)constructed mosques thus indicating well enough the political significance of the process. In 2012 and 2013 TIKA launched five more projects allocating 3, 7 million for the restoration of Ottoman mosques and hamams in Kosovo. Today, the public association of the preservation of mosques with the protection of the Muslim population in the region demonstrated by the Turkish government is likely to generate tensions between Ankara and Belgrade[25].

Other particularly pro-active aid donors have been the local non-governmental organizations. Most of them draw on the reconciliation and multi-ethnic society rhetoric, and are being funded either by states or by private donors. One of the most efficient NGO in the field of protection and restoration of cultural heritage is the Swedish 'Cultural Heritage without Borders', which is currently working for the establishment of a cooperation axis between all regional NGOs initiating the creation of the 'Southeast European Heritage Network'. It has launched numerous projects on the renovation of both churches and mosques, elaborated a scheme on the inclusion of cultural heritage in Kosovo's urban and municipal development plans, and even organized international summer university on the need and mechanisms to work with architectural heritage[26].

Challenges and lessons learned

Although successful, the process of (re)construction of religious heritage in Southeast Europe revealed important conceptual and empirical shortcomings of trans-national peace building. On conceptual level the region of Southeast Europe was approached with idealistic discourse that overemphasized the idea of the common past and the Balkan 'traditional' multiculturalism. Foreign aid to the post-conflict reconstruction of cultural heritage has been marked by externally-imported political language and discursive framing of the Balkans' diverse cultural traditions.

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[24]Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA). accessed on February 2, 2013, http://www.ecocci.com/DC/PDF/19.04.201017_34Presentation%20of%20TIKA.pdf.
[25] Tokyay, M. Turkey increases its Cultural Footprint in the Balkans. 5 September 2012, accessed on January 25, 2013, http://setimes.com.
[26] Accessed on January 25, 2013, http://chwbkosovo.org.

In his book, *"Do no Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace - or War",* Anderson (1999) argues that there are two realities in a post-conflict environment: dividers (the factors that cause tension) and connectors (the factors that reduce tension). The role of cultural heritage in public memory has an ambiguous function, and can divide or connect depending on the party that instrumentalizes it politically. Considering the fact that culture in Southeast Europe has been traditionally related to issues of contested identities and memories, its externally sponsored representations need to be based on a more careful reading of the local historical-political and socio-cultural environment. The joint work of policy-makers and historians, anthropologists and sociologists could provide with effective conflict analysis and could bring long-lasting results in terms of reconciliation and (re)inventing of the common past. Concepts of the Balkan traditional multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism when blindly projected to the past without taking into account the relevant analysis of previous forms of co-existence are not only bind to bring limited results, but can also prove to be counter-productive.

On empirical level international aid often creates a dependency syndrome as in the country-cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. The top-down allocation of aid leaves local authorities with little incentives for problem-based policy and decision making. Southeast European societies, on the other hand, rarely share the international enthusiasm and commitment to the promotion of the role of culture and cultural heritage as unifying factor and reconciliation tool. By implication externally imported efforts to peace and society building often meet no or little response on micro-social level. To get aid local communities need to be encouraged to participate rather than to 'consume' on a hand-out principle, and international assistance could well focus on horizontal mutual participation rather than on charity-based aid allocation.

Another significant source of concern is the politicization of foreign aid. Policies of reconstruction usually depend on attracting external assistance or investment, which is easily tied to donor or investment interests (Barakat 2007: 31). In post-conflict societies where identities had been contested and their symbols had been deliberately destroyed, the reconstruction of cultural heritage is a highly political matter both on domestic and international levels (Teijgeler 2011: 90). Despite the pompous rhetoric emphasizing reconciliation and common culture, in the countries of former Yugoslavia it was the ethnic cultural heritage (religious institutions) that received primary attention and external aid. NGO activists report that the restoration of mosques in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo has been often 'ideologically inspired', and the reconstruction 'yielded the transformation of those mosques into forms more appropriate to the organizations that funded restorations that to the congregations and communities that used them'. (Herscher 2007: 11-12). Teijgeler (2011) further points out that in a country where threatened identities play crucial roles it does not take much for aid distribution to disrupt any delicate ethnic or religious balance (p.90). Such tendencies provoke the question on the neutrality of external aid. Many foreign agents (mainly NGOs) function according to the so called 'principle of operational neutrality' and claim neutrality in public; however are not neutral in their performance, and can even work as for-profit

organizations (Teijgeler 2011:97). The dilemma of the neutrality of foreign aid has been unresolved and needs to be further addressed by trans-national actors working as humanitarian agents in the ever increasing cases of complex emergencies and state failures.

The number of externally sponsored renovated sites in the Western Balkans proves that politics of international assistance have been successful in terms of tangible rebuilding of cultural heritage. What has remained unaccomplished is the reconstruction of the memory of the prewar peaceful coexistence between the different ethnic groups. In this sense the key challenge to the international community remains the same as it was in mid 1990s - is it possible to reunite societies divided by traumas of war and to (re)build sustainable peace and common memory by importing foreign reconciliation policies and mechanisms?

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