

“NOTHING” MATTERS: THE PRACTICES OF PASSIVITY¹

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The modes of international intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the first five years of post-war reconstruction (1996-2000) were, on the surface, action centered. International projects actively intervened in the lives and institutions of Bosnians. For example, internationals worked as trauma counselors, managed food distribution networks, protected returning refugees, and drafted new laws. Internationally funded and implemented projects rebuilt homes, de-mined residential and farming areas, and held conflict mediation forums. These interventionist projects affected both the physical and social landscapes of Bosnia-Herzegovina, erasing the visual and mechanical reminders of war as well as repairing or creating (and destroying) social, political, and economic relations. However, there was something else also going on, something outwardly more passive. Beyond the bustle of project activity – the signature of the international community – was another important aspect of international intervention: “just being there.” This mode of intervention is simply the existence of an international body or bodies. Arguing that the passive presence of internationals is also a social practice of the transformative ideology of international intervention, this chapter details what internationals do when they are doing nothing. In other words, “nothing” matters.

Presence – an emic category and a fact on the ground – is a project and an intervention in itself, not just a logistical means of carrying out other projects. I am mindful of the dangers and pitfalls of blending or confusing analytical and descriptive uses of the same term. In order to distinguish an analytical usage of presence from a descriptive usage, I capitalize Presence. This suggests its particularity and specificity; I also mean to infer through this usage that Presence might analytically be treated as a conglomeration of practices.

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I would like to emphasize that Presence is not necessarily functional; it does not necessarily do what internationals think it does, claim it does, or want it to do. Nonetheless, it makes up part of the tool-kit of intervention strategies of international organizations and internationals. My purpose here is not to comment on the successes or failures of Presence, nor its material effects, but rather to trace the contours of internationals' own practices of Presence.² In order to understand the practices of international Presence it is necessary to broaden conceptions of Presence past a limited understanding of it as simply a necessary condition for the design and implementation of humanitarian and transformative projects. International Presence – which allowed aid projects to move forward, thus transforming the physical and social landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina – is itself also a practice of transformation.

Driven by an ideology of transformation similar to missionization or colonization, Presence intersects with issues of modern governance, both self-government and government of subjects (see Merry 2000; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Burke 1996; Cohn 1996). That is, Presence was centrally incorporated into a system of governance (of control, of conduct) brought to Bosnia-Herzegovina by the international community. For example, democratization, a new missionary movement and international “project” reliant on international Presence – moral on a different level than religion – attempted to inculcate the Bosnia-Herzegovinan population with “new,” “proper” values and behaviors based on specific, value-laden understandings of a (neo)liberal order. Transformations will occur due to the processes and practices proselytized and set in motion. However, the transformations will undoubtedly not occur as “planned,” for those targeted for reform (as seen in past colonial, missionary, and development encounters, as well as within post-socialist transitions) respond multiply with complicity, resistance, and accommodation (Merry 2000; Scott 1998; Verdery 1991, 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). Side effects and unintended outcomes may take on inadvertent importance (Ferguson 1990). Understanding transformative projects themselves is a crucial enterprise for, as Verdery discusses, they

² Any analysis of the successes and failures of the international effort is problematic as it presumes a particular and unified definition of success and failure. This does not exist, and clearly depends on the perspective you take. Success for who? On the other hand, there are some easily identifiable material effects of international presence,

subject (neo)liberalism to a needed analytical gaze. Furthermore, in order to understand transformation schemes it is necessary to understand how they are conducted (not just their effects).³ And, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the transformative project relied, in part, on practices of Presence.

International organizations offering and delivering humanitarian aid and development or recovery assistance carry tremendous power and authority (Barnett and Finnemore 1997). The power wielded by international organizations is based in their ability to define, create, classify and fix meanings in the social world, and in their ability to diffuse norms and actors around the globe (Barnett and Finnemore 1997: 11; see Malkki 1994, 1998; Escobar 1997; Ferguson 1994, 1995; Kaufmann 1997; Klotz 1995; Macdonald 1995; Rew 1997). As such, we should not ignore the practices or ideologies of these powerful international organizations, nor the meanings attached to their Presence. Through my analysis I show that Presence is a key aspect of international intervention and of Bosnian democracy. Indeed, as a set of social practices and in its very passivity, Presence acts as a form of governance – a mechanism of international and democratic power. Through Presence, the international community conducted one of its transformative projects aimed at changing the conduct of Bosnians in particular ways and to particular ends, but not necessarily succeeding.

I have separated Presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina into three conceptual modes: sheer, mere, and pedagogical. Each worked individually and in conjunction with the others as mechanisms of international intervention and governance. These three modes are part of a model of transformation, which the international community claimed as the proper course for post-war, post-socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, they form an integral part of a strategy of governance based on the body. The international body has an assumed skill set identified as democratic, neutral, authoritative, and knowledgeable. Sheer Presence refers to the quantity of international personnel resident in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It represents

ranging from increased salaries for Bosnians working for international agencies to increased prostitution near SFOR military barracks.

³ There is a small but important critical scholarly literature on the international projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in Eastern Europe more generally (see Pandolfi 2002, 2001; Bougarel; Bougarel and Duijzings n.d.; Brown 2002; Hayden 2002, 1999a, 1999b; Ottaway and Carothers 2000; Chandler 1999; Campbell 1998; Wedel 1998). The International Crisis Group (ICG), part of the international community, publishes critical commentaries as well.

the force and the reach of the international community through their bodies. Mere Presence, also having its source in the body of the international, contrasts with the explicitly professional tasks of the international. Concurrent with their (other) job duties, international workers played an important role in passively “just being there.” Lastly, there are implicit and explicit pedagogical implications in international Presence. Here, I do not mean specific training programs given to Bosnians on advocacy or fiscal responsibility. Rather, certain international workers consciously and unconsciously attempted to demonstrate proper behavior and professionalism in their interactions with Bosnian colleagues and society in the hopes that Bosnians would learn from their example.

In order to trace the three manifestations of this transformative ideology, I analyze the meanings and practices of the Presence of international supervisors in electoral activities such as voter registration, polling, counting, and campaign monitoring. Much of the validity of Bosnia-Herzegovina elections rested on their Presence. International supervisors ensured that the Bosnian elections were conducted in a “free and fair manner” and that the established rules and regulations of the election were followed. In many cases, supervisors were responsible for electoral integrity, as seen by their sole handling of “sensitive material” and having to sign or co-sign electoral documents, such as ballot delivery receipts, and daily accounting and results forms. In three of the five elections, Polling Supervisors signed the final result forms, thus carrying formal responsibility for the conduct of the election in their specific polling station. During these three elections (i.e., two 1997 elections and one in 1998), each polling station was supervised by a Polling Supervisor. For the latter two elections in 2000, supervision moved from “full” to “partial,” with each Polling Supervisor responsible for between four and six polling stations. However, they were no longer required to certify the results with their signatures or to carry the forms, ballots, and other materials back to the local or municipal electoral commission’s storage centers. They were no longer solely, bureaucratically responsible with upholding electoral integrity. Supervisors have always held “real” responsibilities, as briefly described in the preceding paragraph. In the following pages, I analyze that other aspect of their “real work” – just being there.

SHEER PRESENCE

“You can’t spit in Bosnia without hitting an international.” – an anonymous international, 1998.

Sheer Presence refers to the overwhelming number and scope of internationals, international organizations, and international funding in Bosnia-Herzegovina: the magnitude of it all. I estimate international personnel in Bosnia-Herzegovina ranged between 28,000 and 70,000 in the five years after the war, decreasing over time. At its high mark, the international population was equal to approximately two percent of the post-war Bosnian populace of 3.5 million residents (UNDP 1998). Military forces accounted for the bulk of personnel with between 20,000 and 64,000 soldiers, again decreasing over time. Thus, they make up a significant portion of the international Presence: approximately 70-90%. However, the civilian international population was never insignificant. In 2001, the three main organizations – UN, OHR, OSCE – employed almost 3000 internationals alone. I estimate that international staff at the UN, OSCE, and OHR alongside those at the approximately 180 International NGOs, 28 diplomatic missions or embassies, governmental agencies such as USAID or EC Monitoring Mission, and numerous business consultants ranged between 5000 and 8000 throughout my fieldwork.

The sheer Presence of so many international soldiers and civilians demonstrated the coercive, repressive, and/or protective power of the international community. Under this argument, internationals are the bodily representation and manifestation of the political, military, and economic power used by the international community to force issues, to frame the terms of reconstruction, and to implement policies. The sheer number of internationals thus served as a constant visible reminder of the might of the international community. This fact was welcome, tolerated, grudgingly accepted, or actively resented, depending on one’s political perspective. Speaking four and a half years after the signing of the peace agreement, Kemal, a Bosniac from Mostar working as an interpreter for an aid agency, worried about the possible reduction or withdrawal of SFOR troops. He said he would not feel safe if they were not around, and estimated that the chance of going back into war was over 50% if SFOR pulled out. In his mind,

SFOR was keeping violent actions at bay, particularly in the Br_ko area where there was only a very small strip of land separating hostile groups.

If Br_ko starts to fight again, all of Bosnia-Herzegovina will again be drawn into war. This is a certainty without SFOR.

Similarly, a neighbor welcomed the international interventions, saying that the “war was simple fascism.” For him, the international community was assisting those Bosnians against fascist government and society, as well as fighting the tacit or material support of fascists. Both Kemal and my neighbor felt protected by the large-scale presence of internationals. They were not uncritical or unaware of the force of the international community to press particular policies, yet they believed that the benefits outweighed the negatives, and in some cases they believed that the policies put forth were best anyway. As Kemal said, “you [the international community] are a push in the right direction.”

Social Visibility: the power of sheer presence

A further and important aspect of sheer international presence, beyond the political and military strength and resources (and perhaps in conjunction with it), is what I term **social visibility**. By social visibility I mean the implicit and explicit show of international concern, resources, actions, and being. To international workers, the magnitude and scale of the international Presence represented the importance placed on Bosnia-Herzegovina (and “fixing” Bosnia-Herzegovina) – as if saying, “*After all, look at the dedication of so many resources to it!*” In the mind of the international, social visibility was primarily a positive feature of Presence. I argue that social visibility was a practice of the international governance and of Bosnian democracy. It was a way of exercising power in society.

The international community in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a community that spent a lot of time and resources making itself visible. First, as described above, there were many internationals. They constituted a Presence. They were not invisible, nor was their individual or organizational money with individual expenditures totaling 6.9 billion DM per year (Papi_ et al. 2001). For contrast, the Bosnian GDP in 1998 was 6.9 billion DM. It is estimated that Sarajevo residents each benefited 150 DM more per

month than other Bosnians due to the overwhelming social and financial Presence of internationals in Sarajevo, 42% of the average monthly salary (ICG 1999). A Soros Institute report (2001) frames it this way:

This influx is creating a completely artificial virtual picture of Sarajevo, a picture of normal life, a European city, without any basis in the reality of the BiH economy and the city itself (Papi_ et al. 2001: 10).

The financial Presence was often remarked on by international themselves, mostly within a discursive framework of “dangerous dependency.” What will happen to Bosnia-Herzegovina, some internationals and Bosnians asked, when the internationals pull out? How will they [economically] survive? But, at the same time for example, many restaurants succeeded or failed through their ability to attract international clientele. In one case, aid funds were given to a woman’s group to open a café-restaurant. They were advised to market their cuisine with internationals in mind. Their signature salads, named after world landmarks, appealed to internationals in their variety and use of foods beyond lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, and cucumbers. It was not that internationals did not want Bosnian food. They did, and often struggled to find restaurants serving traditional Bosniac, Serbian, or Croatian fare. But more than anything else they craved variety, to get beyond, as some saw it, the same meat, bread, and tomato and cabbage salad.

<p>NOT JUST VEGETABLES: OUR SALADS !</p> <p>SALONICCO (tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, feta cheese, black olives) 5 KM OTTAWA (lettuce, walnuts, gorgonzola, apples, celery) 5 KM MEXICO CITY (brown beans, white beans, chick peas, corn, spring onion) 4 KM BOSTON (lettuce, tuna, tomato, gouda, black olives, corn) 5 KM ROME (mushrooms, parmesan, lettuce) 4,5 KM SIDNEY (french beans, potatoes, black olives) 4,5 KM TUNBUKTU (lettuce, tomato, anchoves, black olives) 4 KM BUENOS AIRES (lettuce, tomato, mozzarella, mushrooms, peppers, ham/chicken/salami) 5.5 KM SARAJEVO (tomato, lettuce, onion, kajmak, cucumber) 4 KM MOSCOW (mixed vegetables, mayonnaise) 4 KM SANTA FE’ (chicken, lettuce, tomato, corn, celery, mayonnaise) 5,5 KM</p>
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Figure 1: Salad portion of the Fantasia menu. Note the “not just vegetables” statement, referencing that their salads are more than vegetables placed next to each other on a plate, the commonly disparaged but common Bosnian practice of “salad-making.”

The restaurant, “Fantasia,” which I originally thought was “off the beaten track” is not, but a mere 500m from the current OHR building. The High Representative himself visited Fantasia to mark International

Women's Day, 8 March 2001, and to use the restaurant as a "success story."⁴ However, it was much less clear how the restaurant would be "sustainable" without their international clientele. Many new enterprises, of course, did not rely on international Presence and international money. The director of a micro-credit organization told me that the majority of his clients, "by far," were opening café-bars and hair salons. He was not confident of the ultimate success or business model of these enterprises, but at least they were theoretically self-sufficient.

Second, projects are heavily advertised – international colleagues sometimes sighed at the glut of project billboards (e.g., the beginning of a village, or at the entrance of a building). However, "advertising" was also considered a necessary strategy of positive propaganda. For example, CARE or the Danish Refugee Council may be funding and implementing the rehabilitation of a water treatment facility, the de-mining of agricultural fields or the reconstruction of destroyed homes. Nearby the site location, a sign would note the project title, beneficiaries, and aid providers. In one case, a large international NGO helped negotiate and fund the rehabilitation of a well-traveled city street (i.e., installing street lights, filling mortar craters), which had come under heavy attack during the war. The NGO let the newly elected city leaders take credit for the improvements under the idea that this would lend credence to these moderately cooperative leaders. However, as an international staff-person told me, although the NGO was pleased to support community city politicians, "they would have liked to at least have been invited to the opening ceremony." Their significant contributions were simply ignored. International advertisements of this sort attempted to inform the Bosnian public of the activities of internationals and international organizations, to let Bosnians know that they were not sitting idle.

The election effort in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a particularly good example of international social visibility and the symbolism of numbers and resources. It was a large enterprise, both in terms of

⁴ This salad menu was taken from the internet at http://www.aibi.com.ba/fantasia_eng.htm found with a Google search. While I would like to scan in a picture of the actual menu, it is also extremely interesting and supportive of my argument, that I can find Fantasia's menu on the internet, sitting at my computer in California fifteen months after my last meal there, after berating myself for not collecting a menu (you never know what might be good data)! The existence of this menu on the internet is interesting because most, if not all, non-profits need to publicize and

personnel and resources. The international “population” peaked during election periods with the arrival of hundreds of medium- and short- term election staff. On Election Day 1998, with an overall budget of US \$39 million, the Elections Department had over 10,000 persons under its domain. This figure included approximately 2625 Polling Supervisors, an interpreter for each supervisor, and one driver for, on average, every two supervisors. In most field offices, an extra building had to be rented in order to house the election department. Elections, according to one informant, had to deal with jealousy from other departmental staff (e.g., human rights, democratization, regional stabilization, media affairs) because of the attention the department demands and receives. In the words of another international informant with overall responsibility for logistics, supplies, and operations,

Anything elections want, they get. If they want 100 mobile phones, they can have them, tomorrow. All of our resources are at their disposal. Democracy is the international community’s top priority for Bosnia.

She was not necessarily pleased with the leverage elections wielded, but she was following high-level orders and policy. However, the election department also dealt with the problem of being a short-term “project” in a larger universe of on-going “processual programs” emphasizing human rights and democratization. Why, an Ambassador asked a regional electoral officer, should “casual labor” get special treatment?

The electoral effort is exemplary on all fronts of social visibility: personnel, money, resources, and advertising. Thousands of workers spent their per diem cash on food and drink, rent, and curios. Further, institutional money was funneled into Bosnian pockets as drivers, interpreters, assistants, and professionals were temporarily employed. International Presence saturated city streets: it was impossible in medium sized towns to walk into a bar or café without recognizing another supervisor. Hired vehicles sported temporary OSCE signs in their windows. Short-term accommodations had to be found for the influx of supervisors. Electoral advertising filled the airwaves. Sheer Presence, whether in people or money, and the consequences of accommodating that volume of people and currency is a mechanism of

report on their projects. The menu also exists for internationals in Sarajevo, sitting at their computers, wondering what they are going to have for lunch, and where.

international governance and of Bosnia-Herzegovinan democracy through social visibility. Visible numbers are meant to symbolize the commitment to and caring for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The numbers, a strategy for transformation, are part of a larger mechanism seeking changes in systems of governance.

MERE PRESENCE

“They’d take a monkey if it spoke English.” – An international commenting on electoral personnel policies, 2000.

The existence of mere Presence as a mechanism of international intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina and of Bosnian democracy came to me slowly, in bits and pieces. It was not easy to see the importance of the “international” solely in their identity as an international for all the activity and hustle of those same internationals, for it is the action which justifies their existence. Why, one might ask, should we send internationals if they don’t do anything? I do not mean to imply that all internationals had vague or few tasks, or that their responsibilities were little. There were internationals who were overburdened with tasks and responsibility, some who were underburdened, and some who luckily were fortunate enough to be faced with just the right amount of work. Quite often, as is the case in many professional positions, there was a fair amount of variance in daily work depending on deadlines, service requests, etc. What I demonstrate and argue in the following section is that mere Presence constituted a significant aspect of their role and work, among other aspects.

The monkey quote above speaks to a wry acknowledgment of and frustration with perceived personnel policies. At the time, the personnel office was desperately seeking to fill a variety of electoral positions. The speaker’s statement reflected this need as well as a popular sentiment that some jobs were often filled without regard for qualifications. Although most internationals I interviewed acknowledged the difficult funding and diplomatic politics that personnel offices had to negotiate, the paradox remains that it appeared to matter more that a position was filled than filled competently. (I am not suggesting that there were not attempts to find “qualified” people, but rather that in fact the definition of “qualified”

is quite broad.) While large segments of electoral workers complained about incompetent international colleagues and joked about who might be best suited to head the “do-nothing department,” many also acknowledged that much of the (international) labor was “unskilled.” Many positions could be filled by “interchangeable” international bodies – either because the position was not terribly difficult, because it simply required an international body and the skills presumed to be attached to that body, or because the skills needed were easily learned or sufficiently technical that they could only be learned, such as electoral rules and regulations. Furthermore, internationals circulated frequently within the pool of positions available for internationals in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The high rate of job circulation within the international community substantiates my argument that an important qualification for many international positions was that it be filled by an international. It was not at all uncommon for internationals to have held three to five different positions, in different fields, all requiring some degree of “technical” knowledge (i.e., not managerial). Internationals became Election Officers, Personnel Officers, and Human Rights Officers, in succession. Others were election supervisors, coordinators for rebuilding housing, and then policy analysts. Yet others were election supervisors, election trainers, assistants to ambassadors, security and logistic officers, democratization officers, and executive secretaries.

Internationals and nationals alike gave import to the mere existence of internationals in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Repeatedly, people told me Presence was important in non-work ways, in passive ways, and in ways that had nothing to do with action. Not all internationals acknowledged this purpose, but it can nevertheless be heard in many of their statements about the point of their jobs and in the very organization and implementation of their job duties.

The International Tool

During interviews with (national) Election Officers (EO) in 2000, I was repeatedly told that International Election Advisors (IEA) were useful tools to deploy:⁵

⁵ The EO job, at one time classified as an international position, was nationalized in 1999. Internationals were still in the election department at the field office level, but were called International Election Advisors. Many EOs

- Sometimes it is good to have an IEA.
- The authority of the international is easier.
- I'd rather have an IEA than another national EO!

Although all EOs felt capable of doing the job themselves and some felt that IEAs were redundant or didn't know why they "had" one, they still admitted to an "international usefulness." For example, in one case, there was discussion about whether or not to replace a departing IEA or leave the EOs by themselves when she left. Other EOs in the region worked by themselves, so it was a promising possibility and a sought after responsibility (and reward). The EOs were asked by their superior to present a case why they didn't need an IEA. They lost, despite testimonials to the quality of their work and successes in the community. Hurt, they eventually decided not to take this as an affront nor a statement about their professionalism, but as a reflection of the very contentious and hostile political situation in their area. The powers-that-be simply decided an international was needed.

IEAs – an international position created in 1999 when the (international) Election Officer position was "nationalized" and filled with, at least on the first pass, the ex-EOs – were considered more able to pressure, convince, and/or force Bosnian election officials to "do their jobs," "implement the tasks given to them," and "follow given procedures and regulations." The international body was felt to carry with it an essence able to promote productivity on the part of Bosnian officials, and thus remained present despite "nationalization." At a minimum, it was thought by internationals and nationals I interviewed alike that, in most areas of the country, an international would always be more successful than a national at forcing an issue to completion or resolution. Several EOs told me that when a topic or task given to the (local) election commissions became particularly contentious and was not going to be done correctly or at all, they would send in their international counterpart. In some cases, any international colleague would suffice as they too embodied the weight and authority of the international community. As one election officer without an international election colleague but in an area with extraordinary ethnic tensions, told me,

became IEAs, and many Assistant EOs became (full) EOs. The explicit labeling of certain positions as "international" further suggests an increased authority given to the mark and designation.

The polling station member nominating process is very politicized. We need an international involved, and we want an international. The authority of the international is easier.

In this situation, her immediate boss, an international, took over for her. Another election officer, with an international election colleague and in a fairly ethnically homogeneous area, noted the higher efficiency of internationals:

The IEAs are redundant. We do send her as an international to fix the indecisions of the MEC and political parties [as it can be faster]. I could do it myself; I've been working with them for four years!

In a similar vein, Polling Supervisors were thought to be useful in their international-ness. For example, another EO, independently capable and in a poor but relatively calm area, believed that there was no fraud, saying:

I don't think there is fraud. The Election Commissions are so professional; there are no complaints, they always do everything.

Yet, she still believed that Polling Supervisors were necessary:

Yes, I think they are necessary. I'm not sure what I fear. It's good to be present! The political parties are aware supervisors are observing. Also they are good link back to us; feedback. Further, they really have been trained [so they can] act as an adviser [to the polling station committee.]

Here the election officer also implicitly remarked on the lack of training or poor training of the (Bosnian) polling station committees. Over the years, Polling Supervisors received on average several days, between two and three days, of electoral training. Polling Station Committees, on the other hand, always received less training, even though they were the ones actually tasked with running the election (e.g., checking identifications, giving ballots to voters, counting votes, tabulating results), not the supervisors. Polling Station Committees members received, depending on the election year and their position on the committee, between two and eight hours of training. Bosnians received less training than internationals, but there is another parallel idea that their training was of a lesser quality and/or that their learning was of a lesser quality – an example of the hegemonic myth of Bosnian unprofessionalism. I heard many internal and external debates about why Polling Station Committees received less training, and also why they seemed to learn less from any electoral training. Excuses included the following:

- these people work and can't take the time to attend training;
- they don't take it seriously;
- they were trained before;
- they've been doing this position all their lives;
- they are purposely doing it to demonstrate opposition to the election and/or the international community;
- they are purposely trying to sabotage the election.

Polling Supervisors were thus thought to be necessary because they were more knowledgeable about the electoral rules and regulations and could make sure procedures were followed correctly. However, these views fail to address poor international training given to and/or received by international supervisors, and supervisors who do not take the training or tasks seriously. These are not inherently Bosnian traits!

However, as the above quotes testify, even when faced with poorly trained supervisors, unable to perform their job tasks, the mere Presence of a supervisor was thought to do something useful in itself.

In contrast to the explicit representation and use of the international body as an effective and efficient professional tool, international staff over a variety of job classifications made comments regarding the redundancy of their positions. Some internationals, realizing they had little work, struggled to find "work" and/or meaning to their existence and activities. The sentiment that there was little work to be done, that jobs had to be self-created, and that there was a constant struggle to justify one's existence and presence was common. Their comments were sometimes framed in a manner that suggested that there was a purpose to having internationals around despite the lack of concrete and consistent duties. An entry from my fieldwork journal details one worker's frustration and self-realizations:

I had coffee with Guy today. Guy has just realized he doesn't really have a job. And only has [had one] for about 3 months of the 16 months he's been here. There isn't really much for him to do; someone else is either handling it, or could be. I told him about my Presence theory and he said, "I'd agree with that." He also believes that he is a foreign policy strategy: bolstering internationals.

These sentiments grew over the period of my fieldwork (1997-2000) as institutional reforms were put in place which gave more direct responsibilities and tasks to national officials and employees; internationals found more and more that a large part of their job was to oversee and verify the work of others. However,

within election supervision, a large part of the job description was always about oversight. As early as 1997 and 1998, it was possible to hear supervisors complain about their redundancy. In some cases, their positions were not considered by others to be redundant at all; rather it was felt that their passive Presence created substantial obstacles for Bosnians intent on committing electoral fraud. In other cases however, particularly in the area of logistics, many felt that Bosnian employees could do the required work effectively – an international body was not necessary. Others asked, however, questions about Bosnian workers. Could Bosnians, for example, be effective Human Rights Officers? Would they be considered impartial? Could they be impartial? Would a logistics officer only give contracts to his network of family and friends? Debates over the necessity for or redundancy of internationals in particular positions were a constant source of tension and point to the importance given to Presence in the transformations of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

While many bemoaned their lack of jobs, it was also common to hear about ambiguous work, unfocused tasks, and unnecessary work. Many Municipal Election Commission (MEC) Supervisors made remarks along these lines:

- I believe that with more planning and scheduling, the MEC Supervisors could have effectively performed their duties in a much shorter time frame – three or four weeks – instead of six.
- The first days in the office were weird, not many concrete things to do, and a fear of needing to waste too much time doing nothing useful.
- This gloomy mood was much eased when my [international] friend Gabrielle telephoned to suggest she drive down for a drink. We spent some three hours chatting in the upstairs bar at the National Theatre. She asked me what a MECSPV does, I did not really have an answer.

In particular, many medium-term election staff (i.e., in country for approximately six to eight weeks), felt that they were often given “busy work” to keep them occupied. Out of frustration, many attempted to expand the scope of their work (sometimes to the extreme annoyance of their immediate supervisors) or to take on more responsibility. However, as in any bureaucracy, it was professionally prudent to avoid stepping on people’s toes (i.e., turf wars). Thus, in some cases, superiors soundly squashed attempts at expanding the role of the supervisor. In other field offices, officers welcomed the assistance or the

removal of the supervisors “out of their hair.” It was also common for supervisors to enjoy their unexpected free time – touring the countryside, taking coffee, socializing. This led, for some, to mild feelings of guilt over not being professionally engaged during “work hours.” However, as mentioned, at times there was simply no work to do. However, this sense of guilt fails to take into account the “alternative work” that their international body performs.

These comments on the lack of work, ambiguous work, and unfocused tasks suggest that there may be concurrent purposes – purposes that occur more subtly – given to internationals under the logics of international intervention and aid. These other roles swirl around the Bosnia-Herzegovina landscapes, at play both in electoral sites and in the larger community, but always centered on the mere Presence of an international body. Under this ideology of Presence, the passive “work” done by this body is significant. Thus, despite the lack of concrete tasks on a consistent basis for some internationals, they were an extremely important member of the election effort.

Nowhere was the utility of international mere Presence more obvious than in a trip I took to the Vrata Grad Municipal Election Commission (MEC) with Igor, an Election Officer. Vrata Grad, a now ruined and desolate town, was considered one of the most problematic areas in all of Bosnia-Herzegovina in terms of non-cooperation, violence towards returning refugees and displaced persons, political corruption, and continuing ethnic hatred. As testament to continued violence and intimidation, as late as Spring 2000, Muslim-identified businesses were being bombed. Under Croat control at the time of my fieldwork, internationals were no better liked than returning Serbs. The municipality had suffered from huge displacements and demographic change. The population in 1999 was 22% of its pre-war populace (ICMPD 1999). Its ethnic makeup had almost entirely shifted – from 79% Serb to 76% Croat – although the statistics hide severe drops in absolute numbers (ICMPD 1999). Bosniacs remained a relatively stable population as a percentage (18% to 23%), but dropped from 2200 to 600 persons. It is clear that the city suffered tremendous physical, social, and demographic destruction both during and immediately after the war. A 1997 estimate based on voter registration information, suggests that only 5% of registered voters were resident in Vrata Grad before the war.

When I accompanied Igor to the MEC meeting, I knew how problematic the area was. I had arranged to interview Igor as part of my research schedule; he graciously invited me to observe his day, correctly assuming I would be interested in more than just an interview. His task on this day was to push the ethnically mixed MEC to agree on the formation of the polling station committees. They had already been discussing this for some weeks with no progress, and the deadline for choosing committees had already passed. The MEC had not only failed to choose individuals, but was still debating the ethnic composition of the Polling Committees, a deadline far gone.

The ethnically mixed commission was notoriously uncooperative. The chairperson, a Croat, had previously proposed an ethnic distribution of four Croats, one Serb, and one Bosniac for the 6-person polling station committee. Unacceptable to the Bosniac and Serb members of the commission, the issue was unresolved. Our meeting was, however, remarkably short and hardly worthy of the 90-minute drive to get there. With little fanfare or discussion, they agreed upon a distribution of 3-2-1, with a Croat chair always. The Serb and Bosniac members had been willing to approve the previously proposed 4-1-1 distribution given the condition that two (of six) committees had non-Croat chairs. This was summarily refused by the Croat member. Igor was prepared, he remarked to me on the drive home, to threaten them with arbitration by the country-wide Provisional Election Commission, which would have likely resulted in a 2-2-2 distribution. He said they knew this ultimatum and thus were ready to make some compromises. But, he was still surprised by how smooth and quick the negotiations had been – and explained this entirely on my Presence as an international and a researcher (I had been introduced as a university student researching elections).

They knew you were studying elections and them, and were embarrassed to not be able to reach an agreement. Your presence helped.

In this example and others like it, such as the “effectiveness” of the IEAs described earlier, the ability of an international to provoke a decision does not rest in their conflict management and mediation skills nor in their professional expertise (although they may have both) but in their body. In this case, I had no

official authority or coercive power; I was not even employed by the election department. (I did in this case however embody a role explicitly linked with knowledge and expertise.)

Unfortunately (for internationals), the mere Presence of an international is not always remarkable in its actual ability to goad people into action or to reduce tensions. What is remarkable was its dominant place in strategies of intervention, and in attempts to implement democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Under this model, the international body is vested with skills – skills that should compel Bosnians to act. In fact, I argue that the overriding sense of frustration felt by many within the international community was because their (implicit) model was not functioning according to plan.

Mere Presence, like sheer Presence, is a transformative strategy of international interventions. The body of an international is used as a tool to prod reluctant Bosnians toward governmental, social, and liberal cooperation and compliance. The passivity of mere Presence interacts with more action-centered practices, yet is a transformative agent in its own right. This Presence must be international; it was only the foreign bodies which were considered (by internationals and Bosnians alike) to carry authority, expertise, democracy, and neutrality within themselves.

PEDAGOGICAL PRESENCE

“Our presence trains them, sometimes through observation, sometimes by actual training. ...both inside and outside work, people see the international community and how we work and behave.” – an American electoral worker, 2000.

The official role of a polling supervisor was to monitor polling over the one or two days of voting, so as to ensure free, fair, and democratic polling and ballot counting. However, another, implicit duty was to represent democracy. The silent duty for international staff was to demonstrate how to be democratic citizens. The demonstrative and pedagogical essence of international Presence occurred on at least two levels: a technical professional level and a social lifestyle one. Many internationals explicitly remarked on how they attempted to be exemplars of professionalism and efficiency, as shown in the opening quote of this section on pedagogical Presence.

One American woman I interviewed, Edith, related a long story about her managerial role during the registration of voters. Her job was to oversee and ensure the proper functioning of the office. She was not tasked with the functions themselves, but rather to supervise them. However, throughout the eight weeks, in fits of boredom and frustration with the staff, she would sit down to partake in the checking of forms or recording the arrival of packages. Although in part she was looking for something to keep herself occupied, Edith explained that she was also explicitly trying to prove to the staff that the work could be done faster and more efficiently than they were doing it. She went as far as posting productivity reports per day and comparing her completion rate to the average rate of the Bosnian workers. Her strategy was not subtle. My own field notes from the registration period also display a pedagogical orientation despite my despair and dismay about my incorporation into Fordist production.

I had never been in a situation before where it was crucial that the machines continue to run at peak efficiency. The scanning operators had to always be working. And I had to make sure that happened. Visions of impoverished sweat shop women and children fill my mind. I imagine spirit possessions a la Aihwa Ong's descriptions of newly industrialized workers in Malaysia. When a machine wasn't scanning it was silent; our ears would perk up, and we would cast a glance toward the offending scanner or scanning operators. I've never felt like Henry Ford before, and I'm not entirely comfortable in the role I had to play.

I have more sympathy for assembly line managers now. Not a job I ever want to do again -- it forces one to be demanding in a clock-driven way. I was working until 8 and my shift was going to work until 8 too. I had had enough of them goofing off; they were not going to work until 7:30 and then sit around, pretending to work for half an hour. Scanners started to stop. So I picked up envelopes and started to scan them myself while they sat around and watched me work. They stayed until 8 and I got my point across. Generally I don't mind leaving early -- I'll leave, but you have to be prepared to stay late sometimes too then. My work ethic transformed me into an assembly-line nightmare.

The job needed to be done, and I wanted them to DO it. I tried to be flexible but it was difficult, the structure of the job just didn't lend itself to flexibility. There weren't avenues to do other tasks when one became boring. There wasn't the opportunity to make up new tasks, or to do it in a new, innovative way. There was no thinking to be done. It was just opening envelopes, scanning, correcting, and shelving. Is it too much to ask that those are done well and in a timely manner? How much slack do you give someone?

Here, and in locales across Bosnia-Herzegovina international workers engaged in explicit demonstrations (and debates) on the way to comport oneself professionally and democratically. Was it professional, an anguished colleague asked, for her to hire someone who desperately needed a job versus the most qualified candidate? Overall, internationals negotiated and struggled with the incorporation of Bosnian values and practices into their own work habits. In one case, where a colleague incorporated a lengthy coffee break at a café with his staff into the routine, his supervisor grumbled but accepted it because he was at least running it “as a meeting.”

Internationals believed that they were demonstrating professional and democratic behavior through their commitment to the electoral rules and regulations and in their administrative and bureaucratic techniques.⁶ Supervisors and other election staff did not always agree with the rules, but they almost always obeyed the rules and regulations. In this, I argue, they believed they were “demonstrating” how to be democratic. This included a commitment to rules and an emphasis on administration/bureaucracy, but also on “democratic values” such as consumption and tolerance as defined by (neo)liberal model of democratic capitalism.

Demonstrating Democracy: technical rules and living “values”

Much of “technical democracy” involved learning and obeying the rules and regulations. That is, technical democracy requires disciplined and submissive subjects.⁷ They must be disciplined in ways that include filling out forms, following rules, and submitting to hierarchical authority. Supervisors, for example, were explicitly told which types of violations would result in immediate repatriation and local polling station committees likewise knew which types of offenses would result in the invalidation of a polling station's results. Examples from a polling station during 1997 elections show how supervisors and

⁶ Whether or not they *were* demonstrating professional and democratic behavior is another question altogether. Certainly some internationals did not exhibit professional or democratic behavior (even if there is agreement on what that entails), either as the social-political unit, the “international community,” or as individual “internationals.” Furthermore, Bosnians were not silent; they criticized errors and problems as well as international policies.

⁷ I do not mean to imply that other forms of political organization do not require disciplined subjects, just that democracy does and that it has particular forms of disciplining its technical specialists as well as its

polling station committees interacted with the disciplinary mechanisms of technical democracy. Through this, I demonstrate how supervisors attempted to teach democracy – democratic practice or discipline – through their Presence. I use my own experience because it is more thoroughly documented than even a thorough interview can provide. However, my data shows how most Polling Supervisors consciously negotiated the demands of electoral regulations and the necessity of following the rules as a pedagogical device, even while recognizing the arbitrary nature of the regulations and the possibility of flexibility.

There was a fine line in determining who was actually in charge of the polling station. Officially, the polling chairperson was in charge, but the supervisor had many tasks and responsibilities that made it clear that the supervisor had overriding powers. For example, supervisors filled out all forms, kept and secured all sensitive material, and transported the ballots. Although the chairpersons were nominally in charge, supervisors were tasked with polling station management and “advising” the chairs on any and all electoral processes. This vagueness continued as an issue even into the 2000 elections. In November it was explicitly stated that the Chairperson was “in charge,” but the wording of the Electoral Rules and Regulations still left supervisors with powers that effectively negated much of the Chair’s authority:

Polling Station Committee Chairpersons are responsible for the conduct of the process. Polling supervisors maintain the authority to take an active role whenever necessary....

Back at the polling station, the polling station committee feared I would discount all the ballots after I discovered that one gentleman had been given two ballots. The polling station committee claimed he was voting for his wife too but had failed to bring her with him into the polling station. Issuing two ballots to one person was a clear violation of the rules and regulations and besides duly noting it in the poll/log book, I made a rather large and loud fuss about it, mentioning how the integrity of the elections was in jeopardy. As a supervisor, I had been taught that unless all the rules and regulations were followed exactly the results could be nullified, and that it was up to me to enforce and judge voter and polling station committee adherence to those rules. Did this irregularity “count” as an offense worthy of closure

citizens/participants. Likewise, other forms of political organization also rely on administrative-bureaucratic behavior, but I argue that neo-liberal democracy has unique notions of it.

and censure? What if it was just one of many, but the only one I had seen? In making a scene about this inconsistency, I was concerned over the polling committee's trustworthiness and integrity as well as demonstrating my own integrity as a democratic subject, and about how my own performance would be evaluated if I failed to prevent breaches of democracy. It was important (to me) to show them (through my emotional outburst) that even one small infraction was neither democratic nor professional, and hence, unacceptable.

Packing polling materials and results was another instance of the “necessity” of following the protocols. There were *seven* different envelopes or bags to fill with materials for these elections, down from *fifteen* used during the two months previous municipal elections. This was so confusing that the chairman asked me to do it. Or maybe, he figured that I was better at following instructions, or at least since it was “my organization” that had developed these procedures, I should carry the burden of correctly or incorrectly packing things, and the consequent disciplining if I got it wrong. For my part, I made an effort (conscious yet “natural” for my already self-governed subjecthood) to do the packing the “correct way” and to insist that they help. I was not going to do it by myself while they smoked outside.

Although it was 11pm and we were all cold and exhausted after the tension of accurately counting ballots, it was important to me to let them know that, in general, it was important to do it “right.” I actually got it wrong, but it was hard to get it completely right! I mistakenly carried envelope 6 and envelope 7 to the Local Election Commission, when I was supposed to carry envelope 7 and the chairperson envelope 6, both of which held copies of the results. This was met with a frown. Also, my daily accounting form was green when it was supposed to be white. I had to initial a statement stating that the original daily accounting form in my packet had been green, thus I was not able to provide them with a white original.

This small story illustrates the differences in meanings and in implications for Bosnians and for “internationals” when it comes to “failing to perform.” For myself, I was embarrassed but never challenged. For the chairperson (or other Bosnians), failure would likely have been judged by the electoral staff as lax, improper, and potentially suspect. Supervisors were able to shrug off their own errors, but Bosnian staff were not, at least not at that moment. The compilation of their “errors,” as

judged by supervisors and on forms, left behind a sense that Bosnia-Herzegovinan elections were (still) not capable of being self-managed. Furthermore, the story exemplified how bureaucracy and technicality are implicitly trusted and errors not believed – how could your form have possibly been green when they simply are white?! However, all these rules are simultaneously flexible. For example, I allowed a different counting procedure than the one proscribed, and Helen, another supervisor, allowed her chairperson to transport the ballot box although she did accompany him. Discipline can also be negotiated. This flexibility, however, did not negate the pedagogical impulse inherent in the Presence of the supervisor. They still had the power to enforce, define, and promote “professional” and “democratic” conduct.

The International-Democratic Lifestyle

It was through international Presence and behavior (i.e., selling the trappings of democracy) and through local accommodation of that Presence and behavior (i.e., consuming those trappings) that democracy was produced. However, the marketing of democracy was not a perfectly homogeneous or unified set of messages. The codes were unevenly presented because they were reproduced by individuals who had consumed and used their own country's democracy in unique ways. There may be differences in the presentation of democracy between a Polish supervisor and an American supervisor, as well as between two Polish supervisors. How well democracy was sold to Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs depended on how well it was sold to citizens of already democratic nation-states. The OSCE tried to minimize difference in definitions of democracy by supplying their own expectations of proper behavior. In manuals, codes of conduct, and speeches, they encouraged and exhorted international staff to be respectful, courteous, fair, impartial, neutral, and to uphold the integrity and accuracy of the vote. These behaviors and attitudes, along with consumption and discipline, made up the ideal International Polling Supervisor and the ideal democratic citizen.

Besides reproducing democracy in conjunction with local residents, international staff were engaged in producing an “International Supervisor” culture which was different than their everyday life

norms and behaviors, or at least was an extreme version of everyday life – emphasizing some attitudes and behaviors and rejecting others. Material consumption skyrocketed in this new culture because that was all there was left to do; it was the only remaining vestige of previous life. Supervisors were unable to engage in their “normal” leisure/free-time routines (e.g., sports, cleaning, cooking, crafts, family life, reading, etc.) at the same levels, if at all. Part of this came from the limitations of a post-war economy and part from a desire to socialize with new colleagues and consume Bosnia. In many ways, election monitoring was a type of tourism (all expenses paid). Like tourism, it acted for some as an escape from the drudgery of everyday life and worries. The selling of democratic lifestyles was thus partially based on this newly developed, consumptive culture of international staff. The life of temporary employees, in this case, polling supervisors, was encouraged by the presentation of two weeks worth of per diem in cash (approximately \$1200, equivalent to \$90 US per day). Flush with money, supervisors paid rent, ate at restaurants, and sat in coffee shops. Many supervisors frequented the CD shop. At 5DM (\$3 US) each, it was easy for supervisors to experiment with unknown musical genres or to round out their music collection. In fact, supervisors complained about the poor selection without realizing that the store's stock had been cleared out by earlier international shoppers. While few supervisors spent all of their per diem (it being hard to spend \$90 each day in war ravaged economies), they spent at far higher rates than the, mostly unemployed, locals. Most supervisors actually saved large amounts of cash, but this was the private side of per diem; spending, not saving, was the face presented to the general populace. In fact, many supervisors specifically tried to limit their spending. One woman budgeted *daily* expenditure at 50DM (about \$30 US), of which 25DM was dedicated to daily rent.⁸ She wanted to use her savings from this temporary job to move to Spain and needed to be able to buy a train ticket as well as cover her expenses until she found a job. Another saved money for the express purpose of buying a new windsurfer upon her return to Minnesota, and although never explicitly stated, another woman rarely ate out or socialized with the group, in part I believe to save money for consumption back in Estonia.

⁸ As compared to a Bosnian average *monthly* salary of 139DM in August 1998.

Coffee bars served as a social activity for bored supervisors. One general strategy was to pick a centrally located coffee bar and sit there until more supervisors came wandering by, looking for amusement and a way to spend the afternoon. For example, on my way to the field office from the CD store one morning, I ran into Duncan who was looking for the CD store. So I returned to the CD store with him. Afterward, we decided to stop for coffee as a diversion before lunch. While at coffee, the waitress asked us if she could play Duncan's CDs over the shop's music system. We were happy to sit in the sun listening to our own music, sipping cappuccinos. Soon three other supervisors joined us. Finally, there was a collective decision to “find” lunch. On route, we found more supervisors also “looking” for lunch. Within three hours the group had expanded from one to six.

Supervisors acted as a living advertisement. Supervisors were the draw or hook – “buy democracy and you too will be able to consume.” Supervisors, products of new and old democracies, marketed democracy through their desires for choice, amusement, and material objects. Even when saving, they consumed at levels out of proportion to local residents. Their Presence served a pedagogical role both within the polling station and external to it. Supervisors, consciously and unconsciously, demonstrated how to be self-governing democratic subjects, disciplined to consume, to follow law and authority, to tolerate difference expressed as choice, and to work productively and efficiently.

DOING NOTHING

These three modes of Presence – sheer, mere, and pedagogical – are subsumed within the more active practices of internationals and the international community. Sheer, mere, and pedagogical Presence make up a mechanism of international governance – a way through which international and global interventions conduct their transformative missions. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, by having bodily Presence on-the-ground, the international community hoped to modify the behaviors and beliefs of Bosnians. Although the forms, salience, and intensity of Presence changed during my fieldwork from 1997 to 2000, it continued to exist. The bodily Presence faded somewhat, but the ghosts and contrails of Presence

continued. Bodies may have been fewer and with less influence, but it was the previous bodies which, under this logic, allowed the reduction of bodies. The transformations of Presence had been at least partially realized and internalized structurally in Bosnian institutions and society.