

# **SOCIAL WORK AND CIVIL SOCIETY** **IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA:** **Globalisation, Neo-feudalism and the State**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This article is an attempt to examine recent trends in the politics of social work and social policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina, through the lens of theories of the state and civil society. It sheds light on recent debates regarding the implications of globalisation, or the 'supranational and transnational character' (Deacon, Hulse, Stubbs, 1997: 1) of social work and social policy. The context, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, of the conjunction of war, large scale forced migration, and post-communist transition and, indeed, the continued complex political situation, not least in terms of sovereignty, after the Dayton agreement which ended hostilities in late 1995, is also addressed. Above all, the article is influenced by Katherine Verdery's metaphor of 'the transition from socialism to feudalism' as part of her attempt to develop an 'anthropology of the state' (Verdery, 1996: 15). It echoes her suggestion that new categories and concepts are needed, 'new imaginings' in effect (Verdery, 1996: 11), which shed light not only on what socialism was in Central and Eastern Europe, and on what is actually happening now in the region, but also broadens 'a critique of Western economic and political forms by seeing them through the eyes of those experiencing their construction' (Verdery, 1996: 10). Above all, the article is based on a preference for, and a belief in, a 'social reformist project' (Deacon, Hulse, Stubbs, 1997: 202), both globally and in terms of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which there remains space to influence powerful agencies' policies in the interests of social justice, rather than a return to fundamentalist socialist analysis or a retreat into the abstract relativism of new post-modernist orthodoxies.

The text is not based on detached, academic research but, rather on a long-standing practical engagement with social policy questions in the post-Yugoslav countries. With a background in 'radical social work' in the UK, including a particular emphasis, in the mid to late 1980s, on anti-racism (cf. Stubbs, 1985; 1988), I arrived in Croatia in May 1993 to work, as a volunteer, with a Croatian Non Governmental Organisation (NGO), in a large camp or collective centre which was host, mainly, to refugees from Central Bosnia. Returning to the camp in October 1993, I combined voluntary social work with research, supported by a small grant from a UK university, on 'Social Work Services for Refugees and Displaced Persons in Croatia'. In April 1994, I moved to the Croatian capital Zagreb where, apart from a break in Budapest from September 1997 to June 1998, I have lived ever since.

My work has combined practice, academic research, writing, consultancies, and activism. Amongst other issues, my main concerns have been the social policy role of NGOs - both local and international; peace-building; and a critique of psycho-social models of intervention, with examples drawn primarily from Croatia (cf. *inter alia* Stubbs and Soroya, 1996; Stubbs, 1997; 1998a). From early 1996, much of my work has concentrated on Bosnia-Herzegovina, including an analysis of the role of different agencies in the construction of social policy (Deacon and Stubbs, 1998), co-editing a book following a major conference on future directions in social policy (Gregson and Stubbs (eds.), 1998), and working closely on aspects of a UNDP programme in Travnik (Engberg, Stubbs, 1998; Peirce, Stubbs, 1998). Other work has looked, more widely, at the restructuring of social work and social work education in Central and Eastern Europe (Connelly, Stubbs, 1997).

In having a 'personal temperament' which believes in the need 'to bridge the conventional divisions between theorists and practitioners' (Loizos, 1996: 299), there remain vast problems regarding how to reconcile the diverse roles of cultural critic, local NGO activist, and social policy consultant and planner, multiplied by the fact that, as a Western intellectual working in so-called 'Eastern Europe', I often reproduce the oppressive social relations, or 'colonization' (Csepelli, Orkeny, Scheppele, 1996) of which I am so critical. I remain convinced, however, that 'planning is too important to be left to the planners', and that there are certain principles of intervention and of partnership with local agents, which can be more progressive than the normal, taken-for-granted, routines.

This article begins with theory in terms of a discussion of the dilemmas posed by globalisation for a radical, left-oriented concern with the state and with civil society. It then goes on to focus on contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina, in terms of the usefulness and limitations of Verdery's 'neo-feudal' metaphor. The next part of the essay addresses, in brief, the nature of social policy and social work in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as part of the former Yugoslavia, in war, and, currently, 'in transition', as it were. A set of policies and practices for reform, based on the ideas of Bosnian scholars, which the author has recently advocated as a member of a Planning Mission for a European government seeking to support the social sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is then outlined. A concluding section looks at the risks and limitations of the reform process and, in particular, at the relationship between social policy and

social work, on the one hand, and wider political questions of democratisation, good governance, and peace, on the other.

### **RADICAL DILEMMAS: State and Civil Society in the Age of Globalisation**

In the attempt to develop theory for 'radical social work' in the 1980s, the concept of 'the state' dominated UK, and to an extent, Western European, discourse. In Central and Eastern Europe, however, a main concern was with the concept of 'civil society'. Attempts within political science, notably by John Keane and others, to address the relationship between the state and civil society, and between democratic change in Western and Eastern Europe (cf. Keane (ed.) 1988), had little impact on social work theory and practice. The legacy of this separation has, I would suggest, been a failure to address the complexities of the position of social work, in different social formations, vis a vis the state and civil society, and a crude belief that 'the state is bad' and 'civil society is good' which seriously impedes the development of progressive practice.

The suggestion that social work is firmly located in the state apparatus derives from a particular type of Marxism which, notwithstanding exhortations to work 'in and against the state' (London - Edinburgh Weekend Return Group 1980), and to find the 'spaces' and 'contradictions' for oppositional practice, remains essentialist, functionalist and deterministic. In many ways, the marked 'anti-intellectualism' (Thompson 1995: 27) or pragmatism of mainstream social work in the UK, was mirrored by the clumsy theorising of its radical alternative. Above all, what was meant by the phrase 'state social work' (Jones 1983) remained unclear. Is the construction specifically a UK, Canadian and Swedish notion, as social work was an inextricable part of the 'welfare state' in these countries, or is it more generalisable within the Western world given the role of the state in funding and in legal control (Dominelli 1997: 70)?

Indeed, the shift in the UK from a social democratic welfare state, to the Thatcherite project of 'authoritarian populism' or 'free market, strong state' (cf. Hall, Jacques (eds.) 1983), actually served to reinforce the inherent determinism of theories of state social work: we thought the state was bad, now it has got even worse! What was missing was any real understanding of the state as a concept *per se*, less a 'thing' than 'sets of social processes and relations' (Verdery 1996: 209). This was rarely distinguished from two other important concepts, each very different, namely 'state forms' - dominant configurations of politico-ideological 'common sense' or 'hegemony'; and institutional and administrative structures of governance, both of which vary greatly over time and from one place to another. Hence, the relative absence of comparative studies of social work, from a radical perspective, at least when compared to comparative social policy (Deacon 1983; Dominelli 1991), itself contributed to the problems of understanding the complexities of social work and the state.

Where social work is primarily located - whether in the statutory or voluntary sector - is, therefore, a very different question from its relationship to the 'ruling ideas' of a particular place and time. In addition, the relatively autonomous role of 'professional' ideologies and practices, may also be relevant to the ways in which social work

reproduces relations of control in a given society. The idea that social work is a problematic activity because it is located in the state, seems, therefore to be a very partial explanation of the complex relationship of social work to forms of domination and resistance.

In the struggle for democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s, of which strands of social work-like activities were, in some places, a part, the concept of 'civil society', virtually ignored in the UK radical social work discourse, was given prominence. In the context of societies where state forms sought to dominate, more or less completely, all aspects of the public sphere, there was an increasing theoretical and practical concern, beginning in Poland in the late 1970s but expressed in many of the countries of the region thereafter, with 'civil society'. Most usually, this was taken to refer to an expansion and pluralisation of the public sphere to include a variety of informal groupings, movements and associations 'independent of the state and the ruling party' (Hosking 1992: 1). The concept itself, of course, has a much longer lineage in political science and sociology, and has been used, in very different ways, by 'writers as diverse as Ferguson and Marx, Hegel and Adam Smith, Tocqueville and Gramsci', all of whom have been 'invoked in the contemporary 'rediscovery' of civil society' (Seligman 1992: 3).

The range of activities within and about 'civil society' was very wide, encompassing particular kinds of political dissidence acting 'as if' there was a plural public sphere, the rise of independent trade unions such as '*Solidarnost*' in Poland, and the 'new social movements' including feminist, peace, gay rights, and other kinds of activism. In some ways it was in Yugoslavia, marked not by state absolutism but by a complex form of self-management socialism or, rather, its most affluent northern republic Slovenia, where 'the alternative to the existing system was explicitly articulated in terms of civil society' (Mastnak 1994: 97). Indeed, the fact that various forms of social work, and University level social work training, existed from the 1950s, unlike in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, is also relevant (Connelly, Stubbs 1997). In Slovenia, certain forms of radical mental health and community work, as well as work on children's rights, and the development of campaigns about violence against women, were important civil initiatives in the 1980s. Notwithstanding the influence of Paulo Freire, also influential in strands of radical social work in the UK, these initiatives tended to define themselves as not only 'anti state' but, insofar as the state sought a totalising influence in the public sphere, as 'antipolitical'. The notion of 'antipolitics' derived from Konrad's definition of a kind of 'counterpower that cannot take power and does not wish to' (Konrad 1986: 231).

Hence, in a strange parallel with the UK debate, theories and practices of 'civil society' tended, also, to essentialise the state and fail to distinguish between different kinds of state forms. United against state oppression, but without a nuanced theory of power, diverse forces assembled under the umbrella of 'civil society' were either marginalised during the transitions or 'revolutions' which began in 1989 or, more worryingly, revealed the 'uncivil' face of the new public sphere, in the form of new kinds of nationalism, chauvinism, and violence (Keane 1996: 14). Above all, the concept of 'civil society' appeared not to address the exchange of 'freedom' for

'insecurity', and in the context of a different kind of anti-state project, the erosion of all manner of social rights and the construction of radical bourgeois individualism (Ferge 1995). What remains, of course, are traces of civil initiatives in social work, not least in terms of a renewed emphasis on the paradigm of 'social innovation' (Završek 1995), which continues to question the new common sense as much as it challenged the old, but with little real impact in formal political terms.

In the new discourse, the complex concept of 'civil society' has become conflated with 'Non Governmental Organisations' (NGOs), the number of which, in any given society, has been used as a crude index of the health of a (civil) society (Stubbs 1995). Partly, this is because many of those active in civil initiatives in the 1980s have built local NGOs which, at least in part, maintain the vision of an enlarged public sphere, and continue to distrust state bureaucracies as resistant to change. Even more so, however, the preference of foreign funders, increasingly active in societies in transition, and even more so, societies in conflict, has often been to build up a strong NGO sector at the expense of the state. In this, because of the ideas discussed above, they have found strange allies amongst radicals pledged to greater social justice.

In other words, the globalisation of the state-civil society debate, in a world in which nation states, and their civil societies, no longer exist in a vacuum, is a key piece of the jigsaw missing from much of the current discussion. Whilst much has been written on the subject of globalisation, regarding the increasing interconnectedness of economic and political considerations in a 'shrinking world', in terms of the concerns of this essay, a number of points are particularly important. Firstly, globalisation has not led to any marked reduction in inequalities between the rich and poor parts of the world, nor between rich and poor within particular countries. Secondly, the interventions of major international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United Nations, tend to be directed only to certain countries and rarely impact directly on Western Europe. It cannot be argued that globalisation has led to the exporting of 'neo liberal' politico-economic structures all over the world. Instead, advice from different supranational agencies and, indeed, sometimes from different strands of the same agency, can be contradictory (Deacon, Stubbs, Hulse 1997). Nevertheless, no discussion of state-civil society relationships in the region of Central and Eastern Europe can afford to ignore these complex patterns of supranational and international agency intervention.

To address these complexities, new frameworks and approaches are needed, going beyond a simplistic treatment of the role of 'external' actors on 'internal' social processes. Social work theory and research has been relatively slow to recognise that, even within countries in the region not defined by 'crisis conditions', the state and nationally specific civil society no longer determine, alone, patterns of provision, or ideologies of practice, much less raise all the revenue for services. George Soros' Open Society Institute; the European Union's PHARE, LIEN and similar programmes; UN agencies including the UNHCR; a range of Western foundations and solidarity organisations; and International NGOs such as Save the Children are all key interpreters, definers, mediators, and funders. In their different ways, all of these agencies promote particular in-country intellectuals, many of whom are University

Lecturers in Social Work, who play a range of implementing, advisory and consultancy roles. Indeed, part of the attraction of being involved in this work, notwithstanding the immediate financial benefits in a situation in which the liberal professions employed within the state are being squeezed, is the possibility of developing regional and global networks and links, a kind of 'global cultural capital' (Stubbs, 1998a: 57).

There is a need to analyse this phenomenon sociologically, not least in terms of the possible effects of a new division between in-country social work professionals who have these global links and those who do not. The effects of this globalisation, whilst valuable in terms of 'widening horizons', may also have fuelled the 'state-civil society' split, invoking 'global civil society' against the parochial state, and further neglecting the development of state services. Whilst it may well be immensely important to be able to go over the heads of government, as it were, to appeal to supranational bodies in the interests of oppressed groups, including Roma and other national minorities, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, and so on, this is not without its price. In particular, the danger that, in return for being listened to, progressive forces tend to acquiesce in the further erosion of public services, is ever present. As we shall see in the case study of Bosnia-Herzegovina, this may be even more pronounced when the state *as such*, at least in terms of sovereignty, has all but disappeared, and where levels of international and supranational agency intervention have reached saturation levels.

### **NEO-FEUDALISM AND THE VIRTUAL STATE: Bosnia-Herzegovina in War and Unstable Peace**

It is certainly ironic that, in the transitions in Central and Eastern Europe which began in 1989, the most bloody conflict occurred in what was then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. From the early post-Second World war period, Yugoslavia had been outside the Soviet sphere of influence, had a very different state form from the Soviet bloc, marked by the notion of 'self management', and had levels of openness, freedom to travel, and economic development, only dreamt of elsewhere in the region. Of course, it would be wrong to glorify the nature of 'the Yugoslav exception', as many on the Western European left, particularly in the UK, tended to do. In particular, the complex relationship between economic and political reforms was designed to maintain the power of ruling elites which, after the 1974 constitution which gave state-like power to the six Republics, became largely Republic-specific elites (Magaš, 1993). Dissidents were treated harshly, and challengers to Tito's hegemony were removed, one by one, whilst at the level of formal politics, there were alternate experiments with liberalisation and conservative control (Ramet, 1996).

In the 1980s, the series of balancing acts broke down, underpinned by the death of Tito and replacement of a single President with a revolving Federal Presidency which symbolised the relative absence of central power and authority, except for an increasingly dissatisfied army. Economic uneven development, within and between the Republics, which never really diminished despite specific kinds of regional policies, coincided with a large scale, and general, recession - a product of world conditions, economic mismanagement and reliance on unproductive industries, and

the calling in of Western loans and credits which had fuelled the consumer boom of the 1970s (Woodward, 1995; Vojnić, 1995). In a way, this overdetermined the resurgence of nationalist ideas, particularly amongst the two largest 'national' groups, Serbs and Croats, which articulated very different visions of a future Federal Yugoslavia, one more centralised and the other increasingly decentralised. Paths to democratisation also became very different within and between the different Republics. The rise of civil initiatives and social movements, as noted above, in Slovenia, coincided with a resurgence of Serb centralising hegemony under Slobodan Milošević, which began with oppression of the Albanian majority in the province of Kosova. In addition, there was a resurgence, in part based on renewed links with the Diaspora in Western countries, of demands for Croatian independence.

The unravelling of Federal Yugoslavia is far too complex a story to be described adequately here. The hegemonic project, led by Milošević, and supported by strands within the armed forces, and Serbian minorities in Croatia and, later, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, had no ideological fixedness or coherent vision. Merging fears and resistance with aggression, it succeeded in exposing the 'international community' as also having no clear idea how to stop conflict, or how to go beyond a misplaced faith in 'keeping the status quo'. As Vukovar fell, and Dubrovnik was shelled from the sea in late 1991, it was only a matter of time before the conflict would spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Indeed, whilst there was, albeit problematically, a clear state building project within the newly independent Republic of Croatia, the battle lines in Bosnia-Herzegovina were far more complex. Importantly, this was not post-modern, technocratic warfare of the 'no more heroes or villains' kind (Cooper, 1998). Rather, ad hoc militias and localised forces combined to engage in what was euphemistically termed 'ethnic cleansing', in which territorial gains were secured through brutal killings and expulsions (Oberschall, 1996). Indeed, increasingly squeezed between Greater Serbian and Greater Croatian programmes, the leading Bosniak (Muslim) party, the SDA, treated not as the legitimate Government but as a 'warring faction', also turned to increasingly narrow nationalist approaches.

What is particularly noteworthy is the way in which the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, its antecedents and its aftermath, is a particular illustration of the relevance of Verdery's metaphor of 'the transition from socialism to feudalism' (Verdery, 1996: ch 8). Verdery seems undecided about whether to push the metaphor to its extreme or to play down its potential applicability. In my view, it is most useful when applied to parts of the former Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania - the latter country being the source of most of her examples. It is also highly relevant to parts of the post-Yugoslav space, including Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, although in the latter case, where it not for five years of war, it would have much less resonance.

Essentially, the metaphor is an attempt to disrupt the dominant (Western-led) conception of 'transition' as evolutionary in the sense of leading to something better, going forwards as it were, usually to a heady mixture of liberal democracy and free market capitalism. Instead, she suggests that, in many countries, the transition has produced 'great uncertainty about where government and law actually resided'

(Verdery, 1996: 205), a personalisation and parcelling out of power, and the rise of both nonmarket distribution forms, including bartering, and 'various forms of influence peddling' including the rise of 'mafias' (Verdery, 1996: 205). She goes on to argue in terms relevant, in fact, to parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the economic recession of the 1980s:

"The collapse of the party-state reinforced the tendencies to personalism and patronage inherent in such arrangements, making many people dependent on their locality, their workplace or their boss for access to food, housing and loans. Belonging to a suzerainty, by either having a regular job or enjoying some other tie to a powerful and successful person, meant dependence, but as in feudal times it also meant minimal security." (Verdery, 1996: 206).

In many ways, the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina, represented an extended reproduction, reworking, and militarisation of these suzerainties rather than the rise of particular kinds of 'warlords', as was more often the picture portrayed in journalistic accounts. Patterns of violence, the role of localised militias and even of particular Army units in particular areas, reinforced the loss of control not only by 'the centre' (nominally the Government in Sarajevo) but even by competing centres in Mostar and Pale. Pre-modern wars, of course, are precisely about 'competition for control over resources and trading routes' and the opening up of a 'booming informal sector' (Carbonnier, 1998: 15) which are the key defining characteristics of the new neo-feudal societies.

What is notable in Bosnia-Herzegovina is the way in which international agencies of various kinds, particularly the International NGOs, over two hundred of whom still operate in Bosnia-Herzegovina as at the last count (ICVA, 1997: ii), also reflect and reproduce these tendencies. Various maps drawn by a range of peace keeping agencies and official and unofficial mediators, many of them reinforcing the realities of 'ethnic cleansing', add another layer to the parcelling out of power. International NGOs tend to congregate in the larger urban centres and are often focused much more on particular areas rather than on the country as a whole. This is even more the case with local NGOs which represent a kind of 'meso-NGO sector', too large to be genuinely grassroots movements, and too small to influence national public policy (Deacon, Stubbs 1998).

The Dayton agreement, initialled by the 'parties' to the conflict, meaning the Presidents of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia (on behalf of the Bosnian Serbs) and Croatia, at Dayton Air force base and later in Paris, is an extraordinarily complex and contradictory document, containing both a geo-political territorial settlement, an imposed constitution, originally, incidentally, only available in the English language, and several annexes relating to return of refugees, pursuit of war criminals, property claims, and so on. The state of Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognised in the agreement, with a three person, ethnicised, Presidency, but given only very limited power. *De facto* and *de jure*, power resides with the two entities which make up the state: the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, already established under the Washington

agreement which ended the Croat-Bosniak conflict, which controls 51% of the territory, and the Serbian Republic (*Republika Srpska*), which controls 49%. The Federation, however, is further split between Bosniak and Croat-controlled areas, and divided into ten counties or Cantons, which have a large measure of legal control, to determine their own educational policies, for example.

Hence, it can be argued that Bosnia-Herzegovina is a 'virtual state', hardly existing in any meaningful sense, other than as a prime example of the parcelling out of power and authority between competing regional centres within the entities. Parts of *Republika Srpska* are more closely integrated with Serbia, and parts of the Federation, the so-called Croatian para-state of *Herceg-Bosna*, are closely integrated with Croatia. The main nationalist parties remain in control, although the city of Tuzla has continued to elect non nationalists throughout, and there are increasing splits within the Serbian and Croatian nationalist parties. Nevertheless, the latest elections, whose results are still not known almost two weeks after the vote, appear likely to have consolidated the power of the hard-liners in many areas.

With massively high levels of international involvement, from NATO troops in what was IFOR and is now SFOR, through the powerful Office of the High Representative responsible for the civil implementation of Dayton, and the OSCE responsible for elections and for so-called 'democratisation', to the army of INGOs, it might seem as if Bosnia-Herzegovina resembles something of an international 'protectorate'. In reality, international agencies only add to the proliferation and essential vacuity of power and authority. Indeed, Dayton has done little more than keep the peace through promoting 'the pursuit of war by other means', not least through perpetuating disputes over strategic spaces, borders and routes, whilst failing in large part, to secure objectives of the safe return of refugees and displaced persons. It is precisely in this complex context that 'normal' questions of the development of social work and social policy, whilst seeming as a distraction from (unfinished) political business, must be posed.

### **SOCIAL WELFARE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: towards a new 'welfare mix'?**

Bosnia-Herzegovina is, therefore, a weakened or 'virtual state', with even the mini-state entity or regional bodies constrained in their ability to define social welfare, both as a result of the interventions of international agencies, and the rise of local NGOs as service providers. This 'withering away of the state', or the development of a kind of post state form (Splichal, 1994: 10-11), is hardly the flowering of democracy, much less of social welfare, which certain kinds of theorising may lead one to believe. Nevertheless, despite all the odds, certain kinds of statutory social work, in the Centres for Social Work, did continue even during the war years.

Indeed, the absolute destruction of war, on lives, property, and infrastructure, was only one set of threats such institutions, which had a long tradition in pre-war Bosnia, faced. The other set was in terms of wider human resource questions which contained at least three elements. Firstly, many of the most able staff were 'poached' by International NGOs who, in setting up parallel social welfare services, failed to

acknowledge the role of the Centres for Social Work. Secondly, some staff left to form their own local NGOs where they were able to operate according to their own vision rather than be stifled by managerial hierarchies. Thirdly, both INGOs and the Centres drafted in unqualified staff to fill the traditional roles of social workers, thus weakening the base of professional social work.

Currently, many international agencies who provided social welfare services are seeking to reduce their work, partly because their funders can no longer see the necessity of 'emergency' interventions, and there is a climate which is more focused on the development of longer term structures, policies and frameworks for social welfare (Shenstone, 1998). It could be argued, of course, that agencies should have sought to work developmentally to empower existing local institutions and resources even in an emergency situation. However, despite the problems and, indeed, evidence of continued vulnerability for much of the population, there are a number of positive possibilities for reform which are currently on the agenda in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Above all, the feeling that reliance on emergency humanitarian aid has meant that policy development in this sector has lagged behind other fields, provides an important window of opportunity, not to impose external 'expert-led' solutions, but to genuinely address Bosnian-led analyses and options.

The combination of the war itself, the massive forced migration consequent upon it, and the internationalisation of practice, all combine with wider questions of transition which have tended to be neglected. Social needs are immense and, indeed, competition between the needs of different groups can heighten social tensions at a time when the institutional capacity to meet needs is at an all time low. The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina currently estimates, for example, that there are 2,594 children without parental care and some 32,000 without one parent (Pejčinović, 1998: 417). There are also some 25,000 elderly persons in need of care and assistance of some kind (Klajić, 1998; 18). Overall, in the Federation there are estimates that some 800,000 people are 'socially vulnerable' of which some 500,000 have monthly incomes of less than 20 DEM (Kljajić, 1998; 18). In Republika Srpska some 37,000 children live in families with no regular incomes (Lakić, 1998; 52) and between 21 and 25 per cent of the population has a family monthly income of less than 25 DEM (Lakić, 1998; 54). Both entities have an ageing population, with some 25 per cent of the current population in RS being over 60 (Lakić, 1998; 57). Both entities estimate that up to 80 per cent of households were reliant on humanitarian aid during the war.

Up to 300,000 people were killed in the war, and over a quarter of Bosnia's pre-war population of 4.37 million became refugees in other countries. Over half of the population were internally displaced and, by April 1997, this figure still stood at almost 900,000 (Stubbs, 1998b). The needs of different categories of refugees and displaced persons are complex and huge, and there has, thus far, only been quite limited successes in implementing Annex 7 of the Dayton agreement which provides for the right of all those displaced to return to their original homes should they wish to do so.

Another issue about which there is limited but growing evidence, is the increasing inequalities within Bosnia-Herzegovina itself. This is pronounced between the entities but, increasingly, also between relatively rich and relatively poor Cantons within the Federation. Respondents in a recent vulnerability survey, for example, suggested that monthly incomes from work in the Western Herzegovina area of the Federation reached almost 900 DEM, whereas in the Pale area it was barely 200 DEM per month. These inequalities also, of course, have implications for the financing of social policy. Vulnerability surveys also suggest changes in the patterns of vulnerability between different groups after the war ended. In particular, the CIET surveys have noted the recent emergence of gender vulnerability (Anderson, 1998). Some of the vulnerable groups, well recognised during the war, such as households with disabled persons, the elderly, and those displaced, are now said to be 'more vulnerable than ever' (Andersson, 1998; 183), as they are less able to compete in the market for food now that humanitarian aid has declined. They are joined by the new vulnerable groups of the unemployed and those on a low income.

The core element of continuity from the past to the present and into the future is the role of local Centres for Social Work (CSWs) at the Municipal level. A number of experts have suggested that such Centres, the majority of whose employees are qualified social workers, are a basis for the reform of the system of social welfare and social protection (Kljajić, 1998; Papić, 1998). To quote a leading Bosnian scholar:

"Centres for Social Work as institutions have to open out towards the entire network of social protection participants, including NGOs, and crucially, to see their role as one of stimulating and co-ordinating their work. Existing Centres are a good basis for the institutional reconstruction and transition of the social protection system." (Papić, 1998; 249).

This approach has been amplified in two studies by the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues (IBHI), on reform of social protection in the Federation (IBHI, 1997) and Republika Srpska (IBHI, 1998). These reports have suggested that combining support to these Centres with reform of the local social protection system, together with the promotion of innovative programmes for supporting vulnerable groups, both in terms of social protection and wider social welfare, could form the basis of a new welfare mix and social policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This would involve a new relationship between public, private, and non-profit activities in social welfare, beginning at the local level but with lessons learnt permeating through the whole system (cf. Kolarič, 1998). In this way, emphasis is not placed on governmental or non-governmental services *per se*, much less on continuing to direct aid to vulnerable groups through a parallel welfare system but, rather, issues of the reform of the social sector and its long term sustainability are being acutely posed.

Papić has outlined the basic aspects of this transition as follows:

"Centres for Social Work must become a basic segment of the institutional network, with NGOs and other types of local initiatives for the provision

of social protection. Their 'internal' transition (transformation) allows them to be open to co-operation, and prepared to implement projects in every sector together with other organisations. They should also be enabled to undertake project management, and to prepare and implement their own projects financed by international organisations and other donors. The main co-operator of the Centres in the 'network' of various forms of social protection activities should be, crucially, local NGOs." (Papić, 1998; 258).

Such a transformation cannot be achieved overnight but requires support and assistance in the development of new relationships and new forms of collaboration. It is a challenge to the over politicisation of social welfare from within the entities themselves, in which politicians dictate the agenda to professionals, and seek to secure international funding for a hierarchy of 'deserving victims'. It is also a rejection of the thinking of some neo-liberals associated with strands of the World Bank's approach, who suggest that 'the extent to which the old system has been destroyed might provide a unique opportunity for fundamental reform' (World Bank, 1997). It contains a greater degree of uniformity, both in terms of principles and of broad parameters of provision, than does the implicit vision of many INGOs, in the name of diversity and decentralisation, for each locality to develop the mix of services which suits it best. Above all, perhaps, it rejects a misplaced faith in the abstractions of 'civil society' or civil initiatives detached from a concern with 'real' social welfare.

### **CONCLUSIONS: Social Policy, Social Work and the Limits of Reform**

Questions of social work and social policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina are, therefore, central to notions of governance in terms of maximising the well-being of all sections of the population. Reform can never be a 'technical fix' in which organisational frameworks deliver improved services. Indeed, the possibilities of continued political battles over the future of social policy and social work seem to be far more likely in Bosnia-Herzegovina than any kind of cosy consensus. Issues of the role of the state and of civil society, in a globalised world, cannot be discussed outside of wider questions of social justice.

In this sense, the need to return to debates about what an 'anti-oppressive social work' might look like in a post conflict society, would seem to be required urgently. This paper has suggested that the terms of this discussion must address more nuanced understandings of state-civil society connections in the context of a dangerous shift 'from socialism to neo-feudalism'. Questions of citizenship and of rights, increasingly the privileged terms of social policy discourse in Western Europe, need to be returned to centre stage in Bosnia-Herzegovina, precisely because a discourse of 'vulnerable groups' itself parallels the mini state thinking of the formal political sphere. Questions of ethics, of professionalism, and of entitlements to services, are one way of challenging these frameworks even if, or perhaps because, they are not at all 'radical' sounding.

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