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Conceptualizing informal practices as solidarity-chains - Diasporas coming into existence

Abstract: During the 1990s, informal trade – or *šverc* – was widespread in the former Yugoslav rump state. The following article conceptualizes the mechanisms behind the establishment of informal markets in light of ‘legal failure’ in Novi Pazar, Serbia, where informality produced an alternative, transnational connotation of belonging, leading to a ‘competition between law and social norms’. Trading thus served the purpose of a safety net that generated new and renewed social ties with the diaspora in Turkey, and the Turkish state writ large.

Keywords: Informal practices, Diaspora, Memory, Belonging, Transnational practices, Solidarity

Author Declaration

This article is based on empirical data published in the book *Forging Transnational Belonging Through Informal Trade – Thriving Markets in Times of Crisis*, published by Routledge in 2021.¹ My initial research in 2012 was financed by a joint initiative between the University of Kansas (KU), the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO), and the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) scholarship. The Department for Russian Culture and Society at the University of St. Gallen (HSG) enabled all subsequent research trips since 2013, including travel, room, and board. The Department for Russian Culture and Society also financed the administration of questionnaires n=500.

1 Sandra King-Savic, *Forging Transnational Belonging Through Informal Trade – Thriving Markets in Times of Crisis*, (London: Routledge, 2021).

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Introduction

“The only diaspora that Bosnian Muslims had, was in Turkey...there, they could turn to a well-organized diaspora. The modern Bosnian diaspora was created during the wars of the 1990’s, but other than that, they looked to the pre-existing diaspora that was created almost 80, 100, 120 years earlier when family members had moved to Turkey...” #00:19:50-7# (interview with Jusuf July 2014, Sarajevo)

Terminology surrounding informality, informal practices, or trading informally is negatively afflicted. Policy makers, for instance, perceive of informality as practices that transpire in the shadows and therefore in violation of good governance. Informal practices are, seen from this perspective, immoral, and associated with “legal failure” in need of remedy.² Denis J. Gilligan, too, considers legal failure in his analysis of disrespect for the rule of law in post-communist Europe, though importantly, conceptualizes the context surrounding the existence of informal practices in two ways. First, social norms, according to Gilligan, influence legal failure when society views laws as existing outside their purview and/or benefit. When laws appear to disregard social needs, in other words, their value is undermined. Laws governing in the name of the greater good of society within the Yugoslav rump state did not only exist outside the purview of society during the 1990s, they were damaging for the social fabric, as well as trust in governing structures. In the midst of the war years that were dominated by inflation and sanctions, Belgrade had forged connections to the criminal netherworld to the extent that one was unable to discern the central government from the omnipresent illicit machinations in the rump state.³ As such, the central government lost its legitimacy

2 Denis J. Galligan, “Legal Failure: Law and Social Norms in Post-Communist Europe”, *Law and Informal Practices: The Post-Communist Experience*, ed. Denis J. Galligan, Marina Kurkchian, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

3 See, for instance, Misha Glenny, *McMafia – Seriously Organized Crime*, (London: Vintage, 2009), 48; Marko Hajdinjak, *Smuggling in Southeast Europe – The Yugoslav Wars and the Development of Regional Criminal Networks in the Balkans*, (Center for the Study of Democracy, 2002), 41; R.T. Naylor, *Patriots and Profiteers, On Economic Warfare, Embargo Busting and State Sponsored Crime*, (Toronto: McClelland & Steward Inc., 1999), 360; Jedinica – Film o Crvenim beretkama ili kako je ubijen Djindjić 1 – 3, N.P. Vreme & B92, accessed 9 March 2018 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-UO7lm_5S4; Peter Andreas, “Criminalized Legacies of War: The Clandestine Political Economy of the Western Balkans”, *Problems of Post-Communism* 3/2004, 7; Andrew Feinstein, *The Shadow World*

and necessary integrity in the view of the local population to uphold the rule of law. While this is arguably the case for the general population of the former rump state, this paper considers the implications regarding the loss of trust and legitimacy in governing structures among the Bosniak / Bosnian minority in Novi Pazar, Southern Serbia – also referred to as the Sandžak region – to analyze Gilligan’s second point: “competition between law and social norms”.⁴

International sanctions and distrust toward the central government afflicted all citizens of the rump state. However, the Muslim minority in Southern Serbia experienced an additional layer of severe insecurity as a territory of ‘special attention’ under surveillance by the ‘Territorial Defense Unit’ (paramilitary organization) and the Yugoslav National Army.⁵ Amidst these difficult circumstances, the Muslim minority initiated trade relations with the diaspora in Turkey thus turning the town of Novi Pazar into an important hub of goods that were unavailable elsewhere. As a result, the local population was able to shield itself from the mounting social and political pressure. To be sure, citizens in all of the rump state, as well as the local population in Novi Pazar, conducted trade with neighboring states, including Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. *Šverc*, or informal, small-scale trade was therefore common, and practiced in most of the rump-state as previously illustrated by Rory Archer and Krisztina Rác in “*Šverc and the Šinobus: Small-scale smuggling in Vojvodina*”, for instance.⁶ In this important contribution, Archer and Rác explore local experiences about illicit trade practices and small-scale smuggling, or *šverc*, on the Vojvodinian-Hungarian and Vojvodinian-Romanian borders, thereby illustrating the truly large scale of informal practices during the war years. The practice of *šverc*, however, produced an alternative, transnational connotation of belonging for the local population of Novi Pazar– one in which

– *Inside the Global Arms Trade*, (New York: Farrar, Stratus and Giroux, 2011), 5, 69, 418; Katherine C. Sredl, Clifford J. Schultz, Ružica Brečić, “The Arizona Market: A Marketing Systems Perspective on Pre- and Post War Developments in Bosnia, with Implications for Sustainable Peace and Prosperity”, *Journal of Macromarketing* 7/2017; Mirko Tepavac, „Jači od Države”, *Glasiló gradjanskog samooslobodjanja – Republika Protiv stihije straha, mržnje i nasilja*, 1 – 31 October 2006, accessed 26 April 2018 at <http://www.republika.co.rs/390–391/03.html>; Aleksandar Knežević, Vojislav Tufegdžić, *Kriminal koji je izmenio Srbiju*, (Beograd: B92, 1995).

4 Galligan, “Legal Failure: Law and Social Norms in Post-Communist Europe”, 5.

5 Christian Axboe Nielsen, “The State Security Service of the Republic of Serbia and Its Interaction with Ministries of Internal Affairs in Serb-Controlled Entities, 1990–1995”, Research Report Prepared for the Case of Stanišić and Simatović (IT-03-69) (2016): 280.

6 Rory Archer, Krisztina Rác, “*Šverc and the Šinobus: Small-Scale Smuggling in Vojvodina*”, *Subverting Borders*, (New York: Springer, 2012).

Bosniaks invigorated communal bonds with Turkey by way of trade relations. Trading was therefore not simply a means to an economic end, but served the purpose of a safety net that forged new and renewed social ties with the diaspora in Turkey, and the Turkish state writ large.

Turkish involvement in the Western Balkans received much attention since Ahmet Davutoğlu devised the ‘Zero Problems with Neighbors’ doctrine.⁷ According to Davutoğlu, formerly the minister for foreign affairs and member of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkey was prone to assume greater geopolitical responsibilities in world affairs, in part due to its history and geographic location. The Balkans, too, fall into the former category owing to the Western Balkan inclusion in the former Ottoman Empire, especially since the Yugoslav Succession Wars during the 1990s. Since then, a number of Turkish state-sponsored and non-state actors finance a variety of projects in the Western Balkans, including the Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA),⁸ the presidency for religious affairs called Diyanet,⁹ and the Yunus Emre language institute.¹⁰ Bahar Baser, Erdi Öztürk, Samim Akgönül, and Kerem Ötkem examined these cultural and political institutions and the encroaching authoritarian tendencies under the AKP presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan¹¹ and its support of cultural and educational institutions in the region extensively.¹² Simon P. Watmough and Öztürk examined the Gulen Movement as a ‘transnational network’ that utilizes diaspora communities to strengthen its ‘parapolitical organization’.¹³ These authors provide readers with much-needed and critical insight regarding not only the trans-

7 Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007”, *Insight Turkey* 1/2008.

8 See Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), <https://www.tika.gov.tr/en>.

9 See Presidency of the Republic of Turkey/Presidency of Religious Affairs, <https://www.diyamet.gov.tr>

10 See Yunus Emre Enstitüsü, <https://turkce.yee.org.tr>

11 Bahar Baser, Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, *Authoritarian Politics in Turkey: Elections, Resistance and the AKP*, (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

12 See Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, “Turkey’s Diyanet under AKP Rule: From Protector to Imposer of State Ideology?”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 4/2016, 619–635; Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, Samim Akgönül, “Turkey-Forced Marriage or Marriage of Convenience with the Western Balkans”, *The Western Balkans in the World: Linkages and Relations with Non-western Countries*, ed. Florian Bieber, Nikolaos Tzifakis, (New York: Routledge, 2020); Kerem Ötkem, “Global Diyanet and Multiple Networks: Turkey’s New Presence in the Balkans”, *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 1/2012, 27–58.

13 See Gulen Movement, <http://www.gulenmovement.com>; Simon P. Watmough, Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, “From ‘Diaspora by Design’ to Transnational Political Exile: The Gulen Movement in Transition”, *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 1/2018, 33–52.

formation of the Turkish state under the AKP but also a fundamental understanding about how the AKP utilizes diaspora communities to proliferate its geopolitical relevance *after* the Wars of Yugoslav Succession.

Before the Yugoslav Wars of Succession, the constituting trans-national connections between émigrés and local Bosniaks, meanwhile, fell on fertile ground in Turkey. Turkish citizens, much like Bosniaks and / or Muslim Slavs in the Balkans, mined “through the remnants of their past in order to find clues to help them understand or control the present,” according to Esra Özyürek.¹⁴ Turgut Özal, Turkey’s prime minister from 1983 to 1989 and acting president of Turkey between 1989 and 1993, was instrumental regarding this shift from Turkish isolationism during the Cold War to one of expansion thereafter. In his tenure as prime minister and acting president, Özal sanctioned the reinterpretation of Kemalism. Former president Özal thus not only invited the government to reconsider the past but also allowed for a public discourse about and reconciliation with the history of the former Ottoman Empire. Turkish repositioning within the geopolitical context based on its past coincided squarely with the Yugoslav Succession Wars. As such, SFRY, the rump-state, and subsequently Serbia is not, to frame it in Nina Glick-Schiller’s words, a “historically discrete sovereign state” but is connected to the greater post-Ottoman realm by way of shared “experiences, norms and values...[that are] embedded in social, economic and political processes, networks, movements and institutions that exist both within and across state borders”.¹⁵

The Western Balkans are a fertile ground to examine the movement of people, borders, and goods across time and space so as to learn about the social, cultural, and political effects of diaspora practices. Sandžak epitomizes this transitory and border characteristic of the Balkan region. As such, this paper provides an outlook on migration as it spans questions of identification, informal trade practices, memory, and social space and investigates how these phenomena come together in times of precarity. By looking closely at smuggling and other informal practices without prejudice and without being judg-

14 Esra Ozyurek, *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey: Modern Intellectual & Political History of the Middle East*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 2; See also: Joshua W. Walker, *Shadows of Empire: How Post-imperial Successor States Shape Memories*, (Princeton: Princeton University, 2012), <https://dataspace.princeton.edu/jspui/handle/88435/dsp01v405s9415>

15 Nina Glick-Schiller, “A Global Perspective on Transnational Migration: Theorizing Migration without Methodological Nationalism”, *Diaspora and Transnational-ism-Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. R. Bauböck, T. Faist, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 110–111.

mental, I hope to contribute a better understanding about the mechanisms behind the establishment of informal markets. Building on Rogers Brubaker and Joseph Rouse, I conceptualize diaspora and migrant experiences as a category of practice.¹⁶

Methodological Considerations and Structure

To learn about informal market practices and how individuals experienced the early 1990s, I approached my research as a “student-child apprentice”, to situate it in Michael H. Agar’s words, and sought to create a frame to build on, and integrate the knowledge of group members.¹⁷ As such, I relied on fieldwork to better understand, and tease out overlapping, conflicting, and subsidiary narratives about informality, and the proximity among locals to the diaspora in Turkey. As a routine, I spent much of my time meeting with people informally prior to setting up semi-structured interviews. In total, this paper is based on semi-structured interviews with 31 individuals I had met and talked to repeatedly over the course of the project.¹⁸ In Novi Pazar, I observed daily activities, engaged in informal and casual conversations, and continued to interview a range of residents who were involved in, and/or remembered the informal market trade between 1991 and 1995. Upon arriving in Novi Pazar in 2012, I first took up residence in an informal ‘student dorm’ that was located in a private residence. I subsequently returned to Novi Pazar in November 2013, April 2014, April 2015, June 2015, August 2015, and November 2015. In May 2014, traveled to Istanbul to speak with merchants in the *Kapalıçarşı* (Grand Bazar), and met with interlocutors in Sarajevo in June 2015 and January 2016. To triangulate ethnographic data, I administered questionnaires n=500. In May and June 2017, I resided in Belgrade to view the daily *Večernje Novosti* (evening news) newspaper series that was published between 1991 and 1995 at the National Library.

In what follows, I will provide a historical sketch in which to situate narratives of empire, and how individuals frame and utilize this memory to connect with the diaspora in Turkey. Next, I will illustrate how the Muslim mi-

16 Rogers Brubaker, „Ethnicity without Groups”, *European Journal of Sociology* 2/2002, 163–189; Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1/2005; Rogers Brubaker, Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, *Theory and Society* 1/2000, 1–47; Joseph Rouse, „Two Concepts of Practices”, *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. R.T. Schatzki, K. Knorr Cetina, E. Von Savigny, (London: Routledge, 2001), 190–198; Joseph Rouse, *Practice Theory. Division 1 Faculty Publications* 43/2007.

17 Michael H. Agar, *The Professional Stranger*, (London: Emerald, 2008), 242–243.

18 All the identities and names of the interviewed partners are anonymized.

nority lost its trust in the disappearing state, that is the central regime in Belgrade, an effect that was further escalated by the internationally imposed sanctions. To overcome the socio-economic difficulties, Bosniaks invigorated and / or renewed their ties to the diaspora in Turkey, which illustrates the context in which the “competition between law and social norms” came to fruition.

Narrating the Loss of Empire: The Making of Diaspora Connections

“I don’t consider the official history, only what Bosniaks tell each other unofficially, the memory of Bosniaks. And there is so much that happened here during the 20th century... I mean, this is not a long historical period. When you look at it from the perspective of historical time, then, I guess, it is somehow short. But so much happened here, and nearly every family has relatives who moved from the Sandžak (region) to Turkey. I am talking about the Sandžak region now, but this happened to all Bosniaks in Southeastern Europe. All this also happened in Bosnia, in Macedonia... since 1912 when the Balkan Wars started, since the Ottoman Empire left this region. When the Turks stopped to govern this region, many of the Islamized peoples here (*islamizirani narod*) found themselves within new borders. A lot of them... they had a really hard time to adjust. They were like fish on land... One people (*jedan narod*) were suddenly supposed to divide into four, five new states” #00:03:20-0# (interview with Mirijam June 2015, greater Sandžak region).

Mirijam, a middle-aged woman I was first introduced to by a common acquaintance, sits in her yard in the presence of her daughter and a friend. Since this first meeting in 2014, Mirijam had provided me with her own, as well as collected oral histories, and reading materials related to the migration of Muslim Slavs to interior Ottoman lands during the turn of the century. Interviewees such as Mirijam, similar to Jusuf above, often invoked the memory of relatives and acquaintances who had left Southeastern Europe at the turn of the century. It is remarkable here to note how close interviewees seemed to be to the past as told by elder generations. The redrawing of borders that led to widespread emigration before and after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1919 is acutely felt and thus transmitted. Perhaps as a result, individuals in Novi Pazar consider the Muslim Slav diaspora as the original “pre-existing diaspora”, as stated by Jusuf.

Though individuals had left the Balkans since the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia, the outmigration of Muslim Slavs to interior Ottoman lands and subsequently Turkey transpired in three waves. During the first period in 1876 / 1878, individuals left due to a combination of factors, namely the

introduction of compulsory military duty on the side of the Habsburgs. Austria-Hungary subordinated formerly autonomous properties, including *vakifs* (religious endowments), to the imperial bureaucracy and abolished the *timariot* ('feudal' Ottoman land laws). Austria-Hungary finally transmogrified the Bosnian system from a subsistence into a monetary economy, which impoverished previously landowning beys. The largest wave of Muslims left South-eastern Europe following WWII.¹⁹ Though Turkey and Yugoslavia had by now signed the Turkish-Yugoslav convention in 1938 and arranged further population exchanges in the form of the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement in 1953, Edvin Pezo states that it was Turkey's open-door policy that facilitated emigration from Yugoslavia and immigration to Turkey, respectively. Turkey's Settlement Law 2510, according to Pezo, was especially instrumental regarding this open-door policy, seeing that this law facilitated the emigration of Muslim Slavs to Turkey, provided they spoke Turkish or else ascribed to republican values. Muslim Slavs, Torbeši, and Pomaks were particularly welcome in Turkey as these groups were thought to assimilate to Turkish values and norms with ease.²⁰ Vladan Jovanović adds another reason for the large-scale emigration to Turkey, namely that of an information campaign by which authorities promised 'rich prospects' upon moving to Turkey.²¹ Though documentary proof of the Gentleman's Agreement is missing,²² academics generally agree that Muslim Slavs were 'free' to leave Yugoslavia upon giving up their citizenship.²³ The agreement further allowed for, or rather stipulated, that Muslim Slavs could leave for reasons of family reunification in the Turkish republic.

With the outbreak of the Yugoslav Succession Wars, Bosniaks again migrated and fled Southeastern Europe. Relying on a report from 1994, Kemal Kirišci states that 20,000 Bosniak refugees settled in Turkey, some of whom moved in with relatives in Istanbul.²⁴ The greatest number, however, settled into the prefabricated housing for the Bulgarian refugee wave of 1989 that was pro-

19 Edvin Pezo, „Komparativna analiza jugoslovensko-turske Konvencije iz 1938. i 'džentelmenskog sporazuma' iz 1953. Pregovori oko iseljavanja muslimana iz Jugo-slavije,” *Tokovi Istorije* 2/2012, 116.; See also Safet. Bandžović, *Iseljavanje Bošnjaka u Tursku*, (Sarajevo, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti Imedjunarodnog prava, 2006).

20 Ibid., 115.

21 Vladan Jovanović, “Land Reform and Serbian Colonization: Belgrade's Problems in Interwar Kosovo and Macedonia,” *East Central Europe* 1/2015, 90.

22 Pezo, „Komparativna analiza jugoslovensko-turske Konvencije iz 1938. i 'džentelmenskog sporazuma' iz 1953. Pregovori oko iseljavanja muslimana iz Jugoslavije,” 117.

23 Ibid.

24 Kemal Kirišci, “Post Second World War Immigration from Balkan Countries to Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 12/1995, 71, and footnote no. 20.

vided by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). A mix of government and non-governmental authorities, including hospitals and schools, the Anatolian Development Foundation, and private citizens provided these refugees with aid in the form of schooling, care for injured Bosniak soldiers, and vocational training.²⁵ Asem, an interlocutor I was first introduced to in 2012, was not among those who had left Novi Pazar during the 1990s, and gave the following answer when asked about his decision to stay in Southern Serbia:

“On my mom’s side, they came to Novi Pazar sometime in the 1890s.... My mom’s side is Albanian, and they came to live here before 1900. My grandpa on my mom’s side was a tailor. He ran his own cooperative. He had three brothers, and they all lived together under one roof. After the great war, sometime in 1922, or 1923 – that is when people from here started to move to Turkey – two brothers of his also left. My grandfather stayed here. Those two that left were sent to Izmir where the Turks had driven out the Greek population, by the island there. When the generation of the 1950s started to emigrate, they went to Pendik by Istanbul. And, ahm, somehow, as is the case in any war, I know for example how it was in this war, during the bombing, I also stayed here. My older brother and my younger sister both left for Turkey, they couldn’t live like this. You can’t persuade people, or explain, why they should stay or leave. Nobody knows how they react in such a situation, to this fear, somehow.... Look, I told you about my son. Before he was born, I didn’t think that I would experience his birth as something that would make me this happy. When he was here, I was happy. But I didn’t know what it would feel like before he came. This is the same principle. Just the opposite. Bombing. At that time, I had three children, my oldest son was eight, my daughter was four, and then there was the baby. Now, when I consider the whole situation with some logic, I would tell myself to leave. But then, you couldn’t get me out of here. No chance. My older sister also stayed, but my older brother, and my younger sister, they both went to Turkey. We have a house there in Turkey, by the sea. So, they left. They were there during the bombardment. They left in April and returned by September. I went after the bombardment ended. I went there to recuperate for a month, and after that we all came back together. Those are strange times, when you experience such things. So, there is no clear answer to your question about why I stayed. It just happens. There are no big conclusions here. You just don’t plan for these things, never. And, I can imagine these people back then.... When someone is forced to leave... there was misery, poverty, there was not one particular reason. Just fear for

25 Ibid., 72.

one's life. You could basically disappear overnight. The next day, there would be rumors about how they shot you, as in, this guy disappeared, that guy disappeared.... And people weren't even supposed to ask what had happened to whom. And the rumors about what exactly happened just keep spreading because people couldn't talk about it openly out of fear about their disappearing, too.... Think about it, Sandra, what if I told someone that I am selling my house, or anything else, and I leave, and you can be sure that there are thieves around, and people purposefully scare you away because your house is right downtown, because they want your house.... And because of this, you have nowhere else to go when some official doesn't hand you out the documents that allow you to leave the country. So, he stays where he is. We can't understand their motives from this distance. Look, it's still the same, we, as a country in general, we don't have a defined direction. What we want to do, who we are, what is it that we actually want!?! If we at least knew what we do not want, what we no longer are.... This would actually open a path toward the future. If we were able to say, this is right, and this is wrong, to admit it was a crime that some person was liquidated 70 years ago. I didn't read these things in a book; I learned these things by listening to my family members. This means there was someone who's name was četnik (*znači, tu je bio neko ko se zvao četnik*), and don't ask me if a soldier is responsible for his own actions or not. This someone killed my grandfather. And now, I am supposed to have a sort of approach to this as if it never happened. But it is all connected" #00:14:08-5# (interview with Asem, November 2015, greater Sandžak region).

This quote is, to be sure, exceedingly long. Yet, it was imperative to keep this answer together for two specific reasons. First, Asem corroborates many of the narrative strands that recurred in casual conversations and semi-structured interviews with other interlocutors. These include the significance of heritage sites, and loss of property, autonomy, and safety— or rather the lack thereof – among Muslim Slavs in Southern Serbia following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and again during the 1990s. Second, and connected, is the fact that Asem illustrates the extent to which interviewees collapse the time-space continuum to understand their current sociopolitical situation. Nearly all interviewees oscillated between past and present narratives during casual conversations and semi-structured interviews – Asem articulated this aspect most clearly. Instead of handing me a simple answer as to why he chose to stay in Novi Pazar during the 1990s war years, he lunged into a historic explanation that he couched into previous decisions his family members made in the past. His narrative is a clear and chronological continuity to a non-sequential past. Upon my inquiry about his decision to stay, he clearly displayed af-

finity toward the social condition as experienced by family members who left the Sandžak at the turn of the century. The extent to which interviewees string narrated atrocities together with auto-biographical experiences of the 1990s is striking. Cognitive connections with the émigré community – based on memory transmission within the family unit – form a bedrock for the continuity of social relations among Bosniaks for two reasons. First, connecting with the émigré community served the purpose of “symbolic or normative anchoring” by which interlocutors superseded their loss to the Yugoslav community.²⁶ Second, family relations with the émigré Bosniak community in Turkey assumed the character of a collective diaspora experience with which locals identify, even in the absence of strong personal relations to émigrés in Turkey.

Besides confirming wariness with officially sanctioned historiographies, both Asem and Mirijam tap into a significant narrative during our conversations, namely the common supposition that all Bosniaks lived as one under the Ottoman Empire. Following the logic of this recurring conjecture among interlocutors, Bosniaks constitute a diaspora – one community that was forced to espouse monarchic and subsequent supranational and national values to fit into newly created states following the Balkan Wars. It is difficult to overstate this last argument. Local Bosniaks learned about the seemingly recurring past from individuals who narrated the breakup of an empire by way of violent expulsion, state-led misappropriation of property, and fear on the basis of their belonging to an ostracized religious group. This recurring experience of the past, however, connects locals not only with their history but also with the entire Bosniak diaspora that was subject to comparable developments. Locals in Novi Pazar are, according to this logic, not subject to Serbia but belong to this very diaspora that was left scattered around Southeastern Europe and Turkey following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and again during the 1990s.

Informal Practices as Solidarity Chains

ME: How did this market work?

SALEH: I usually went to the market with my parents. My younger sister also came with us, and the both of us were there, in these huge crowds... there were always huge crowds of people. A lot of people came from all over Serbia. Thousands. Especially every Tuesday and Sunday, those were the official market days.

26 Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar, Matthew Watson, *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How it Changes*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), 75.

ME: How did your family get the goods here, and how did you grow the business?

SALEH: My father had a great idea, he bought his own minivan, to import things from Turkey with it. There was a lot of money in that business. He transported things from Turkey for certain people (*za odredjene ljude*) from Novi Pazar. There was a lot of money in that business.... After some time, he bought another van, then he bought a trailer, and his business grew gradually. He transported more and more things, and went to Turkey more often, twice a week even. Later... he later sold the vans, bought a big lorry, and continued to do business with Turkey. I went with him a few times, and he brought this jeans material, and other things, but mostly textile, because people bought this material from Turkey either to produce goods, or to peddle them wholesale. There were big profits in that business... I mean huge. It was all normal, and it kind of went on like this for quite some time. My father bought another truck, and even expanded his business. Then he bought another truck, and on and on until we had kind of a small freight company. All of that fascinated me” #00:15:29-7# (interview with Saleh, June 2015, greater Sandžak region).

Throughout the first half of the 1990s, Novi Pazar experienced an economic boom for two reasons. First, Novi Pazar’s state sponsored industry and biggest employer, the *Tekstilni Kombinat Raška* (Raška Textile Factory, TKS), collapsed due to the economic downturn and subsequent war in SFRY. Second, in order to safeguard their continued income, Bosniaks traveled between Turkey and Novi Pazar and utilized diaspora family connections to acquire material and fabrics for the production of jeans and other apparel with which they set up makeshift clothing factories in their homes, often hidden from officials. As a result, locals who had been employed by the TKS put their skills to use in the informal production of (counterfeited) clothing. Locals also sold food items, coffee, and cigarettes on the Novi Pazar market, also known as *buvljak*, to other Yugoslavs who traveled to the city in search of commodities that were in short supply and/or altogether inexistent elsewhere. The twin processes of existing transnational relations with the local and diaspora community in Turkey, together with the internationally imposed sanctions, created a new class of successful traders in Novi Pazar. At the same time, employment and goods were difficult to come by in other areas of Serbia. Both Serbs and Bosniaks initially profited from this trade. James Lyon noted that “overnight, a new class of wealthy – both Serb and Bosniak– entrepreneurs sprang

up, although many Serbs remained in low-paying state sector jobs.”²⁷ In Novi Pazar, factories produced up to 30,000 pairs of counterfeit jeans a day that included brands such as Levi’s, Diesel, and Replay.²⁸ Because of low wages and the relative ease of tax evasion, the cost of textile production dropped considerably. Residents of Sandžak thus started to capitalize on these advantages to set up textile, shoe, and leather manufacturing companies. Because of the general chaos of the war years, however, no reliable figures exist that could illustrate the exact revenue and production output. Be that as it may, analysts and scholars figure that “several hundred thousand pairs of jeans” and other apparel items were produced in the region while annual revenues were “between \$50 and \$100million.”²⁹ Sandžak, specifically Novi Pazar, attracted thousands of individuals that sought to work in the sprouting textile industry with its up to 500 factories by the end of the 1990s, according to Lyon.³⁰ Belgrade, too, capitalized on these relations by sending ‘tax collectors’ – commonly referred to as racketeers among the local population – to Novi Pazar.

The TKS is to some extent emblematic for the town of Novi Pazar, where the factory is located. Once a regional giant for the production of textiles, the factory collapsed in the 1980s. Since its establishment in 1956, the Kombinat was a major source of employment up until the economic recession of the 1980s when the company gradually let go of its employees. However, it is instructive to remember here that the Yugoslav system did not allow for laid-off employees. This was particularly the case during the international sanctions and subsequent NATO bombings of Serbia. Factories, for instance, were responsible for the social welfare of their employees as opposed to the state.³¹ As a result, companies seldom let their workforce go officially, because doing so incurred higher costs on manufacturing plants. This was also the case for the TKS in 1992, when the factory failed to formally discontinue the contract of its workforce. Instead of laying their workers off, the TKS forced its employees to take an open-ended, unpaid leave of absence.³² “All these peo-

27 James Lyon, “Serbia’s Sandžak under Milošević: Identity, Nationalism and Survival”, *Human Rights Review* 9/2008, 71–92.

28 Denisa Kostovicova, “Fake Levis, Real Threat”, *Balkan Reconstruction Report* 8/2003.

29 Lyon, „Serbia’s Sandžak under Milošević: Identity, Nationalism and Survival”, 85.

30 Ibid.

31 Горана Крстић, Божо Стојановић, *Анализа формалног и неформалног тржишта рада у Србији, у прилози за јавну расправу о институционалним реформама у Србији*, (Београд: Центар за либерално-демократске студије), 31–33.

32 Ana Džokić, Marc Neelen, Emil Jurcan, *Sta je u Pazaru zajedničko/What Pazar Has in Common(s)?*, (Novi Sad: Daniel Print, 2012), 14–15.

ple were suddenly unemployed,” Asem recalls. “But doing so burdened employees especially after the war, because the people of Novi Pazar momentarily utilized their craftsmanship instead of waiting for handouts from the state.”³³

One afternoon in May 2012, Asem picked me up in a sleek vehicle that suggested affluence, and steered his automobile to a location of his choosing for our first semi-structured interview. We drove up and into the hills that surround Novi Pazar and came to a stop in front of a charming *vikendica* (holiday home). His family inherited this cottage as well as the plot of land on which the small house stands. Once in the yard that surrounded the chalet, Asem made sure to exhibit the roses that nearly covered the entire yard. He pointed toward a bunch of plastic jars, filled with what appeared to be water, mixed with those same roses. Before returning to his recollection of the 1990s, Asem offered me a glass of the syrupy drink. “The Ottomans introduced this beverage to the Balkans,” then he explained:

“Now... why did the government do such things that led me to believe that they do not want me here. Why was there such a mess here, and why did they make us feel as though we are second-class citizens in this country. And so, slowly, after being out of work for three, five years... there is no work, there is no work, I start to have problems. I can't cover my elementary needs for survival. I don't have a job, so, I have to steal, or do any sort of work that can sustain me. I no longer feel the government provides me with opportunities. Then, what happens, our people, during the 1990s, because our factories here collapsed, lost their jobs. Those were big systems that employed up to 5000 people back then. They all lost their jobs because the system failed. First, the system decays in such places as this one, smaller places, before collapsing in Belgrade. Up there, the government gives, gives, gives, gives, until it is no longer able to give a thing. They seized to support us immediately, and the collapse was instant. Then what happened, our people had to find work. These people were only skilled in the textile and furniture manufacturing business, to work in those state-owned factories” #00:21:43-8# (interview with Asem, May 2012, greater Sandžak region).

Asem describes the deteriorating economic situation as it was felt across the entire former SFRY. By 1989, the hyperinflation rate was 1,256 percent annually.³⁴ To curb the inflationary rate, Ante Marković – then Prime Minister of Yugoslavia– initiated a fiscal stabilization plan led by the Inter-

33 Asem, interviewed in the Sandžak region by Sandra King-Savic in 2012.

34 Robert Bideleux, Ian Jeffries, *The Balkans: A Post-communist History*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 196.

national Monetary Fund (IMF) that prompted a six-month pay freeze, which culminated in the introduction of a new currency. In Serbia, the inflation kept soaring. By 1992, the annual inflation rate stood at 9,237 percent and rose to “a quite literally astronomical 116.5 to the power of 10 to the power of 12 percent in 1993.”³⁵ Vesna Pešić, a sociologist, politician, and human rights activist, stated this hyperinflation resulted from the Milošević era initiated *narodnjačke revolucije* (populist revolution).³⁶ According to Pešić, the gross domestic product fell by 20 percent during the four consecutive years since 1990 and up to 1993. The same was true, she states, for the hyperinflation in the Yugoslav rump state that is considered the longest in history.³⁷ As a result of the socioeconomic and political crisis, Yugoslavs turned to what Susan Woodward called the established *modus vivendi* in communist regimes: “cultural identities, alternative social networks, and organizations that are already present in society.”³⁸ Bosniaks in Novi Pazar, such as it was, turned to their relatives in Turkey, as explained by Asem:

“Now... our people (*naši ljudi*) had to do business privately. There was no capital investment with which we could have started this business. We (*mi*) could not expect anything from the state, and the state was disappearing. There was this... war, sanctions, all that... all that was happening, and our people went to their relatives in Turkey, those who had migrated there. They were fortunate, because they had gained some economic strength. Turkey strengthened economically sometime between 1985 and the 1990s, which is why our people were able to help us. It was based on personal family ties. They did not give us money to feed ourselves, they gave us sewing machines. They said: here is a machine and some jeans fabric, I will give you some machines, go and sell the product somewhere. And so, after about five months, we paid off the material that we got, and bought some more.... Our people were forced to do this... And this is how we established hundreds of these small family owned businesses here. These businesses were usually located in family homes and were made up of two workers per one machine – usually the father and the mother, both of whom had learned how to do this job in the Kombinat – they had these skills and the know-how for this work. They just had no money to buy the machines, and this is how we created these small factories in Novi Pazar. Then,

35 Ibid., 249.

36 Vesna Pešić, *Divlje društvo-kako smo stigli dovd*, (Beograd: Pešćanik, 2012).

37 Ibid., 373.

38 Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1995), 125.

the children grew up slowly, and they also worked on these machines, and the production went on in this way. When Serbia was under sanctions, Novi Pazar experienced a boom. It saved us, this rescue from our relatives in Turkey, this initial help, which then turned into a business. This was not a gift. Thanks to that, we, as Muslims (*mi, kao muslimani*), withstood the economic situation here” #00:27:42-5# (interview with Asem, May 2012, greater Sandžak region).

Other interviewees confirmed Asem’s recollection of the crushing economic situation in Serbia during the 1990s. For instance, Leijla’s daughter explained that locals had no choice but to help themselves:

“And then, you know, the textile and shoe factory closed. That’s when people became self-employed, and started to work in their houses, bought machines, and sewed jeans. We all tried our best, as best as we could, to do something, some... anything...workshops, shoes... and you just work, get some more textile from Turkey, bring it here, buy some more machines, open a business... do you understand? Sell (*prodaješ*) your wares here, in Novi Pazar. There are so many who did just that... so many” #00:30:30-4# (interview with Leijla and her two daughters and grandson, April 2014, greater Sandžak region).

Like Asem, the above interlocutor identifies the intersection between existing knowledge, namely, the work at the Kombinat and the possibility of procuring goods in Turkey. Locals turned to Turkey due to the deteriorating socioeconomic condition in Serbia and made use of their existing skills they had acquired locally. Trading, however, would have been unavailing if not impossible without material aid coming from Turkey. These material goods were, however, not simply a means to quench the local population’s thirst for coffee or desire for a new pair of jeans. Instead, one must understand these goods as a “shared event of practice”; marketable goods became “enacted objects.”³⁹ Traders did not simply distribute goods from Turkey in Novi Pazar; they also “re-transfer[red] cultural customs” across the border.⁴⁰ Traders were thus salient social agents that not only fulfilled material but also emotive needs people cherished. Traders assumed, in other words, affective functions that individuals replicated locally.

It is important to iterate the assumption among the local population, that Belgrade was not considered reliable in terms of aid when the stagflation

39 John Law, *After Method– Mess in Social Science Research*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 56.

40 Thomas Faist, “Diaspora and Transnationalism: What Kind of Dance Partners?”, *Diaspora and Transnationalism– Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. Rainer Bauböck, Thomas Faist, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 11.

hit hardest. Asem said it perhaps most poignantly as he explained that Southern Serbia, and the Muslim minority in particular, could not expect anything from the state. Not only was ‘the state’ disappearing, as stated by Asem and other interlocutors, the internationally imposed sanctions further escalated the dire economic situation. As a result, Bosniaks invigorated and / or renewed their ties to the diaspora in Turkey to overcome the economic slump. It is in this context in which the “competition between law and social norms” comes to bear fruit, because trade relations were more than simple business exchanges.⁴¹ As such, the Yugoslav Succession Wars provided ample reason to disassociate socio-politically from Serbia proper within and of itself. Yet, the centralized regime in Belgrade further undermined its credibility by cooperating with criminal agents, which fostered the loss of trust and legitimacy in governing structures among the Bosniak / Bosnian minority in Novi Pazar, Southern Serbia, and exacerbated legal failure in due process.

Trust in Social Norms and Legal Failure

“This (market) was good for the state, the regime, and Milošević. They literally robbed the state, plundered it. And they were under sanctions, do you understand? This means all of the official business conducted here was *šverc*. The government was under sanctions, and Novi Pazar was some sort of a door through which to bring in goods... ehm... illegally... by doing *šverc*. What I mean to say is this, they all smuggled. Do you understand? Half of Novi Pazar was a flea market (*buvljak*) back then. This means the market started here, and reached all the way up to the municipal building, and back down toward the Raška river. I am telling you, about 70 percent of all the people from Novi Pazar worked on this market back then. Whoever was able to do anything ended up working on the market. Those who did not travel to Turkey told others who did what to buy for them, for instance coffee, or anything, you know. Then, you go there, buy a bag, take it to the market, measure the quantity in kilos, and sell it to customers on the market. The government tolerated this. And what did they do, they came here from time to time, when Sloba (Slobodan Milošević) decided to send his goons, to collect their so-called taxes, they literally racketeered. This was no ordinary tax, they racketeered the market, the workshops. They also seized goods, took it from us. They would come here, and just kind of size up some-one’s company based on the size and the workers there, and come up with some mystery number the owners would have to

41 Galligan, “Legal Failure: Law and Social Norms in Post-Communist Europe”, 5.

pay, say 200,000 Deutschmarks, 300,000 Deutschmarks... and that's how he sent them two or three times per year. That was lucrative for the state, not the state, of course, but for Sobo and his people who lined their pockets, do you understand? But it was also good for our people here. Do you understand? If we had to pay taxes here, had to pay insurance for the workers, to register them and so on, that would have been really very expensive. But this way, the earnings were bigger. There could be for instance 200 workers who worked in a workshop, but registered were only two. People saved money by not paying social contributions for employees. Life was great here, it was a great life here in Novi Pazar back then" #00:15:56-5# (interview with Senad, August 2015, greater Sandžak region).

Senad states the trade "was only good for Novi Pazar, not so much for the rest of the Sandžak region." Recalling that nearly all Bosniak and/or Muslim families have kin in Turkey, one is left wondering about this apparent asymmetry. One possible answer might be the geographical location that favored the flourishing of this market – Novi Pazar was (is) better accessible compared to the rest of the other five municipalities on the Serbian side of the Sandžak region.⁴² The Kombinat, too, was in Novi Pazar, as was the existing market infrastructure. Therefore, Novi Pazar primarily served as a trading hub, while functioning as a centralizing force for the unity of Bosniaks in Serbia. Novi Pazar, in other words, constituted an economic powerhouse much as the town preserved the narrated unanimity of the Sandžak region. External threats, including the war and subsequent mass killings and displacement in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as nationalistic posturing in the region, contributed to a rallying around the flag reaction. Bosniaks, in other words, gravitated toward Novi Pazar for economic, and symbolic reasons.

A conversation at the local NGO contextualizes the aforementioned findings further. The local NGO is a meeting place where like-minded people gather to talk about job opportunities, the government, and upcoming projects. An array of people frequented the locale during my time in the field, most of whom had opinions about the government, the market, and Turkey they cared to share. One attendee explained upon my inquiry as to how one goes about when seeking to smuggle goods:

"To put it in the simplest, and most logical way possible, we had a leg up on everybody else in Serbia because we could call our relatives in Istanbul or in the other cities. Perhaps they themselves had nothing to offer, but they

42 Fieldwork 2012; see also Serbia's Sandžak Still Forgotten, The International Crisis Group (2005), www.files.ethz.ch/.

could ask around (*da se raspitaju*) for good prices for windowpanes, textiles... anything, anything we could sell. This is why the government let us do our thing here— they needed us (*mi smo njima bili potrebni*)” (Field notes, August 2015).

It is interesting to note the specific commodity this interlocutor mentions: windowpanes. Considering that Serbian citizens bought windowpanes on the market in Novi Pazar, one can reaffirm a segment of the population benefited during the sanction years. Purchasing windowpanes is useless, in other words, unless one builds or renovates a house. While this observation seems tangential, one ought to recall the segment of the population in Serbia that lost their savings, jobs, and livelihood at the time. Building and renovating houses stands in stark contrast to the former. At any rate, this field note further relates that locals in Novi Pazar served as middlemen, able to provide potential merchants with initial contacts and access to merchandise before traveling to Turkey to obtain goods.

It is significant that Senad insinuates that Slobo – as he used to call Slobodan Milošević during our interviews and casual conversations – was a criminal who racketeered the state for financial gain. Judging from the data collected in the field, this distrust is rooted in the 1990s and the connection between the criminal netherworld and the Milošević regime. Once during an informal conversation, Senad even declared the Milošević regime as criminal instead of nationalist, and often used the word *magla* (fog) to describe the regime’s tactics of duping Serbian citizens into believing in external threats, fifth columns, and other perils that might menace the Serbian people. Locals knew this and, perhaps as a result, emphasized trading with the émigré Bosniak community in Turkey as a symbolic anchor, as opposed to highlighting their forced cooperation with a “criminal regime”. Trust in social norms, or the connection to the diaspora in Turkey, far exceeded trust in laws provided by the government. Because Belgrade used informal channels to penetrate the sanctions, political actors cultivated transnational trade relations so long as the state benefited from the sanctions-busting businesses. Belgrade not only approved of but fostered small-scale *šverc* to penetrate the internationally imposed trade sanctions on Serbia during the first half of the 1990s. Perhaps Momčilo Grubač said it best when he explained the Serbian regime accepted criminal activities as a source of state stability.⁴³ Belgrade was thus initially unwilling to dismantle informal trade practices for the sake of state stability and proved unable to

43 Momčilo Grubač, „Organizovani kriminal u Srbiji”, *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Splitu* 4/2009, 702.

quash informal trade practices thereafter, which severely hurt its ability to implement and enforce the rule of law.

Summary

Among the most inveterate unintended consequences is the sense of distrust that permeates all levels of society in Serbia, including Novi Pazar. Because the Belgrade regime relied on smuggling activities and criminal networks during the 1990s, locals no longer trust the sociopolitical and economic process in Serbia. Distrust of governing institutions cuts across ethnic and theistic boundaries, undermining Belgrade's credibility in legal terms, and resulting in legal failure.

According to popular belief in Novi Pazar, Serbia, there are 3 – 4 million Bosniaks who live in Turkey. Conventional wisdom there holds that it is this very community of émigrés in Turkey that provided Sandžak Bosniaks with the necessary tools to run and upkeep the textile production that, in part, sustained the informal market during the international communities' economic sanctions on Serbia between 1992 and 1995. 'Without the diaspora,' I heard time and again, 'we would not have made it.' This narrative, I contend, provided locals with anticipatory properties. Because Serbia is not a 'historically discrete sovereign state', by reconnecting with the Bosniak émigré community in Turkey locals reconceptualized their associative space as post-Ottoman and Turkish, respectively. As such, material encounters shaped social relations that forged a sense of community between local and émigré Bosniaks in Turkey. These connections ought to be understood as meaningful transnational solidarity chains. As such, networks between the local and diaspora community provided Bosniaks in Novi Pazar with social norms by which they were able to circumvent the unreliable, or, according to interlocutors, "criminal regime in Belgrade".

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Резиме

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КОНЦЕПТУАЛИЗАЦИЈА НЕФОРМАЛНИХ ПРАКСИ КАО ЛАНАЦА СОЛИДАРНОСТИ - ДИЈАСПОРА СТУПА НА СЦЕНУ

Апстракт: Током 1990-их неформална трговина – или шверц – била је широко распрострањена у бившој (крњој) југословенској држави. Овај чланак концептуализује механизме који стоје иза успостављања неформалних тржишта у светлу „краха правног система“ у Новом Пазару, у Србији, где је неформалност произвела алтернативну, транснационалну конотацију припадности, што је довело до „надметања између закона и друштвених норми“. Тако је трговина послужила као сигурносна мрежа која је генерисала нове и обновљене друштвене везе са дијаспором у Турској и турском државом у целини.

Кључне речи: неформалне праксе, дијаспора, сећање, припадање, транснационалне праксе, солидарност, Турска, Нови Пазар, Србија, деведесете

Међу непоправљивим нежељеним последицама доминира осећај неповерења који прожима све нивое друштва у Србији, укључујући и Нови Пазар. Пошто се Београд током 1990-их ослањао на шверцерске активности и криминалне мреже, локално становништво више нема поверења у друштвено-политичке и економске процесе у Србији. Неповерење у институције власти прелази преко етничких и верских граница, подривајући кредибилитет Београда у правном смислу и резултирајући колапсом правног поретка. Према веровању народа у Новом Пазару, у Турској живи 3–4 милиона Бошњака. Преовлађујуће је мишљење да је управо та емигрантска заједница у Турској обезбедила санџачким Бошњацима неопходне машине за вођење и организацију текстилне производње, која је делимично и одржавала неформално тржиште током економских санкција међународне заједнице према Србији у периоду 1992–1995. „Без дијаспоре не бисмо успели“, могло се стално чути. Можемо поуздано тврдити да је овај наратив за локално становништво имао антиципирајућа својства. Пошто Србија није „историјски дискретна суверена држава“, поновним повезивањем са бошњачком емигрантском заједницом у Турској мештани су поново концептуализовали свој асоцијативни простор као посто-

томански, односно турски. Као такви, материјални сусрети обликовали су друштвене односе који су стварали осећај заједништва између локалних и емигрантских Бошњака у Турској. Ове везе треба схватити као важне транснационалне ланце солидарности. Такве мреже између локалне и исељеничке заједнице омогућиле су Бошњацима у Новом Пазару друштвене норме помоћу којих су могли да заобиђу непоздани, или, према речима саговорника, „злочиначки режим у Београду“.