Due to the 1992-1995 war, there are more international nongovernmental organizations (INGO’s) in Bosnia-Herzegovina than in any other Eastern or Central European country. Since the war ended in 1995, the non-governmental or civil society sector has developed and strengthened. Colas explains that the end of communism has allowed for the “birth, or rebirth, of civil society” and that the civil society sector must confront the nationalisms that developed during communism as a result of the lack of foundation for civil society (1997, 41). Peggy Watson illustrates that civil society can be understood in “metaphorical terms as a domain of fluctuating yet stable power relations” (1997, 24); it is composed of, but also goes beyond, specific social actors who are shaped by “immanent fields of power relations” (Ibid.). These fields of power include local, national, and international actors. In this paper, I seek to demonstrate how the governmental and nongovernmental sectors in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia) impact Roma, and specifically Romani women, by examining local and international nongovernmental organizations and governmental programs for Roma.
Невладините организации (НВО) често се сметани за обезбедуваши на услуги; тие можат да ги пополнат дупките кога државата не е во состојба или не успева да понуди одредени видови услуги. Во повоена Босна, покрај меѓународната заедница, локалниот граѓански сектор на општеството компензира за слабата централна власт. НВО, повеќе од кој било друг сектор на општеството, го имаат преземено патернализмот од поранешната комunistичка држава. Пинок покажува: „националните и локалните власти во Источна Југоисточна се повеќе се потпираат на невладиниот сектор за пружање услуги; постои јасна неволност на двете страни да се носи целиот товар на вистинска промена на долг патек“ (2002, 248).

Дискурсот на НВО и ситуацијата во повоена Босна првенствено се однесуваат на мнозинството етнички на босански Хрвати, Србии и Муслимани (откуку па натаму во текстот Босниачи1). Во текот на последните 10 години, Ромите (Циганите) беа исключени од поголемиот дел дискусија кои го засегаа развојот на граѓанските општествени и владини сектори. Сузан Гал (Susan Gal) објаснува, „Додека се бара еднаквост на поединците во доменот на политиката, идејата за граѓанско општество ги фрла во сенка економските и другите социјални разлики, кои во пракса фундаментално го ограничуваат учаството во политиката“.(1997, 34). Ниту еден Ром не е избран на некоја Владина позиција во Босна. Само неколкумина не-Роми ги признаваат економските и политички предизвици со коишто се соочуваат Ромите. Благодарение на работата на локални Роми активисти, и со помош на меѓународната заедница, дискурсот на граѓанското општество во Босна денес го опфаќа прашањето на правата на Ромите повеќе од кога и да било, но запоставувањето на Ромите останува широко распространето. Иако каше Ромите расте свеста за Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are often viewed as service protectors; they may fill in a gap left when the state abandons or is unable to offer certain kinds of services. In post-war Bosnia, the local civil society sector, in addition to the international community, compensate for the weak central government. NGOs, more than any other sector of society, have taken over the paternalism of the former communist state. Pinnock demonstrates, “national and local governments in Eastern Europe are increasingly relying on the NGO sector for service provision; there is a distinct reluctance on both their parts to carry the entire burden of real long-term change” (2002, 248).

The discourse on NGOs and the situation in post-war Bosnia primarily addresses the majority ethnicities of Bosnian Croats, Serbs, and Muslims (hereafter Bosniacs1). For the last 10 years, Roma (Gypsies) have been excluded from much of the discussion on the development of the civil society and governmental sectors. Susan Gal explains, “While claiming the equality of individuals in the political realm, the idea of civil society obscures the economic and other social differences that, in practice, fundamentally constrain political participation” (1997, 34). No Roma occupy elected governmental positions in Bosnia. Few non-Roma acknowledge the economic and social challenges that Roma face. Due to the work of local Romani activists and with the help of the international community, the discourse on civil society in Bosnia is more inclusive of Roma rights today than it ever has been, but neglect of Roma remains widespread. While Roma have an increasing awareness about the politics of civil society, they tend to lack the skills necessary to attract donors and attention from the majority communities.
Background to the Project

From 1998-2000, I worked as a volunteer for a local women’s NGO, Medica Infoteka, in Zenica, Bosnia. Medica Infoteka was established in April 1993 to provide psycho-social and medical assistance to survivors of war-related rape. During my time in Zenica, Medica consisted of a medical clinic, a team of psychologists and social workers, a daycare center, and Infoteka, a political and research wing. Medica and Medica 2, both located in Zenica, also consisted of two accommodations for women and children, workshops in weaving, sewing, hair design, and furniture upholstery, and a hotline for women and children victims of violence (SOS Telephone). Since 1997, Medica has been shifting and broadening its focus to include not only war-related issues but domestic violence against women, policy advocacy, and women’s rights in general. My colleagues at Medica Infoteka included Bosniac, Bosnian Croat, and Bosnian Serb women.

I mostly worked for Infoteka, the team that establishes and maintains networks with other NGOs and governmental institutions. As the second volunteer at Medica and because of my background in psychology, Infoteka asked me to design and coordinate a research project. My colleagues did not specify a topic but encouraged me to find something relevant to Medica’s mission of promoting women’s and children’s rights. I proposed to do a project with Roma because in Medica’s research on the

Основа на проектот

Од 1998 до 2000 год., јас работев како волонтерка во една локална женска НВО, Медика Инфотека во Зеница, Босна. Медика Инфотека била основана во април 1993 год., со намера да пружи психо-социјална и медицинска помош на жртвите од воените силувања. За време на мојот престој во Зеница, Медика се состоеше од клиника, тим од психологи и социјални работници, центар за дневна грижа и Инфотека, политичко и истражувачко крило. Медика и Медика 2, обете во Зеница, исто така овозможуваа престој на жени и деца, а имаше и работилници за ткаење, шиење, фризирање, тапацирање на мебел, и жешка линија за жени и деца, жртви на насилиство (СОС телефон). Од 1997 год., Медика се менуваше и го прошири својот фокус за да ги вклучи не само проблемите поврзани со војната, туку и домашното насилиство спрема жените, застапување на политики и, општо, правата на жените. Моите колешки во Медика Инфотека беа Бошњачки, босански Хрватки и босански Србинки.

Јас претежно работев за Инфотека, во тимот кој ги воспоставуваше и ги одржуваше мрежите со османатите НВО и владини институции. Како втор волонтер во Медика, и поради моето претходно искуство во областа на психологијата, од Инфотека ми замолија да дизајнирам и да координiram истражувачки проект. Моите соработници не прецизираа тема, но ме охрабрија да најдам нешто што ќе биде релевантно за мисијата на Медика која ги промовира правата на
prevalence of domestic violence in the Zenica municipality, they recommended that similar research be conducted among Romani women (Medica Infoteka 1999, 92). Their sample population of approximately 500 women did not include even one woman who identified herself as Romani. By 1999, Medica had established itself as one of the most successful NGOs in Bosnia. It had good relationships with donors, members of other local and international NGOs, governmental employees, and multiple projects that incorporated women from all three of the majority ethnicities, but they did not specifically mention Roma.²

2 During June 2000, three colleagues and I interviewed 112 Romani women in the Zenica municipality using a snowball sample in order to discover their socioeconomic status and demographic profile, the extent to which they experienced violence, to whom they turned for help and for what reasons, and what they thought about violence against women in general. I compared these figures to those of non-Romani communities based on the research Medica completed in 1999. We concluded that the consequences of classism, sexism, and racism create multiple forms of violence: physical and emotional violence against individuals, economic violence and state level marginalization against Roma, and violence against Romani women because they are women. There is a staggering amount of domestic violence among Roma and non-Roma in Bosnia. However, in a number of different categories, Romani women reported significantly more violence than non-Roma: 33% of Romani women said that their partner had abused them over a long period of time as opposed to 24% of non-Romani women (Medica Infoteka 2001:27). Significantly more Romani women (38%) reported that their partner had threatened them...
The transformation period from socialism to war to a free market economy in Bosnia has been slow and difficult for all ethnicities. Due in part to the on-going economic instability of the state in addition to the threat of possible violence, Bosnia has not attracted a great deal of (legal forms of) transnational capital. For example, in Zenica, the steel factory provided most of the local jobs, but due to insufficient technology and multiple bombings, it is beyond repair. International aid organizations provide a

The second part of our research included in-depth, semi-structured oral history interviews because we wanted to learn more about Romani women, their day to day lives, their life stories, and to counter some of the negative stereotypes of Roma in general. At the completion of the research, we published a not-for-profit book, *How We Live(d)* (Medica Infoteka 2001), and printed English, Bosnian, and Romani versions.

In the summer of 2003, I returned to Bosnia to complete research on my Master's paper. I focused on gaining a better understanding of the politics of local and international NGOs and governmental agencies, and more specifically how they address the challenges that Roma face. In this paper, I interrogate local NGOs in regards to their policies with Roma, Romani organizations' stance towards women, the role INGOs play in regards to Roma, and Romani women’s experiences with the above actors.

**Roma and the State**

**Romite i državata**

Periodot na transformacija od socijalizam, преку војна, до слободна пазарна економија во Босна беше бавен и тежок за сите етнички. Делумно поради тековната економска нестабилност на државата и заканата од можно насилство, Босна не успеа да привлече голем дел од (легалните форми на) транснационален капитал. На пример, во Зеница, фабриката за челик обезбедуваше поголем дел од локалните работни места, но поради застарената технологија и

with violence and responded affirmatively to the question, “Has your partner ever hit you?” (44%) (Ibid.).
large number of jobs for some local Bosnians, but not for Roma due to general lack of knowledge of NGO jargon, computer skills, and the English language.

In order to successfully incorporate Roma into governmental and civil society sectors during the precarious transformation period, Roma will need present a louder voice and a more organized grassroots campaign. However, it is difficult to organize grassroots campaigns when so many Roma face abject poverty not to mention lack the kind of education necessary to initiate and maintain such grassroots mobilizations. Romani women’s involvement is triply challenging as women face not only poverty and lack of education but also sexism and violence within their own communities and discrimination against them from the wider non-Romani community. Because Bosnia has yet to form a strong, unified central government, much less one that cooperates adequately with local governments and with the private sector, a movement against “it” proves difficult. Omi and Winant explain that positive change for racialized minorities can only be achieved when reform is initiated by the state, “when it has generated new programs and agencies in response to movement demands. Movements capable of achieving such reforms only arise when there is significant ‘decay’ in the capacities of pre-existing state programs and institutions to organize and enforce racial ideology” (1994, 88). Historically, Roma throughout Eastern and Central Europe and the Balkans have experienced neglect by the state. The 1992-95 war in Bosnia decentralized the state making it difficult for grassroots movements to initiate counterhegemonic reforms; however, in other ways, the heterogeneity of the civil society sectors provides Roma in post-war Bosnia more opportunities than they had previously.
Tito’s paternalistic Yugoslavia successfully assimilated many Roma into the wider society, or at least it appeared to from the perspective of many Roma.\(^5\) The post-war government in Bosnia hardly resembles the paternalist state of the former Yugoslavia, especially in regards to Roma. Local Romani leaders expressed uniform disgust regarding the lack of contact between NGOs and the government. Government officials focus attention on their own ethnic parties and do little more than make symbolic gestures to quiet the local Romani NGOs and leaders. Mehmed Suljic, a Romani intellectual and leader of an NGO, explained to me that Bosnian Roma’s needs are grossly over-shadowed by the needs of the majority communities. He blames the government, which has three rotating presidents, who are aligned with the three majority ethnicities: “In this kind of atmosphere, it is very difficult for the constituent people to live but when the word is about national minorities then it is dark.”

Romani leaders are not alone in their irritation with the government. Romani women’s contact with governmental institutions demonstrated how much local government institutions have (mis)treated or neglected Roma. My Medica colleagues and I asked women with which governmental institutions they had contact and discovered that significantly more Romani women had contact with...
governmental institutions than had non-Romani women. Although we did not ask the women why they went to these institutions, levels of violence in addition to their low socioeconomic status may have lead Romani women to governmental institutions. Nearly half of the Romani women we interviewed (46%) had been to the Center for Social Work, where social welfare is distributed; only 12% of non-Romani women had been to the Center. Twenty-eight percent of Romani women had been to the police as compared to only 9% of non-Romani women and 25% of Romani women had had contact with the court system whereas only 8% of non-Romani women had. It appears as though much of the contact that Romani women had with governmental institutions was negative. Approximately one third of the women stated they had a negative experience with the Center for Social Work (Ibid.). This may depend on whether the woman was granted any kind of material assistance. The women who expressed that they had completely positive experiences most often mentioned that they “received something” and those who had had negative experiences stated that they “did not receive anything” (Ibid.). Nearly half of the women (43%) who had contact with the police stated that their experience was negative (Medica Infoteka 2001, 32). They also expressed their dissatisfaction with the police in regards to lack of material assistance.

We asked women about differences in access to state services from socialism to the post-war period. All of the women we interviewed explained that their lives were better under socialism, especially in regards to access to state services. Romana explained to us how her experiences with local governmental institutions disappointed her when she returned from Germany at the end of the war:
Many Romani women expressed frustration because the Center for Social Work sent them to the local Romani organizations for assistance. Romani NGOs do not treat all Roma equally. Sometimes they only assist Roma who live in their own areas. Even if they wanted to, Romani NGOs do not have the capacity to alleviate the needs of all Roma; they do not have the resources to assist the large numbers of Roma who struggle daily with food, shelter, education, medicine, and sometimes domestic violence. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Romani women turn to these institutions in the case of domestic violence.

Serbian Romani activists Vera Kurtic and Slavica Vasic explain that a Romani woman who has survived rape (or other forms of violence) will rarely ask governmental agencies for assistance because “the institutional officials and the procedure itself blame her for the rape...[T]he institutions that are there to provide assistance are white, only white people are employed there, only white people are involved in the decision making process, racism is very much present and this is the primary reason that Roma women would rather give up than seek assistance from the institutions” (2002, 25). Vickers’ work echoes this sentiment towards governmental institutions in regards to the ways in which minority women are treated by local governmental institutions: “Violence manifests
in different ways, with different degrees of intensity, and it cuts across boundaries such as class, race, and ethnicity. Though violence manifests itself in interpersonal relationships, it is also structured into human institutions... In practice, many women must organize to protect themselves and their families against the very state institutions that are supposed to protect them” (2002, 238). She elaborates by explaining that marginalized women face an especially daunting reality because they at once need and want relief from the violence they suffer at home but they are aware of racialized discrimination within governmental institutions (Ibid., 242).

The Role of Local Romani NGOs

When I began to research the situation of Roma in Bosnia in 1999, I made contacts with many Romani leaders. I met with local Romani NGOs or more loosely organized groups of Roma in local associations from Zenica, Tuzla, Kakanj, Sarajevo, and Bijeljina. One of the first visits I made was to Sa E Roma (We are Roma) in Tuzla. Founded in 1996, it is arguably the most successful Romani NGO in Bosnia today.

In the summer of 1999, I met Mehmedalija, one of the leaders of Sa E Roma, and eight other men. Mehmedalija led the meeting and swiftly prevented anyone but himself from speaking, including his own son, who led a Romani youth group. He complained about internationals that came to their offices for information but did not provide money, even though I told him on the phone before my arrival that I was not a donor; I was looking for information. Despite this criticism, he arranged acco-
Identities

modation for me in a hotel owned by a fellow Roma and spent a great deal of time speaking with me. For the first afternoon, he spoke more of his personal problems than those of Roma in general. The next morning, I met with Mehmedalija and Indira, the secretary for *Sa E Roma*. After we finished our coffee in the hotel in which I was staying, we went to the home of a Romani woman where three older women were teaching teenage Romani girls how to sew at four different sewing machines. I spoke briefly with Indira and the Romani women. Indira expressed frustrations to me about being the only Romani woman employed at the organization and the discrimination she faced as a Romani woman from her male colleagues and others. She told me that she wanted to start her own organization and I encouraged her. In 2002, I learned that Indira had started her own organization, which I will discuss below.

Saban Mujic, the other president of *Sa E Roma*, joined us at the home of this Romani woman with his granddaughter. I spoke with Saban, Mehmedalija, and Indira for about three hours. Saban was quieter and less verbally aggressive than Mehmedalija. He explained that he simply wanted his children to have the rights and opportunities afforded to them. He wanted them to be able to attend school, not to be discriminated against or to be called “Cigan” (Gypsy) by teachers and others. He expressed frustration, anger, and sadness regarding the stereotypes of Roma (either dirty, lazy thieves, or romantic, worry-free travelers). I explained Medica’s services and we agreed to have a meeting in Zenica. I asked if he could come to Zenica with some women, including Indira. After the meetings in Tuzla, I had regular contact with Indira by telephone. I asked Indira if she would
ра преку телефон. Ја прашав дали ќе дојде и таа ми рече дека „тие“ (мажите) ќе одлучеле дента. Наредниот ден стигнаа мажите без жени, и покрај нашето барање.

Координаторот на Инфотека, Душка, го водеше сестанокот. По претставувањето, го започнаа сестанокот прашувајќи го Шабан што мисли за дискриминацијата на Ромите конкретно по прашањето на „раса“ и тој ја раскажа следнава приказна:

Па, знаете дека порано работев во фабрика и работев во рудникот, и сум еден од првите пензионирани Роми. Не постоеше никаква дискриминација, најверојатно зашто не знаеа од која националност сум. Веќе вклучен во политика и бев член на Комунистичката партија и имав за цел да ја подобрам ситуацијата на Ромите и кога открија дека се идентификувам себе си како Ром, не ми веруваа. И започна дискриминацијата. Рекоа: „Како тоа Ром би бил во Парламентот?“ Така што некои облици дискриминација сепак се појавуваа претходно.

Дали формите на дискриминација се променила или останаа исти?

Мислам дека една форма на дискриминација спрема Ромите секогаш постоела, но сега е процентуално расширена. Тоа е поради економијата и политичката ситуација во земјата, и поради водачите кои се на чело на државата, а стигнале таму благодарение на националистички причини.

Пред овој сестанок, многу од монте колешки во Медика Инфотека тврдеа дека таквите форми на дискриминација не постоеле во Босна, или барем не на „расна“ основа. Шабан не импресионираше со желбата да ги види сите ромски деца во училиште, но ниту еднаш не ги спомна жените и девојките Роми. Недостатокот на внимание на Sa E Roma спрема come and she said “they” (the men) would decide that day. The following day three men arrived, no women, despite our request.

The coordinator of Infoteka, Duska, led the meeting. After introductions, I began the meeting by asking Saban what he thought about discrimination against Roma specifically in regards to “race” and he told the following story:

Well, you know that I used to work in a factory before and I worked in the mine and I am one of the first Rom to retire. Discrimination never appeared, most likely because they didn’t know what nationality I was. I was involved in politics and I was in the communist party and I had the goal of improving the situation of Roma and when they discovered that I identify as Rom, they didn’t believe me. And the discrimination started. They said, “What kind of Rom would be in Parliament?” So some forms of discrimination did appear before.

Have the forms of discrimination changed or have they been the same?

I think that one form of discrimination has always existed against Roma but now it has spread to a larger percent. That is because of the economy, and because of the political situation in the country, and because of leaders, who head the country, and they arrived there due to nationalist reasons.

Before this meeting, many of my colleagues at Medica Infoteka had asserted that such forms of discrimination did not exist in Bosnia, at least not on the basis of “race.” Saban impressed us with his desire to see all Romani children attend school, but he never mentioned Romani women or girls. Sa E Roma’s lack of attention to Romani women and Saban’s explanation of the racialization of
Roma fostered my project with Medica Infoteka significantly (see Erickson 2003).

Women at Medica Infoteka gave the men crash courses on proposal and budget writing, organizational development, and communicating with donors. They focused on the need to be patient and persistent. During the meeting at Infoteka, Mehmedalija called to say he had just found out about the meeting. He was extremely angry that he had not been informed or consulted about it. Competition for funding, and personal and organizational recognition within and between Romani NGOs and the wider society, as well as within the broader NGO network fosters such dissent. Roditi-Rowlands (2002, 253) explains, “The situation is more critical among certain Romani NGOs, where some powerful individuals have proved very skillful in fundraising, while others have not...[C]ompetition for funds can be so intense that the result is that those organizations that receive international recognition and funds are doomed to be envied by others.”

In the summer of 2003, I revisited Saban at Sa E Roma. He was the only director; Mehmedalija had started his own organization. Sa E Roma had moved to a larger office space and had a Romani center in Kiseljak that housed a library and space for workshops and classes. Saban explained an impressive list of activities: computer courses, classes on Romani culture (music, art, history), programs for children who attended regular school, summer camps, preschool programs, courses for women in weaving, sewing, knitting, and upholstering, programs for the elderly, and more.
In 2003, when I asked Saban about funding challenges for all of his programs, he stated, “we stole something from you.” In other words, he learned something from our meeting in 1999. In 2003, Saban sounded much like the coordinators of Medica Infoteka whom he met in 1999. Like members of Medica Infoteka, he provided advice to other local (mostly Romani) NGOs and worked with other NGOs. He addressed the issue of cooperation, competition and corruption among Romani and non-Romani NGOs and the need for patience. He explained how many Romani individuals and organizations came to him for advice, but many did not understand how to manage the funds or the programs well. He said, “I want those Romani organizations to grow a little. But when they get money, Roma create their own problems amongst themselves. They want to divide the money up, but not to lead a project.”

Saban was also a member of numerous local, national, and international Romani councils and had attended many conferences. He worked on decreasing discrimination against Roma in Bosnia as well as increasing employment rates, educational attainment, the number of Roma who speak the Romani language, knowledge about Romani history and cultural practices, and changing the Bosnian constitution to be more inclusive of Bosnian minorities, especially Roma. He hoped that more Roma would be represented in government at the local, regional, and national levels. Saban told me that there were about 15,000 Roma living in the Tuzla canton and of these, only 15 Roma had formal jobs. According to Saban, the nongovernmental sector estimated that there were about 75,000-80,000 Roma living in Bosnia, but he believed there were many more.7
По приближно девет месеци средби со Роми лидери ширум Босна базично истражување, со колешките решивме да се фокусираме на Ромките во кантонот Зеница-Добој. Летото 1999 год., јас станив во контакт со Асоцијацијата на Ромите во Зеница, за да им го предложам нашето истражување. Им ги споменавме нашите средби со останатите ромски лидери, после кои лидерите од Зеница и Какањ ги наведоа сите проблеми што ги имаат со другите Роми и причините зошто на оните од Зеница повеќе им е потребна помош. Антијас и Јувал-Дејвис (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992) објаснуваат дека додека HBO секторот може да обезбеди простор за инаку замолените гласови, постои широка палета последици како што се високиот степен на корупција на финансирањето и борбата за авторитет во рамките на различни групи. Кога некои Роми ќе најдат луѓе подготвени да сослушаат, да помогнат или да поддржат, можеби нема да сакаат да ги споделуваат со останатите ромски заедници.

Почнувајќи полека и нежно, Смаил го започна состанокот со опишување на тешкотите на Ромите во Зеница и Какањ, како што се недостигот на медицинска помош поради недостаток на пари или недостапност на службите; возрасни поединци кои се необразовани и неписмени; лошо изградени домови; неасфалтирани, калливи патишта, кои заминувањето и доаѓањето ги прават скоро невозможни за време на студените, дождливи месеци; недостиг од училишен прибор, облека, храна, пари за упис и основна училишна партиципација; и деца кои воопшто не одат во училиштето. Додека зборуваше за проблемите и разликите меѓу Ромите, Смаил одеднаш почна да плаче. Почна кога молеше од нас барем една машина за пишување, зашто сите извештаи морале да ги пишуваат на рака, „што е непрофесионално за каква било организација.“ Ни објасни колку е тешко секогаш да мораш да

After about nine months of meetings with Romani leaders all over Bosnia and general background research, my colleagues and I decided to focus on Romani women in Zenica-Doboj canton. In the summer of 1999, I contacted the Roma Association in Zenica to propose our research. We mentioned our meeting with other Romani leaders after which the Zenica and Kakanj leaders listed all of the problems with other Roma and why those in Zenica needed more assistance. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) explain that while the NGO sector can provide a space for otherwise silenced voices, there are wide-ranging consequences such as the high levels of corruption for funding and struggle for authority within the various groups. When some Roma find people ready to listen, help, or support them, they may not be willing to share that with other Romani communities.

Beginning slowly and softly, Smail began the meeting by describing difficulties for Roma in Zenica and Kakanj, such as lack of medical care due to lack of money or availability of services; adults who were uneducated and illiterate; poorly built homes; unpaved, muddy roads, which made coming and leaving nearly impossible during cold, wet months; lack of school supplies, clothing, food, registration and basic fees for school; and children not attending school at all. While speaking about problems and differences among Roma, Smail suddenly began to cry. It began as he begged for at least a typewriter from us because they had to write out all of their reports by hand, “which is not professional for any kind of organization.” He explained the difficulties of always having to ask for things, how much he would love to say that Medica Infoteka received “this or that” from the Roma Association but that was impossible. He spoke about the situation
Подоцна, Душка ги опиша услугите на Медика во детали, ставајќи акцент на работата со жените и децата. Ги понуди услугите на Медика на Ромките и јасно стави на знаење дека Медика не е донатор. Објасни дека за сите речиси седум години откога постои Медика, жените и децата Роми не ги користат нејзините услуги, и дека таа не знае зошто е тоа така. Рече дека за првпат во својата историја, Медика ќе цели на конкретна национална група. Медика секогаш ги прифаќала жените без оглед на нивната религија или националност, но билеќи Ромките не ги користат нејзините услуги, Медика би се фокусирала на таа група. Потоа, Душка го опиша истражувањето кое сакаме да го проведеме со жените и деца Роми, како и нашиот интерес за распространетоста на домашното насилиство. Смаил веќе ни објасни и посочи кои од неговите колеги редовно си ги тепаат жените. Тој и неговите колеги не сметаа дека тепањето на жените е „ненормално“ или неподобно; воопшто не се срамеа of his peers, who were sitting with us at the table, about their former jobs, their children, and how much they had lost or never had. His tears were real although he exaggerated quite a bit (at one point, using the cigarette box as a telephone to illustrate a conversation between himself and the municipality or other governmental organizations). The man to my left also began to cry, but he did not allow his tears to leave his eyes and sat in somber state for about a half hour after Smail stopped crying. He stared out the window and his dark brown eyes seemed to be in another place entirely.
“we hit our women.” Duska had seen Smail kick his wife down the street. We explained the research, questions we would ask about gender, identity, and prevalence of domestic violence. At first, Smail stated bluntly, “if you interview one Romani woman, you’ve interviewed them all. Whether they live on the street, in a shack, in a house or an apartment, they encounter the same problems.” Just as many non-Roma stereotype and homogenize Roma, Romani men may essentialize, homogenize, and discriminate against Romani women in various ways. This does not mean that Romani women do not have power or that they do not resist discrimination (see Erickson 2004 for more attention to the ways in which Romani women resist violence and discrimination).

A month later, Smail opened another meeting. Present were members of Medica, two other local NGOs in Zenica, and Romani men and women from Zenica and Kakanj. After all of the organizational explanations and introductions, we asked to hear from the twenty some Romani women who had come. The women explained that discrimination existed against them because they are Roma. One woman had an 18-year-old son, who was in the army in Gorazda. His commanding officer had hit him, calling him a “Gypsy”. She had eight other children, none of whom attended school. They had never begged for food nor eaten from the garbage. Her husband worked and they survived on his meager salary. He beat the children. Someone asked her whether she would have more children in the future, she said her “heart hurts,” but “I am here.”

Another woman had three children and she explained that they ate from the garbage because they had to, espe-
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вreme на војната. Сака што дојдеме во Каканџ да видите како живеат, како мораат да носат чизми за да се движат низ калливата ромска населба. Немаат водовод, можноситети за посетување училиштето, медицинска помош, ниту социјална помош. Ниту една од женитите на составеното не ги праксала децата на училиштето за тоа што ниту една нема пари за тоа. Тие исто така имаат и здравствени проблеми поради недостатокот од пари за болнички престој и лекарства, „дури и за аспирин“. Многу од Ромите кои ги запознав во Босна и Герцеговина колку е важно не-Ромите да отидат „на терен,“ особено во ромските населби, за од прва рака да ги видат условите во кои живеат Ромите. Една жена ми кажа дека можам да напишам книга само за една Ромка од Босна, што е особен контраст на тврдењето на Смаил дека секоја приказна на Ромска жена е како и сите други.

Изгледаше дека женитите на составеното го одобруваат нашето истражување и дека се возбудени поради него. За возврат на нашата помош во развојот на невладините организации и нивното повремено користење на нашите факсови и компјутери, заедно со медицинската, психо-социјалната и образовната помош на Медика за женитите и децата, Смаил рече дека ќе ни помогне да стапиме во контакт со Ромките. Овој разговор ни разјасни дека мораме да работиме со Ромите, за да работиме со Ромките. Исто така, се уверивме дека проблемите со кои се соочуваат Ромките се многу повеќе нагласени отколку што верувавме првично, во однос на неприступноста до службите во поширокото општество. На домашното насилиство почнавме да гледаме како на правило, а не како на искуство, заедно со недостаток на образование, здравствена заштита и постојано вработување. Се изненадивме од тоа колку Роми ни дозволија да зборуваме со нивните жени, иако се соочивме и со мал број случаи каде што не ни беше дозволено да

The women at this meeting appeared to be in favor of and excited about our proposed research. In return for our assistance on NGO development and their occasional use of our fax or computers in addition to Medica’s medical, psycho-social, and educational assistance for Romani women and children, Smail said that he would provide assistance in accessing Romani women. This conversation made it clear that we had to work with Romani men in order to work with Romani women. We also believed that the problems Romani women faced were more pronounced than we had originally believed in terms of lack of access to services in the wider society. We began to see domestic violence as the rule rather than the exception, in addition to lack of education, health care, and steady employment. We were surprised to find how many Romani men allowed us to speak with their wives, although we encountered a small number of cases in which we were either not allowed to speak with a woman or a man interrupted our interview and refused to let us continue speaking with their wives.
Our relationship with the Romani leaders proved to be challenging. We learned that Smail was one of two presidents of the Zenica Association. Soon we met Meho, who frequently came to Medica to ask for our assistance with various matters and also greatly assisted us in contacting Romani women. We began to work more closely with Meho than with Smail. When we began the Roma project, Smail and Meho were co-presidents of the Zenica Roma Association. Like the men in Tuzla, they separated and by 2003, they had their own organizations.

Although in different ways, Meho and Smail are both NGO entrepreneurs. Despite their genuine concern to improve the situation for Roma in Zenica, the wider political and economic challenges which they faced as individuals and members of a disadvantaged racialized community influenced them and their NGO policies in ways that served to better their own personal agendas and economic situation. Werbner explains, “...the challenge for minority activists and anti-racists is also... one of negotiating internal differences – of consolidating alliances and formulating agendas beyond divisive identity politics” (Werbner 1997, 265). This proves especially challenging for Romani leaders in Bosnia due to a long history of economic, racialized, classist (and gendered) discrimination. Corruption and competition among Romani leaders is prevalent.

During our quantitative survey with Romani women, we asked them about their experiences with the local Roma Association. Nearly every other woman (43%)
имала контакт со Асоцијацијата. Од нив, половина изјавија дека имале целосно негативно искуство. Безброј жени кои ги интервјуирале се пожалија дека локалните ромски лидери само „си се грижат за своите“. Едно семејство ми кажа дека Асоцијацијата ги терала Ромите да ги платат пакетите со хуманитарна помош кои ги дистрибуирала, иако многу работи биле бесплатно делени на Ромите кои живеат во истите делови од градот со лидерите.

Додека ромскиот НВО сектор направи извонреден, иако можеби непостоян, напредок за да одговори на потребите на многу локални Роми, и им ги соопшти своите грижи (едногласно или не) на релевантните владини службеници, Ромките беа на големо изоставени од овие дискурси. Повеќето ромски лидери говорат за потребата од повеќе и подобра образование; ретко ги споменуваат ромските девојчиња во дискурсите. Некои мажи Роми навистина сочувствуваат со лошата состојба на Ромките, но малку умеат да се справат со проблемите. На пример, Мехмед и Ахмед Сулиќ се браќа кои себе си се сметаат за интелектуалици, и кои водат една ромска НВО која ја истражува ситуацијата на Ромите. Во 2003 год., го прашав Мехмед дали верува дека проблемите со кои се соочуваат Ромките се исти или се разликуваат од оните на мажите Роми. Тој ми објасни:

Сѐ е тоа поврзано со цивилизацијата; мора да признаям. Виdeoji Ромите се во најнизкиот ешалон на цивилизацијата, со други зборови, најхората, најнеобразованите, најнеобразованите, би рекол дека во областите во коишто живеат Ромите владее старијот, архаичен сфакање за животот – а тоа е патријархално воспитување, што значи дека жените се во поинаква позиција и тие носат повеќе од товаров, повеќе отколку мажите. Тие, вечноност, се главата на семејството, тие се оните поодговорните; од нив зависи дали семејството ќе преживее.

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tact with the Association. Of these, half stated that they had a completely negative experience. Countless women we interviewed complained that local Romani leaders only “watch out for their own.” One family told me that the Association made Roma pay for the humanitarian aid packages that they were distributing, although they gave many things away free to those Roma living in the same areas of the city as the leaders.

While the Romani NGO sector has made remarkable, if not inconsistent, strides to address the needs of many local Roma and have voiced their concerns (uniformly or not) to relevant governmental officials, Romani women have been largely left out of these discourses. Most Romani leaders address the need for more and better education; they rarely mention Romani girls in the discussion. Some Romani men are truly sympathetic to the plight of Romani women but they have little knowledge of how to address the issues. For example, Mehmed and Ahmet Suljic are brothers, who identify themselves as intellectuals, and run a Romani NGO that researches the situation of Roma. In 2003, I asked Mehmed whether he believed that the problems that Romani women face were similar or different to those of men. He explained,

It is all related to civilization; I have to admit that. Since Roma are in the lowest echelon of civilization, in other words, the poorest, the most uneducated, I would say in the areas where Roma live, an old-fashioned, archaic way of understanding life rules – that is patriarchal upbringing, which means women are in some other position, and women carry more than their share, more than men. They are actually the main person in the family, they are the more responsible ones; it is up to them whether the family will survive.
Mehmed did not separate gender issues from other issues. For example, he asserted that gender equality is related to education. He also told me that the international community plays an important role in bringing “civilization” to Bosnia, especially to Roma, which I will address further below.

I also asked Saban of Sa E Roma whether he thought Romani women faced different challenges than men. In 1999, at the meeting between Sa E Roma and Medica Infoteka, he did not specifically mention gender. He did not mention gender in my interview with him in the summer of 2003 either. I broached the subject and discovered that he has changed his rhetoric but not his programs. He told me that he hoped to begin a program for Romani women and children so that Romani women could learn how to be better parents which signifies the enormous responsibility of parenting upon women alone. He also told me that male leaders acknowledge discrimination by men against women. They were trying to employ a woman in the organization and create more programs and activities for women. However, he explained, “it is a long process.”

Some Romani activists have addressed the difficult challenges that Romani women face in that Romani men tend to see educational needs and unity among Roma as more important than discrimination and violence against women – at least for the time being (European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) 2002). As I mentioned above, in 1999, Indira was the secretary for Sa E Roma. At the time, she was an excellent spokesperson for Roma, and especially Romani women, but she had not received training in NGO jargon, adequate computer skills, and she had not completed school. Today she leads her own organization, Bolja Budućnost (Better Future) and she was one of two trainers for a program, “Romani women...
can do it.” It is a program (funded by the Gender Task Force in Sarajevo) that seeks to empower Romani women within their homes and eventually on a public or political level. Indira accomplished a great deal in a brief period of time. In 2003, I asked her about the seminars for the above program, and she highlighted the importance of including class along with ethnicity in resolving the problems that Romani women face and the importance of long-term change, not only short-term solutions:

It’s raising the awareness of Romani women, how to organize within the family, in the community, how they can learn to realize their rights, how to resolve their own problems. So that they are not women of another class, rather that they are like other women, they try to fight for their own rights, resolve their own problems. For if they don’t do it themselves then no one will do it for them. [...] When I was in Mostar, after the seminar, women asked us, “Are we going to get a food packet now?” I told them, “That’s no help, what are you gonna do with a packet or two of food? [...] It'll help you more if you learn how to solve your own problems.”

Indira initiated several projects through her organization including “The Public: Life and Representation of Romani Women,” a campaign to raise public awareness about Romani women and decrease prejudice. Indira and her colleagues photographed Romani women, collected testimonials on their standard of living and their interests. She also led projects on literacy and computer training for Romani children, and on housework and hair design for women.
Indira networks with local NGOs, Romani NGOs throughout Europe, and with other Romani women. In the summer of 2003, she was working to build a local grassroots movement for Romani women in Bosnia. In 2002, Indira attended a meeting where 22 Romani associations gathered to form Vijeće Roma (Roma Council). They voted to have 11 members represent Roma in Bosnia and Indira was the only woman elected. Later, Vijece Roma joined the Ministry of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indira spoke at length about her involvement in the Roma Council and mentioned the new Romani Democratic National Party. I asked her if she wanted to become involved in politics, and her answer shed more light on her perspective as a female leader. Indira refused requests to serve on the newly formed Council because she does not like “titles or ranks.” She thinks that too many politicians look out for their own interests instead of those of their constituents and she did not want to associate herself with such people. She also did not feel that she had the proper education to be on such a council and she believed that “the nongovernmental sector is the nongovernmental sector. If you start getting involved in politics then it’s not the same… [W]e are a nonprofit, nonpolitical organization and I can’t mix the government and nongovernmental sectors.” Indira explained that she would rather work on the ground with people than further her own political position.

In her explanation of the relationship between “politics” and NGOs, she also addressed class, gendered, and racialized differences. For example, she told me she had more faith in Roma who manage to survive by alternative means (such as begging) than she did in the Romani leaders who sought personal and political power. I wanted to know more and I asked her more about the party, what she thought would happen with it, and if she wanted...
to one day be involved. She told me that everything in life is political: “Without politics you can’t do anything. But formal politics as politics, that’s not for me. Who knows if maybe I could be a successful politician? Because, I’ll tell you, I’m a good speaker.” Indira’s definition of “politics” resonates with feminist, activist literature. For example, she seems to believe that the everyday lives and acts of people are important and that everyday decisions impact long-term goals as much as more formal politics (see e.g. Mohanty 1991; Naples 2003; Smith 1987). Indira never mentioned the need for a large women’s or Romani movement. She focused on her own experiences with Romani women. By conversing with women, she worked towards the larger goal of empowering them and saw that they had the ability to wield power within their own families and eventually in the wider community. As a result she faced challenges within the Romani community, especially from other (male) Romani leaders. I asked her,

*How is it between you and other Romani organizations?*

*Honestly?*

*Honestly. Difficult.*

*Because of what?*

It’s difficult because they are all men’s organizations and with them there isn’t even one woman working in the organization and now I don’t know if it’s because of some kind of mentality, the way they consider a woman, that she isn’t for such work, and that a woman should be at home sitting... or maybe they are simply afraid because we have so many results in such a short period of time [...] We have had a lot of problems with those men’s organizations... I really don’t
Identities

have all of the information that they [men’s NGOs] do, but it’s not all that important to me so I generally don’t look at what they’re doing, what they’re interested in, how they work, while it’s the opposite with them; they follow every step I take, they want to know where I am, what I’m doing.

I’m only interested in my organization and that it works as it should.

Funding is difficult for any NGO in Bosnia, but especially for Romani organizations due to lack of knowledge and international contacts, and fierce competition with other Romani and non-Romani NGOs. Western funding is the key to defining the NGO sector, especially in light of the expanding European Union (Pinnock 2002, 233). Without proper education on NGO development, NGOs like Indira’s suffer. On the other hand, NGO development can be very expensive and funds may not always assist those who need the most support, nor do local NGOs have as much power to define the kinds of assistance or the needs of local populations as the international community. For example, Indira became upset while attending a conference in Strasbourg on developing Romani NGOs in regards to use of funds. At the conference, she told the organizers, “You are giving large amounts of pointless funding for us to come here. I didn’t want a hotel, an airplane ticket... so that I could come here for two days... Wouldn’t it have been better to take that money, if you want to help the Romani people, so that they have some direct help from it? They don’t have anything there and now I’m sitting here listening to you... [H]ave you ever been to a Romani settlement to see how people live?”

Indira is implementing many of the recommendations that feminist scholars and other Romani activists have addressed. For example, Romani activist Nicoleta Bitu
Nikoletta Bitu, a Romani activist from Bosnia, believes that in addition to the need to focus on grassroots projects, “different initiatives to bring state officials and Romani activists together could have a major contribution in introducing gender aspects in the states, policies and, more importantly, in their implementation... This will allow us to discover new young Romani women and to address Romani women in the communities and make them aware of their rights. International advocacy should go hand-in-hand with grassroots activities” (Bitu 2004). Indira leads local grassroots projects but, despite her critique of them, she also networks with other Roma and attends national and international conferences. Indira also works on issues of domestic violence against Romani women (see Erickson 2003, 2000).

**INGOs and Roma: the Intersection of Local and International Forms of Racialization**

Cooperation and coordination between and within local and international NGOs remains a serious challenge in Bosnia (Demichelis 1998). Hawkins and Humes explain, “States are embedded in dense networks of transnational and international social relations that shape their perceptions of the world and their role in the world. States are socialized to want certain things by the international society in which they and the people in them live” (2002, 243). As I mentioned above, Romani intellectual, Mehmed Suljic believed that international community could bring “civilization” to Bosnia, which includes counteracting local forms of patriarchy in Romani communities. Few Roma that I spoke with interrogated international forms of racialization. Like local discourses, international aid discourse on human rights, education, violence, nationalism, sexuality, etc. are racialized and
Gendered, and influenced by the worldwide economic imbalance between and within different nation-states. Addressing these variances in-depth is beyond the scope of this paper, but I will highlight some of the critiques of the international community as well as some of the benefits of their presence in Bosnia, especially in regards to Roma.

Gagnon articulates, “To the extent that funders and donors rather than local needs drive their actions, international NGOs reflect the interests of powerful states in the international system. As such the NGOs act as instruments of power – a way for states to project their power into other societies – rather than as forces working with the interest of the locals as the priority” (2002, 209). Gagnon’s work highlights some of the major structural challenges for local and international NGOs in Bosnia and argues that Bosnia is an especially good test case for the effectiveness of INGOs because there are more than 250 INGOs in Bosnia (2002, 207). Gagnon illustrates that competition between INGOs and their contradicting philosophies lead them away from cooperation with each other and with local people. They also tend to focus on short-term problems, not on historic reasons behind the problems or long-term solutions.
Географската местоположба на многу од МНВО во главниот град, Сараево. Постоеше и нееднаквост на моќта во истражувањето кое го спроведов со Ромките. Се развија три различни релации на моќ: меѓу моите колешки од Медика Инфотека и мене, меѓу моите колешки и Ромките, и меѓу Ромките и мене. Со моите колешки редовно разговаравме за мојот пристап до некои одредени видови моќ (западно образование, пари, американски пасош, итн.) но разговорите за разликите во пристапот до моќта меѓу моите колешки и Ромките се покажаа како попроблематични, иако и тоа се подобри со тек на време.⁹

Разбирливо, чувствата на Босанците спрема меѓународната заедница се поделени (виdì исто Helms 2003a; b; c). Иако МНВО ги потценуваат локалните народи, тие исто така овозможуваат и стабилна бирократија која ја недостасува на сегашната босанска влада; исто така, тие обезбедуваат капитал и зачувување на мирот, и некои ги истакнуваат важните прашања за кои локалните Босанци не говорат (ситуацијата на Ромите, на пример).

Голем дел од литературата ги претставува МНВО како хомогени социјални системи. Иако постојат заеднички квалитети кои ги формираат поединечните МНВО, МНВО секторот го сочинуваат поединци.¹⁰ Сретнах многу меѓународни хуманитарни работници кои биле во Босна со години, кои одлично работеа и беа особено почитувани од локалните Босанци. Некои странци, иако малкумина, говореа босански. МНВО и локалните НВО, заедно со владините службеници и локалното население заемно си влијаат на повеќе нивоа во различни ситуации, и за оваа мора така да се проговори, за хомогенизирачката дихотомија да не ги сврти локалните Босанци против МНВО или да ги претстави како да работат во many INGOs, in the capital city of Sarajevo. There was disparity of power in the research that I conducted with Romani women. There were three different power relationships: between my Medica Infoteka colleagues and me, my colleagues and Romani women, and Romani women and me. My colleagues and I regularly discussed my access to certain kinds of power (Western education, money, an American passport, etc.) but discussing differences in access to power between my colleagues and Romani women proved to be more challenging, although this improved over time.⁹

Understandably, Bosnians feel ambivalent about the international community (see also Helms 2003a; b; c). While INGOs may belittle local peoples, they also provide a stable bureaucracy that the current Bosnian government lacks; they also provide capital and peacekeeping protection, and some highlight important issues that local Bosnians may not address (for example, the situation of Roma).

Much literature portrays INGOs as homogenous social systems. While there are overlapping qualities that make up individual INGOs, individuals make up the INGO sector.¹⁰ I met many international aid workers who had been in Bosnia for years, who were doing remarkable work and were highly respected by local Bosnians. Some internationals, albeit few, spoke the Bosnian language. INGOs and local NGOs, in addition to government officials and local people, interact on multiple levels in various situations and this must be addressed so that a homogenizing dichotomy does not pit local Bosnians against INGOs or portray them as working in a clear-cut tandem relationship. These interactions are also based upon race, class, and gender classifications and the diversity of relation-
оцигледно тандемски однос. Овие заемни влијанија исто така се базираат и на расни, класни и родови класификации, па разновидноста на односите мора да се сфати и понатаму да се истражува.

Гањон (2002) вели дека во имплементирањето на практични цели, некои МНВО биле поуспешни од некои други. Тие МНВО практикуваат истражувачки методи со учење на локалното население и се фокусираат на заедниците, наместо на националните проекти, кои повеќе ги зајакнуваат локалните HVO (Ibid., 223). Иако се согласувам со Гањон по ова прашање, постојат проблеми во врска со овие предлози. Имено, ситуацијата на Ромите и поконкретно на Ромките, нема да биде соодветно адресирана со тоа што на локалните Босанци ќе им се овозможи да зборуваат за приоритетите. Нема Роми претставници во локалната, ниту во националната власт, и мал број од нив имаат способност за донесување одлуки во врска со поширокото општество. Иако меѓународната заедница донесе нови предизвици и неуправотежени односи на моќ, исто така беше донекаде успешна во вклучување на Ромите во дискурсот на HVO и во владиниот дискурс. За разлика од Титовите политики на изнасилено „братство и единство“, или на запоставување и дискриминација на Ромите од страна на не-Ромите, меѓународната заедница се постави спрема ситуацијата на Ромите како Роми и се обиде да ја подобри, иако подоцна и посепоро отколку со другите етности. Според Барани, и покрај често пати популациите и мисионирачки особини на меѓународните HVO, Ромите повеќе имаат корист од нивното присуство, отколку штета (Barany 2002). Барани изјавува: „Овие пресврти на политиките се должат не на прилично неефективната работа на ромските активисти, туку во голем дел на неумоливиот притисок од страна на меѓународните организации“ (Ibid., 306).

Gagnon (2002) demonstrates that some INGOs have been more successful than others in implementing practical objectives. Such INGOs practice participatory research methods with local people, and focus on communities instead of national projects, which better empower local NGOs (Ibid., 223). While I agree with Gagnon on this issue, there are some problems with these recommendations. Namely, by allowing local Bosnians to address priorities, the situation for Roma, and more specifically Romani women, would not be adequately addressed. There are no Roma represented in local or national government and few have decision-making capabilities in regards to wider society. While the international community has introduced new challenges and imbalanced power relations in Bosnia, it has also been somewhat successful in including Roma in NGO and government discourse. Unlike Tito’s policy of forced “brotherhood and unity,” or the neglect of and discrimination against Roma by non-Roma, the international community has addressed situations of Roma as Roma, and sought to improve the situation albeit it later and more slowly when compared to other ethnicities. According to Barany, despite the often times patronizing and missionizing qualities of international NGOs, Roma benefit from their presence more than not (Barany 2002). Barany states, “These shifts in policy have been due not to the largely ineffective work of Gypsy activists, however, but in large part to the relentless pressure of international organizations” (Ibid., 306).
Dervo Sejdić is the first Romani individual I met who used the phrase “Romani movement.” In 2003, Dervo was the coordinator for the Council of Roma. He also worked closely with local Romani NGOs on notions of empowerment. I asked Dervo if he believed that Roma need unity in order to accomplish more results and he stated that unity was not yet necessary; rather, Roma must spend a greater deal of time “in the field” interacting with one another and then unity will come. While he believed the Romani community was strong enough to stand on its own, without the international community, he also stated that internationals have been a positive influence and they are necessary. According to Dervo, Roma began the movement but the international community has helped them to realize some of their goals. Other Roma agree. In 2000, Meho, a Romani leader in Zenica, explained at a roundtable discussion on education that he was thankful for the war because it brought international organizations that “help Roma.”

Jennifer Erickson  
Roma in Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Gendered Gaze at the Politics of Roma, (I)NGOs, and the State

In the summer of 2003, I met with Karen, an American woman, who had been working in Bosnia for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for more than five years. Karen has done a great deal of work with Romani communities in regards to education and promoting cooperation between Romani NGOs, but her focus is on education. She explained to me that the current educational system is based on an outdated system of education, which focuses on rote memorization. She stated that “progress” was slow and Bosnia needs to become “more modernized,” which is one of the goals of the OSCE mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina.
Karen provided me with several examples of fundamentalist nationalist textbooks and school atmospheres by all majority ethnicities. Some children, she explained, are bused to monoethnic schools, and in other schools there is complete segregation: different classes, teachers, school bells, cafeterias, etc. Schools in Bosnia have become a vehicle for politics. Nationalist subjects are part of the curriculum in many schools. In the summer of 2003, OSCE was working on revising textbooks including the issue of language and geography, which varies depending on the ethnicity of the authors. According to Karen, all three ethnic groups had inappropriate content in their textbooks. She explained that there were many schools with offensive names and symbols that could lead to problems. I began to think about the misrepresentation of Native Americans and other non-European groups, which pervades textbooks in the United States, but I did not say anything. OSCE has made several recommendations on how to improve the educational system including the need for new textbooks with less overtly nationalist political ties, desegregation, inclusion of Romani children and less discrimination against children of all ethnicities (OSCE 2002, 2003). Long-term goals included adding Romani history to textbooks as well as financing higher education. However, Karen explained, there are 12 ministries of education in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which makes collecting accurate data very challenging.

Save the Children focuses on violence against children, discrimination in schools, and poverty in local communities (Save the Children 2002a, 2002b). In August 2003, I spoke with Jasminka, who works for Save the Children UK. Jasminka is one of the few non-Romani Bosnians who works for Save the Children.
Britanija. Jasminka e edna od retkite ne-Romki Bosanki so koj razgоварав, a koja gi iznanzavace predrasudite sprema Romite. Taav veruvave deka i odbvanevo da se zboruva za situacijata na Romite e forma na diskriminacija, i ohrabruvave mognu Bosanci „da rabotat so Romite, da uchat od niv, i da gi pochivuavat – na isto nivo“. Taav objasni deka na Romskite deca im e potrebno obrazovanie, i deka moraat da nauvat da bitat aktivni i da razmisluvavat so svoja glava. Isto tak, reche deka vandalnite slubni ne mislat deka e vozmovno da se promeni situacijata na Romite; tие prosto ja kritikuvaat sopstvenata percepcija na romskiot nasuv na zivota. „Spasete gi decatata“ organiziraše obuka za partiipativni metodi vo učeneto vo romskite zaedinici, i rabotete na zglemuvaanje na znaevoeto za Romite vo poширkonoto opštewstvo. Tvrdevanata na Jasminka znatievno se razlikavaa od onie na mognote bosanski poedinci koj gii imav zapoznane, od koj mnogume vo lokaalnite HBO, i postojano gii povtoruvaat negativnite stereotipi za Romite. Mnogu Bosanci cvrsto veruvaat vo stereotipite za Romite, i vo toa deka Romite si go odbralo nasuv na zivota, a so toa i problemite.

In 2003, I spoke with Jim, another American who worked for the OSCE. Jim told me that there is no law regarding the social and economic rights of minorities (see also ERRC 2004). According to Jim, neither Roma nor the government had initiated anything regarding Roma and housing, which is a significant problem. Many Roma lived on social welfare before the war. They lived in government-owned flats and since there was no law regarding these flats, many Roma in post-war Bosnia are homeless. He further explained that before the war, many people built houses illegaly to avoid taxes. If a non-Rom had a house without a title, they can receive a retroactive title. This is unheard of for Romani settlements. Most
dobie retroaktivna dozvola. Ova e nechueno za romskite naselbi. Mnogu luge (pogrešno) mislat deka site Romi patuvaat ili mitiraat, taku shto ne bi trebaale da imaat pravo na kuka. Isto taku, tuka e desetgodishnoto pravilo; ako ne se javi sopstvenikot na odredena parcela vo rok od 10 godini, tогаш таа може да биде prodadenata ili dадена на postojnoto stanar. Ovoj proces iziskuva oгromna dokumentaci-ja, a mnogu Romi немаат ни извод од матичната книга на родените, сметки за struja, телефон, glasacki legitimacii itn. Ovoj proces честопати зависи од dobata волja на општините, кон се плашат дека ако дадат парцили на некои Romi, уште повеке Romi ќе дојдат, а тие тоа не го сакаат.12 Тогаш џим ми кажа дека Советот на Европа ј дал на Босна рок за усво-јување на закон за социјалните и економски права на малцинствата, особено на Romite. Владата го усвои решението, но никој вистински не го разгледа, и никој не прави ништо конкретно во врска со тоа. Ги усвоиуваат законите само за да ги усвојат. По-натаму, според џим, Romite немаат силно лоби кога станува збор за такви прашања. Ромскиот совет или Ромскиот советодавен одбор, кој го споменав погоре, спаа под Министерството, со сестанува редово, но ромските лидери мегусебно не се согласуваат и не можат да се сосредоточат на една тема. Џим не веруваше дека локалните власти и државните ин-ституции кога било ќе бидат подготвени да работат на прашањата на Romite. Мисли дека тоа е случај на краjизо запоставување. Сите други етиности на краjот добиваат некаква помош, но Romite немаат никого. Тоj верува дека многу од овие проблеми се поврзани и со проблематичните закони за бегалци на УНХЦР. Многу bosanski Romi сe уште живеат во Bosна како раселени лица, но УНХЦР се фокусира на bегал-ците, onие поединци кои ги преминале (самоволно) meгународните граници поради различни форми на people (mistakenly) think that all Roma travel or migrate so they should not have rights to a house. There is also the rule of 10 years; if no one claims a plot of land within 10 years, then it can be sold or given to the current occupant. This process requires a great deal of documentation and many Roma do not have birth certificates, electric bills, phone bills, voting records, etc. This process often relies on the good will of the municipalities, which are afraid that if they give some Roma plots of land, then more Roma will come and they do not want that.12 Then Jim explained that the Council of Europe gave Bosnia a deadline to adopt a law on the social and economic rights of minorities, especially for Roma. The government did adopt a provision but no one really examined it and no one is doing anything concrete about it. They pass laws for the sake of passing laws. Furthermore, in Jim’s opinion, Roma do not have a strong lobby for such issues. The Roma Council or Roma Advisory Board, which I mentioned above, falls under the Ministry, and meets on a regular basis, but none of the Romani leaders get along and cannot stay focused on any one topic. Jim did not believe that local authorities and state institutions would ever be ready to work on Romani issues. He thinks it is a case of pure neglect. All other ethnicities eventually find some assistance but Roma have no one. He believed that many of these problems are also related to problematic UNCHR laws on refugees. Many Bosnian Roma still live within Bosnia as displaced persons but UNHCR focuses on refugees, those individuals who have crossed (arbi-trary) international borders due to various forms of per-ssecution, and cannot return to their homeland. UNHCR does provide some assistance (for example, material) to internally displaced persons (IDPs) but they focus on refugees.
прогонство, и не можат да се вратат во татковината. УНХЦР навистина обезбедува некаква помош (на пример, материјална) за внатрешно раселените лица (ВРЛ), но се фокусира на бегалците.

Кога зборував со Ким, помошник-службеничка за безбедност во УНХЦР, ми објасни дека тие започнале да работат со Ромите во 1999 год., кога голем број Роми бегали од Косово почнале да пристигнуваат во Босна. Според Ким, до 1999 год. Ромите скоро и да биле непознати за меѓународната заедница, која била позагрижена за политискарамнотежа меѓу Србите, Хрватите и Босниските. Во летото 2003 год., УНХЦР имаше проблем со дефинирање на Ромите на институционално ниво. УНХЦР се фокусира на мандати, на ситуацијата, не на посебни етнички групи. На пример, протерувањата се случуваат секому ширум земјата; така што УНХЦР не може да се фокусира на конкретни етноси.

Ким конкретно работеше на проблемите на сместувањето, документацијата и регистрацијата на Ромите, и на овозможување обука за правна помош на локалните центри коишто се борат против расна дискриминација. Целта на проектот беше да им се помогне на Ромите во профитирање од центри за правна помош. Но, како и да е, Ромите не се навикнали на позитивни исходи од власти, така што самиот проект беше проблематичен. Ромите немаат тенденција да се обраќаат за помош кај власти (освен во Центарот за социјална работа, кога се во прашање пари). УНХЦР им помагаше на Ромите и да ги разберат своите права базирани на нивниот статус и нивните права на враќање и реконструкција во домовите, исти како и на другите раселени лица. Во 2003 год., ромските населби беа значителен проблем. Иако Ромите со генерации живеја на иста земја, тоа не значеше дека ја поседуваат. Горица, сараевски кварт,

When I spoke with Kim, Associate Protection Officer, UNHCR, she explained that they began working with Roma in 1999 when large number of Romani refugees from Kosovo began arriving in Bosnia. According to Kim, until 1999, Roma were practically unknown to the international community, which was more concerned with the political balance between Serbs, Croats, and Bosniacs. In the summer of 2003, UNHCR was having a problem defining Roma on an institutional level. UNHCR focuses on mandates, on the situation, not on specific ethnic groups. For example, evictions happen all over the country to everyone; therefore UNHCR cannot focus on specific ethnicities.

Kim was working specifically on housing issues, documentation and registration of Roma, and on providing training to local legal aid centers combating racial discrimination. The goal of the project was to assist Roma in benefiting from legal aid centers. However, Roma are not used to positive outcomes from authorities, so the project was challenging. Roma tend not turn to local authorities for help (other than the Center for Social Work in regards to welfare monies). UNHCR was also helping Roma to understand their rights based on their status, and on their rights of return and reconstruction, the same as other displaced persons. In 2003, Romani settlements were a significant problem. Even if Roma lived on the same land for generations, they did not necessarily own it. Gorica, a section of Sarajevo, is the only Romani settlement that has seen tangible results, and Romani activist Dervo Sejdic was instrumental in this process.
Romani NGOs have developed creative strategies for working with the international community, especially in regards to funding. Pinnock, who has worked with Roma in Bulgaria, explains, “Put another way, those within the foundation were being creative with concepts imposed on them by the NGO structure and using them for practical ends. Roma/Gypsy foundations therefore have incorporated ‘Western’ values in such a way as to make them relevant to themselves as Roma/Gypsies...” (2002, 247). Many NGOs in Bosnia have also fashioned creative strategies and ways of getting around Western policy, but it is not easy. I heard that one of the Romani leaders in Bosnia did not use the money he received for a proposal on the education of Romani children in the way that he proposed. Rather, he used the money to attend a world Romani conference in Greece and did not receive the rest of his funds.

In conclusion, Romani NGOs face many challenges within the burgeoning civil society sector in Bosnia. On the one hand, the international community imposes Western notions of projects and recommendations for the growth of civil society in a patronizing manner. While the democratic rhetoric behind these programs includes equality and better access to programs for everyone, in reality, INGOs too are part of larger global racialized, gendered economic imbalances, which are often overlooked by those individuals who work for them. On the other hand, their support of the Romani civil society sector has been instrumental in the growth of Roma rights. While some non-Romani NGOs have begun to acknowledge Romani organizations at meetings, they often display a
да ги канат ромските организации на состаноци, тие често го показуваат менталитетот „обвини ја жртвата“ и ги жигосуваваат ромските лидери и НВО без да се осврнат на крајните цели и последици на расизмот. Ромските лидери се присилени повторно и повторно да зборуваат за своите проблеми, и често се чувствуваат парализирани, зашто многу малку не-ромски НВО или владини агенции се волни да смислат конкретни стратегии за подобрување на животот на Ромите. Исто така, многу ромски лидери се мажи и ги запоставуваат посебните потреби на Ромките. Зависно од перспективата, потребите на Ромите се самоволно проценети, и во поголемиот број случаи, потребите на Ромките се грубо запоставени. Со цел да ја подобриме ситуацијата на Ромите и Ромките во Босна и на други места, мораме подобро да разбереме како расната дискриминација дејствува на локални и на меѓународни нивоа и како заемно дејствуваат овие форми на расизам. Ова значи дека поединците кои работат во МНВО мора да ги испитаат формите на дискриминација во сопствените национални држави, и да не ја наметнуваат реториката на „демократија“ без адекватно да ги преиспитаат причините што стојат зад меѓународните, националните и локалните форми на расизам, класизам и сексизам. Се согласувам со ромските активисти дека повеќе не-Роми треба да коработуваат и лично да ги видат условия во кои живеат толку многу Роми, но еднакво е важно да се работи со не-Ромите на уривање на расните стереотипи и да се спречат тековните форми на запоставување и дискриминација.

Превод од англиски јазик: Јана Јакимовска
Notes:

1. *During the 1992-1995 war, “Bosniac” (Bošnjak) replaced the term “Bosnian Muslims.” It is an ethnic and cultural term, not a religious one, as not all Bosniacs are practicing Muslims.*

2. *Most Roma in Bosnia identify themselves as Muslim. Roma in other parts of the former Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe tend to identify with the religious majority. For example, most Roma in Serbia are Orthodox and many Roma in Croatia are Catholic.*

3. *I want to express my gratitude to Oxfam for funding the research that my Medica Infoteka colleagues and I completed from 1999-2000, including publication costs. All of the interviews that were recorded during the summer of 2000 and 2003 were transcribed by members of Medica Infoteka. I translated all of the interviews from Bosnian into English. I edited the interviews by using [] for my own comments; “[...]” or “…” indicate where I removed or rearranged a word, sentence, or passage. I also removed some repetitive phrases used by some Romani individuals. Parentheses are used to indicate what an individual said or meant in addition to the quoted passage. I use “–” to indicate a longer pause in the sentence and a comma for shorter pauses. I use the word, “Rom” for one Romani individual, the word “Roma” for more than one individual; “Romani” is an adjective or the noun for the Romani language; for example, Romani women speak Romani. The word, *Cigan* is the singular form for Gypsy in Bosnian and *Cigani* is plural; Rom and Romi are the singular and plural forms in Bosnian. Italicized words within the text are either Bosnian words or the interviews’ questions. Finally, all of the names in this text are pseudonyms except for the some of the Romani activists and members of Medica Infoteka who preferred or did not mind that I used their real names.*
4. I am grateful to IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board) under IARO (Individual and Advanced Research Opportunities) and CSWS (the Center for the Study of Women in Society) at the University of Oregon for funding my Master’s research in the summer of 2003.

5. In my Master’s paper, I addressed the relationship between the former Yugoslav communist government and Roma in more depth, especially in regards to Romani women.

6. All of these figures were statistically significant with p-values > 0.005 (Medica Infoteka 2001, 31-33).

7. It is difficult to accurately estimate the number of Roma in Bosnia because many Roma do not identify themselves as Roma. Moreover, a census has not been completed in Bosnia since the war ended and many Roma died or left the country.

8. Anthropologist Harrell-Bond (1995) builds upon Marcel Mauss’s (1925) notion of the gift in her critique of international aid organizations, and more specifically aid organizations’ relationships with refugees. I think her work can be extended to local NGOs who have more power than others which is demonstrated by Smail’s need for a type-writer. Harrell-Bond asserts that aid debases the one who receives, especially when there is no intention (or ability) to reciprocate; “the act of giving is not simply mechanical; the gift defines the status and power relationships which exist between the giver and the one who receives it” (Harrell-Bond 1995, 149). Gifts do not come without self-interest whether given by the state or by individuals (Ibid). We did not give Smail a typewriter, but he explained that he would not be able to reciprocate any material assistance in the same manner in which it is received. This sheds light on a power differential between Medica Infoteka, the local Romani Association, and me. I discuss this more below.
9. For more on the different perspectives between my colleagues and me on the situation of Roma, and more specifically Romani women, see Erickson 2003. In this paper, I described the challenges I faced in completing the project due to different perspectives on Roma and in the definition of feminism, the goals of the project, and what my colleagues and I learned from one another during the project with Romani women.

10. This point stems from a discussion after a panel on which I presented at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in Chicago, IL, November 19-23, 2003. Professor Steve Sampson aptly raised this point in reference to our panel’s title, “NG-Ogres? Ethnographic Views of Foreign Aid to Women’s NGOs in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.”

11. For more information on education and Roma in Bosnia schools, see ERRC 2004.

12. For more information regarding Roma and post-war housing rights, see ERRC 2004.

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Colas, Dominique. “Civil Society: from Utopia to Management, from Marxism to Anti-Marxism.” In *Nations, Identities,*


Medica Infoteka. *Nismo naucile(i) tako smo zivjele(i) [How We Live(d)].* Zenica, Bosna-Hercegovina: Infoteka, 1999.


Jennifer Erickson, Roma in Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Gendered Gaze at the Politics of Roma, (I)NGOs, and the State


