

Introduction

Uvod

MANAGING DISTRUST AND HATRED: MULTIETHNIC LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

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1. Background: Multiethnic Local Communities after the War

It is almost a truism that local government is an important feature of constitutional democracy. No democratic order of today can be envisioned without a system of governmental institutions authorized to make political decisions and to manage and administer public policies on a limited territory within a sovereign state. Indeed, there is no modern or contemporary sovereign state which does not know some form of local government or is at least divided into local communities. In other words, local government is not an exclusive property of democracy. Nondemocratic systems of yesterday and today know some forms of territorially identifiable local subunits. This holds for communist authoritarianism as well. In countries of the communist sphere—with the partial exception of Yugoslavia—local government was of a purely administrative nature, following the overwhelming centralization of the party-state regime.¹ Decentralization of power, as one of the key features of democratic local government—and which includes a set of guaranteed local functions as well as autonomy in their implementation—was virtually absent. In its stead stood a system of subordinated deconcentration of essentially the one and the same authority. This multilayered structure, extremely complicated in some countries, of local government served mainly as a transmission mechanism for technical implementation of decisions passed by the party-state apparatus.

The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the beginning of a new era. For many countries once belonging to the communist regime, the era can safely be summarized by the establishment and stabilization of constitutional democracy. Judging by the speed with which the new legal and political framework was shaped (a democratic constitution based on the primacy of human rights and the rule of law, political pluralism, responsible government, independent public, etc.), these countries have relatively painlessly covered the road from authoritarianism

¹ The case of the Yugoslav socialism is specific, in the sense that one of the system's main features used to be a very high degree of (for socialism otherwise untypical) decentralization, derived both from the ideology of "socialist self-management," and from the ideology of ethnic exclusivity within the multiethnic state. During the last two decades of its existence, Yugoslavia was only a quasi-federation, divided in federal units perceived as almost completely autonomous nation-states, each being guided by "its own" Communist Party. In this context, municipalities enjoyed broad functional and financial autonomy, formally based on the principle of self-management. In practice, however, municipalities were under the strict control of the respective national communist parties.

to democracy. Still, a closer scrutiny of particular fields of social and political life reveals the high level of complexity of the democratic transformation process. As already available literature indicates,² local government reform is prominent in this regard. The task of local democratization has faced many problems and obstacles, ranging from redrawing local communities' borders to establishment of a new legal framework and institutional structures, redefinition of the meaning and reach of local functions and policies, new approaches to the problem of local finances and a substantially changed conceptualization of the relationship between local and central governments. The imperative of coping with the legacies of the past also functions in this area.

In this complex set of pressing issues, the management of interethnic relations in ethnically heterogeneous local communities stands out as a fusion of:

- new democratic principles and mechanisms (rule of law, primacy of human rights, market economy),
- substantially new types of local governance (based on relative autonomy from the center, proper functions, viable policies) and
- demands for recognition and implementation of minority rights in local communities.

In understanding the contextual complexity of the third feature, it should be recalled that this set of demands in post communist states is not reduced to the regulation of the legal and institutional status of minorities, which would, in turn, enable them to implement their rights at the local community level. What is at issue is the problem of identity—both the identity of localities and the identity of national groups in postcommunism. Only in their interplay can we look for the mode of managing multiethnic local communities that does not threaten but rather advances minority rights. Here, the problem of legacies comes to the foreground. During communism minority rights shared the status of human rights: they existed not as genuine, legally formulated, guaranteed and enforceable rights, but rather as privileges granted by the party-state in exchange for subjects' loyalties. However, it is possible to identify at least two confronting approaches to the “national question” in the practice of “real socialism,” approaches which once flavored the status of minority groups. First, in an effort to compensate for missing legitimacy in their rule, some communist regimes (e.g., in Bulgaria and Romania) resorted to the nationalistically mediated traditions of their respective titular nations at the direct expense of minorities. On the other pole—all the differences among them notwithstanding—stood the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, where minorities (or some of them) were sometimes granted privileges in the form of regional or local quasi-autonomy. These different treatments of ethnic diversity revealed their importance after the fall of communism. In the countries

² See e.g.: Peteri, G. (ed.) (1991) *Events and Changes. The First Steps of Local Transition in East-Central Europe*, Working Paper of Local Democracy and Innovation Project, Budapest; Elander, I. and M. Gustafsson (eds.) (1991) *The Re-emergence of Local Self-government in Central Europe: The First Experience*, Centre for Housing and Urban Research, Šrebro; Coulson, A. (ed.) (1995) *Local Government in Eastern Europe. Establishing Democracy at the Grassroots*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Aldershot; Baldersheim, H. and M. Illner et al. (eds.) (1996) *Local Democracy and the Processes of Transformation in East-Central Europe*, Westview Press, Boulder; Kimball, J. D. (1999) *The Transfer of Power. Decentralization in Central and Eastern Europe*, Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Budapest.

of the first group, minorities sometimes had to fight for the recognition of their previously oppressed identity. On the other hand, minorities in the second group of countries are occasionally perceived as past bearers of majority-hostile privileges, which is sometimes used by majorities as an ideological justification of denying both special rights for minority groups and basic individual rights to members of these groups.

This abbreviated exposition clearly connotes the serious nature of the problems of minoritarian identity and minority rights in the 22 countries created in the territories of the three former socialist federations (the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia). The processes of democratic transition and consolidation in these countries, including democratization of local government, are preceded and, in many respects, pre-empted by their approach to the problem of statehood. According to Robert Dahl, this question logically precedes the creation of democratic institutions:

We cannot solve the problem of the proper scope and domain of democratic units from within democratic theory. Like the majority principle, the democratic process presupposes a proper unit. The criteria of the democratic process presuppose the rightfulness of the unit itself. If the unit itself is not proper or rightful—if its scope or domain is not justifiable—then it cannot be made rightful simply by democratic procedures.³

In the practice of new postcommunist states, this problem queried the ultimate justification for the existence of the new states, i.e., of the conditions which make the given state a legitimate political unit. All new states were established as nation-states, invoking the “right to national self-determination” as the foundation of their legitimating principle. In this context, the decisively important points are those regarding the manner in which the old state had fallen apart and, consequently, the manner in which new nation-state was established. The postcommunist experience seems to have validated Alexander Hamilton’s old dictum: what is at issue—at the moment of dissolution of the old system and the establishment of the new one—is “whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitutions, on accident and force.”⁴ In the case of the breakdown of multinational communist federations, “reflection and choice” versus “accident and force” amounted to the difference between peaceful transformation of the old unit into new states, on the one hand, and the extremely cruel process of violent destruction of the old unit that had given birth to new states, on the other.

The case of the former Yugoslavia belongs to the second pattern of the establishment of new postcommunist nation-states. The history of this country’s breakdown serves as a tragic illustration of the ultimate consequences of an ethnically exclusivist approach to postcommunist state-building. Opened and decisively directed by Serbian nationalism, national identity was mobilized as nationalist hatred against “others,” causing hundreds of thousands of casualties and mass destruction of human settlements, this all against the background of ideologically prepared practice of “ethnic cleansing.” During the wars in

³ Dahl, R. A. (1989) *Democracy and Its Critics*, Yale University Press, New Haven. p. 207.

⁴ Hamilton, A., J. Madison and J. Jay (1982) *The Federalist Papers*, Bantam Books, New York. p. 2.

Croatia and Bosnia the principal targets of annihilation were heterogeneous local communities which, by their peaceful existence in the previous period, had demonstrated the viability of harmonious relations in a complex ethnic, cultural and religious area.

Hence, when thinking of the prospects for democracy and viable protection of minorities in multiethnic local communities of the five countries that emerged after the breakup of the socialist Yugoslav federation, the first analytical feature that should be taken into account is the manner in which these countries parted their ways with the old regime. In this regard, a basic distinction can be made between two groups of former Yugoslav countries.

Slovenia and Macedonia belong to the first group, countries that succeeded in escaping the devastating logic of war. Such a generalization might be objected to: Slovenia, in June 1991, was pushed into the first major armed conflict in then Yugoslavia. On the other hand, Macedonia is the only ex-Yugoslav state which did not experience direct war; still, this country has been constantly exposed to different international pressures (e.g., the problem of international recognition), threats coming from neighboring war areas (which culminated in the refugee crisis during the Kosovo war) and attempts to destabilize its sensitive ethnic balance. But the generalization offered here points in a different direction: discourse of mistrust or hatred toward “others” does not present—despite numerous problems which exist in these countries, problems much more serious in Macedonia than in Slovenia—the ideological foundation of their respective political processes, neither at national nor local levels. Rather, both countries have resisted the danger and temptation of organizing political life along the friend-foe axis, instead nurturing their post communist developments as the processes of the establishment and consolidation of democracy. In such a context, both the condition of national minorities and reforms of local government have become issues of a process aimed at the establishment of the nation-state as a democratic community.

The countries of the second group—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—all have experienced war, consequences of which still function in different ways as relevant features of their political dynamics and societal relations⁵. A metaphor familiar to political theory is not entirely out of tune here: the breakup of Yugoslavia exemplified the fall from authoritarian statehood to some kind of pre-political condition or “state of nature.” The wars in ex-Yugoslavia were waged in Hobbesian terms of merciless *bellum omnium contra omnes*, with members of various nations trained to hate each other and to internalize the view of the impossibility of any future life together with “others.” In consequence, the path to the establishment of the new political condition took the form of reinforcing ethnocratic nation-states, with “winners,” i.e., majorities, perceiving the newly emerged units in terms of ethnic exclusivity, as “their own” homes. Several consequences

⁵ This text was written in November 1999. In January and February 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections were held in Croatia. There is a good reason to believe that the clear victory of the center-left coalition has brought the rule of ethnocracy in this country to its end. Following the promise of democratic consolidation that would include the respect for minority rights, the new government has already made first steps that signal abandonment of the old exclusionary and semi-authoritarian principles and practices. In consequence, it is likely that the above classification will soon have to be reworked.

follow. First, in these countries democracy tends to become a ritual faade which poorly hides the essentially authoritarian aspirations of nationalist ruling elites. Secondly, these political orders, following the ideological matrix of exclusivity and its derived claim of the necessity to defend “our genuine values,” have been developed as highly centralized regimes. Thirdly, members of minority communities who, despite all the efforts of war, still live in these countries, are often apprehended as second-class citizens who, by the very fact of their belonging to another ethnic group, present a threat to the newly emerged states.

Montenegro, a federal unit of today’s Yugoslavia, escapes the offered classification. Until 1998 it obviously belonged to the latter group, with its political leadership acting faithfully along the lines of extreme nationalism promoted by Milosevic’s regime. But after the parliamentary and presidential elections of 1998, the political orientations of Montenegro have substantially changed. New political authorities have been trying hard to establish democracy (to the extent this is possible at all within the proto-totalitarian federal framework), and to guarantee equal status and political participation to minority national groups living in Montenegro.

2. Presenting the Project

2.1. *Main Theme and Goals of the Project*

The picture presented is grim but not exhaustive. The logic of hatred has not entirely won. There still is, in many multiethnic local communities, a non-negligible number of people who think that hatred against those who are different is neither “natural” nor “normal.” And in some local communities such people are capable of offering, organizing and defending practices of interethnic relations substantially different from the one presented above. This alternative pattern is the main subject of the project *Managing Multiethnic Communities in Countries of Former Yugoslavia*. In the project, this pattern is named “good practice,” and it can be summarized as the process of reestablishment of life together based on principles of mutual respect and tolerance.

This project is initiated, conceptualized and funded by the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative—Budapest (LGI), as a part of the broader project, *Ethnic Conflict, Multicultural Politics and Local Governance*, devoted to the presentation and dissemination of positive experiences in managing multiethnic local communities in postcommunist countries. At a relatively early stage of the broader project’s development, it was decided to organize an exploration of multiethnic local communities in former Yugoslavia into a subproject, and to offer its results to the public scrutiny. The present volume is the final step of this research and writing process. But what was the aim of this project, and what methods were used by researchers?

Perhaps the first answer that we owe our readers is the justification of the decision to concentrate on good practices in local communities in which the logic of hatred and distrust were, or still are, prevailing. Would it not be—in methodological and analytical terms—better to concentrate our attention on what is bad? This reasoning says that we cannot fight what is wrong unless we explore it and come to a profound understanding of its causes. The answer to this challenge consists of two parts.

First, our choice does not imply any avoidance of the fundamentals of existing conditions. The presentation of good practices can be made neither feasible nor valuable without taking into consideration foundational circumstances that brought about the rule of ethnocracy. All the case studies presented here describe good practices against the background of different problems stemming from the *ratio* created by the war and dissolution of what used to be a common state. These good practices are conceived, developed and affirmed as specific actions for creating peaceful life together within a context that, in order to be changed, has to be understood first. The second part of the answer follows from here. The aim of this project is to present, affirm and promote the implementation of peaceful solutions based on tolerance and mutual respect in multiethnic local environments burdened by legacies from the sinister past. It is our hope that these practices can serve as positive examples, offering important lessons on possible ways of achieving condition of peaceful coexistence in troubled multiethnic localities.

As regards the method applied in the project, several features which frame the approach need to be taken into account. This volume presents a collection of descriptive case studies written in accordance with the following standardized structure:

1. Introduction (background) to the conditions of minorities in the related locality
 - What are the general socioeconomic and political conditions?
 - What the major legal guarantees of the protection of minorities?
 - What is the socioeconomic and political situation of related social groups?
 - What is the background of the specific problem addressed by the good practice?
2. Problems to address
 - What were the problems that were addressed?
 - What were the motivations for developing the good practice?
 - Who were the major actors in developing the good practice?
 - What were the major interests represented by different actors?
 - What were the key decision points?
 - How were the priorities selected for the action plan?
3. Objectives and strategies
 - What were the objectives?
 - What actions were taken?
 - How were the actions implemented?
 - What resources were mobilized?
4. Implementation and development
 - What problems occurred during the implementation?
 - How were these problems solved?
5. Results and achievements
 - What results were achieved?
 - What indicators were used to evaluate results?
 - What are the impacts of the good practice on the local community?

What impact has the practice had on local and national decision-making?
Are the results sustainable?

6. Conclusions

What were the most important lessons learned ?

What can others learn from the practice?

Has the practice been used elsewhere? (if yes, when, where and by whom)?

As a careful reader will observe, this structure has not served as a compulsory frame to be followed by contributors in every detail but rather as guidelines for writing. The aim of these guidelines has been both to meet the demand for comparability among the case studies and to allow room for contributors to display the particular conditions of their respective local communities. Therefore, what at the first sight might look as a simple divergence from the framework designed by LGI experts, should rather be seen as the consequence of the framework's purposeful elasticity, aimed at balancing between the demand for comparison, on the one hand, and the equally important imperative of showing those features of analyzed communities which escape generalization, on the other. In other words, given in many respects peculiar character of our main topic, we have decided to create a framework which would allow for a detailed empirical and observational presentation of points which create unrepeatable contexts of different local communities. Furthermore, we have also decided to leave it to our researchers to offer, within the framework presented above, the choice of their particular topics, i.e., the choice of particular areas of life in their communities that deserve to be presented as good practices. One consequence is that this volume does not offer a systematic comparison. Our contributors were not asked to collect specified data by analyzing specific fields and subject areas, but were rather requested to freely choose and present cases that support peaceful and tolerant patterns of the life together. Therefore, the focus of this study is on good practices in their real-life variety.

2.2. Main Results

What are the conclusions of this stage of our project?

To repeat, there is a substantial difference between the two groups of former Yugoslav countries, as outlined in the previous section. Case studies on minority rights and local communities in Macedonia and Slovenia demonstrate that in these countries there is no substantial gulf between the legal-institutional framework and policies carried out at the central level, on the one hand, and the approach to minority rights in local communities, on the other hand. Presented issues, all very sensitive in terms of majority-minority relations, are witness to a public awareness that views these relations as *political* issues, which have to be approached and managed exclusively by the use of instruments and in processes defined by the democratic legal and political framework. Once it is established that the minority question is the question of sustainability of the given country as a democratic unit, the whole approach to majority-minority relationship gets a substantially better treatment. Laws are not created with the intention to favor majorities at the expense of minority groups. The

case studies from Macedonia and Slovenia presented in this volume demonstrate that, once minorities are recognized and given the status of equal citizens who still may need of special protection, their problems at local levels—regardless of how sensitive—are perceived and managed in ways which tangibly reduce the room for violent confrontation.

The reader will learn that Slovenia, contrary to the prevailing belief, is not an ethnically homogeneous country. There are two types of ethnic minority groups living in the country: autochthonous minorities and “aliens” (allochthonous groups). Zoran Pavlović writes on the right of the autochthonous Italian minority to use Italian as a mother tongue in public communication, education and information. Sergej Flere and Tomaž Klenovšek explore the legal, social and political situation of ethnic non-Slovenians in Slovenia and in the city of Maribor. These case studies demonstrate that both the legal framework and practices of its implementation are oriented toward the creation and development of conditions in which minorities will be guaranteed equality and are allowed to freely articulate and express different features of their national identities.

Case studies from Macedonia reveal how sensitive and sometimes painfully complicated relations among ethnic groups in this country are. Mirjana Najcevska presents the project *Mosaic* which created a bilingual group composed of Macedonian and Albanian children in a Kumanovo kindergaten. This good practice is aimed at demonstrating the feasibility of overcoming an otherwise almost complete lack of communication between the two ethnic groups. Zhidas Daskalovski analyzes minority political participation and minority education in the ethnically highly diverse Skopje suburb of Chair. Martin Demirovski writes on the condition of Roma minority in Macedonia. His study emphasizes the joint activities between the NGO Roma Community Center in Kumanovo and the local government in building the necessary infrastructure in the Roma settlement of Sredorek.

These studies show that mutual distrust, prejudices and an extremely unstable international environment all exist in Macedonia as features that potentially can threaten both the harmony in interethnic relations and the very survival of the country. Still, Macedonia has succeeded to preserve peace and relative social and political stability. Minority-protecting legal rules and institutional arrangements are not reduced to mere formalistic ornaments. Their implementation by the national and local governments, political parties and various nongovernmental organizations is marked by genuine efforts to preserve the ethnic balance, protect minority rights and gradually change prevailing cultural attitudes in the direction of tolerance and mutual respect. As a result, one could claim that today both ethnocentric majoritarianism and minoritarian separatism are largely delegitimated as political options in Macedonian society.

At the end of the first section I have presented a summary of conditions in which the process of managing multiethnic communities in countries of the second group—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—has been taking place. Most often, the “standard” issues of democratic transformation of local governments are either still not on the agenda or their presentation is politically and ideologically distorted. Tendencies toward ethnic exclusivity on the part of majority nations and their elites, blended with a high degree of centralization of governmental powers, have drastically reduced the room for the institutionalization of a proper scope of local functions and autonomy. In this setting the issue of minority rights at the local level is confronted with very serious predicaments. The ethnocentric postcommunist creed has preserved and even

advanced the mental coordinates of the old party-state consciousness: minorities have reoccupied the role of one-time political dissidents. Still, there is one important difference: the communist dissidents used to dissent against the regime, sometimes to much sympathy from society. Minorities of today are pushed against their will into the peculiar position of dissenting against society at both national and local levels.

But this exposition also informs that people of different ethnic backgrounds still live together in localities. Contrary to ambitions and efforts of war engineers, “ethnic cleansing” was not completed in all multiethnic settlements. Different ethnic groups are maybe not living together, but they at least live next to each other. Since—largely thanks to different interventions of the international community—both the killing and expulsion of “others” are delegitimated, the plain fact of ethnic mixture demands some kind of management of interethnic relations, regardless of the preferences of majorities’ political elites. Rebuilding multiethnic local communities from scratch is often perceived by ruling elites as both an imposed and threatening demand, so that their policies can sometimes be characterized as a purposeful mismanagement of issues in this area, aimed to preserve and advance the pattern of majoritarian domination. Different instruments and techniques are used in this endeavor.

Inadequate national legislative regulation of minority rights is perhaps the most serious violation of democracy in this field, and it stretches from false claims that “all citizens are equal before the law” and that special rights for minorities would violate the fundamental democratic principle of equality to an even more dangerous invocation that the decreased percentage of minorities makes their claims for special protection superfluous. The other important aspect of this mismanagement consists in deprivation of local communities of the minimum necessary legal and political autonomy. This again appears in the form of pro-centralist legislation which tends to perceive local government as a “lengthened arm” of central government rather than as an autonomous unit with legally guaranteed functions. What follows first is the reduced scope of policy choices available to local governments. Second, policy choices are not only determined by the local governments’ legally reduced capacity for autonomous action but also by their predominantly ideological pattern imposed by the central government. Efficiency of the local government is the demand of the day, but it goes essentially for efficiency coordinates, goals and instruments of which are directly controlled by the central government. More often than not, in the explanatory core of policy choices in local communities we find the nationalist agenda, achievable only at the price of further worsening interethnic relations.

This is the set of patterns against which good practices presented in this volume are directed. For analytical purposes, we could again distinguish between two subtypes of cases within this group.

To the first subtype belong good practices in local communities which did not directly experience war (Rijeka, Novi Pazar, Subotica, Ulcinj). However, these communities are inhabited by members of national groups which, until recently, were at war with each other: Bosniaks and Serbs live in Novi Pazar, Croats and Serbs in Rijeka and Subotica.⁶ Safeta Biševac writes on the Bosniak-Serb relations in the troubled Serbian region of

⁶ It has to be noted that interethnic relations in Rijeka and Subotica are not reducible to Croat-Serb relations; as our case studies show, Rijeka and Subotica are ethnically highly heterogeneous communities, both populated by many national groups.

Sandzak, concentrating her attention on the good practice exemplified by efforts of political parties in the town of Novi Pazar to prevent spilling over of the war to the region, this despite extremely harsh nationalist policies of the Belgrade regime. Zoran Stanković presents the rich and colorful ethnic picture of the Croatian town of Rijeka; his study shows how ethnic groups and their organizations are struggling to preserve tradition of tolerance in a country whose policies are most often pre-informed by ethnic exclusivity. Tamas Korhecz explores policies directed at preservation of multiculturalism and equality of ethnic groups in the multiethnic Serbian town of Subotica, an enterprise which most often has to be undertaken in confrontation with nationalist-exclusionary policies of the central government. Korhecz specifically addresses good practices of preservation of ethnic equality in the fields of culture, media and employment. Jovan Nikolaidis writes on the relationship between Albanians and Montenegrins in the Montenegrin town of Ulcinj. This case study deals with the situation comparable to those in the above group. Despite the tradition of the tolerant life together between these two ethnic groups in Montenegro, their good relationship has recently been severely threatened by the hostile attitude toward Albanians, aggressively promoted by the Milosevic's regime, which reached its peak with the 1999 Kosovo war. Nikolaidis' text explains both traditions of peaceful coexistence and contemporary efforts to preserve harmony between these two ethnicities.

The good practices described in these case studies can be summarized as endeavors aimed at the defense of long-standing traditions of peaceful and harmonious life together in face of threats to it. People had to preserve the peaceful coexistence in conditions framed by war waged "on their behalf." Members of titular nations were *de facto* given the opportunity to stand up against their neighbors, upon the mere fact of the latter's belonging to "others," and to force them to exile. But both ethnic majorities and minorities resisted the temptation of taking warring sides. Therefore, the immense value of practices presented here consists in their revealing and upholding the capacity of people to disassociate themselves from the logic of hatred for the sake of defense of civilized life among differences.

To the second subtype belong local communities directly devastated by war. As a result of killing, destruction and other types of war trauma, these communities are marked by the seemingly unbridgeable distance between ethnic groups. Consequently, good practices in such communities consist primarily of efforts to overcome the condition in which hatred and distrust exist as "natural" feelings toward "others."

Since many people were forced to leave their homes and are still deprived of opportunity to return, and since hatred reigns at the national levels as well, different strategies of fighting the sinister past have to be applied. First, it is necessary to do away with principal instruments of the production of interethnic hostility. It is well known that the tragic ethnic war in former Yugoslavia was inspired, prepared and supported by words of hatred manufactured by corrupt media in service of chauvinistic elites. In his contribution on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tarik Jusić offers a detailed account on this phenomenon, as well as on a set of attempts, undertaken primarily by the international community, to dismantle media as artificers of war and to turn them into instruments of democratic reconstruction of the country. Although this case study does not deal explicitly with local communities, we decided to commission it because the subject it deals with is directly relevant for the possibility of the reestablishment of common life in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Secondly, local communities in war-torn areas cannot be reconstructed as democratic units unless new local political institutions are built in accordance with democratic rules. In addition, if reestablishment of the prewar ethnic picture is perceived as the necessary feature of the democratization process, it follows that besides traditional liberal democratic values, both institutional arrangements and political processes should reflect and affirm ethnic balance and equality as well. Starting from this premise, James Rogan explores the creation of local multiethnic governance in the postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina. The good practice he describes consists in the OSCE *Introduction Project*, designed and implemented to provide specific training for newly (1997) elected local representatives of different ethnic backgrounds, with the principal aim to make it possible for these representatives to bridge war-induced divisions and to work together in their municipalities.

Thirdly, the problem of the return of refugees to their prewar homes is in the heart of any attempt to establish democratic normalcy in war-torn areas. The case study written by Amy Mountcastle and Ljubomir Tot tells of the painfully deep gap that divides people who used to live in the same settlements and who were at one point pushed into war. This study presents two nongovernmental projects organized and implemented as attempts to bring members of the Serbian minority back to their homes in the heavily devastated Croatian towns of Pakrac and Osijek. This good practice clearly demonstrates that it is possible—even in the most difficult circumstances—to fight hatred and prejudices and to reestablish a minimum of tolerance by employing carefully prepared strategies of interpersonal and interethnic communication.

To this subgroup belongs also the case study on Mostar, prepared by the Civic Association for the Protection of Human Rights (ZGP). This text presents the tragic condition of a once prosperous town of Mostar, now devastated by war and divided along ethnic lines. While citizens still live in mutual distrust, the diverse efforts undertaken by ZGP demonstrate that it is both necessary and possible to improve the existing situation and to work in direction of improvement of social condition and reestablishment of the toleration among different ethnic groups.

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Finally, one of the most tragic consequences of the war and accompanying “ethnic cleansing” is the many thousands of violently displaced persons and refugees that are not, and probably will not be, able to return to their homes. As Árpád Baráth shows, in this difficult context the necessary framework of any good practice consists in securing a decent minimum living standard for these people in their social integration in a new environment, as well as in creation of sustainable good relationship with the “host local communities.” With such a framework in place, it is possible to successfully address problems that very often cut across individual lives, such are refugees’ traumatic war experiences or psychological and cultural difficulties in adapting to the new environment. Within this context, Baráth’s case study specifically tells of the complex multiethnic rehabilitation of children and youth, developed and implemented by the *Association for Development of Voluntary Work* in the Slovenian city of Novo Mesto.

In conclusion, it can be observed that positive thinking and action in this field demands a lot. It goes not only for good intentions and readiness to change the prevailing approach

to interethnic relations. The cases presented in this volume clearly demonstrate that those who want to enact and support good practices in multiethnic local communities in the postwar and the post-state-collapse environment have to envision and follow carefully balanced strategies. These strategies differ from one case to another, reflecting particular problems and particular characteristics of local communities. The LGI team hopes that this volume will provide nongovernmental organizations dealing with human and minority rights issues, as well as public officials, with a basic knowledge of the legal and political framework of minority issues in the former Yugoslavia, and with the area-specific information on possible efficient means of policy-making and innovative thinking in managing multiethnic communities in this region.