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**Higher Education in Post-Conflict Environments: Case Studies of Serbia,  
Macedonia and Kosovo  
[working paper\*]**

**Introduction: education and development**

The link between education and development is not a novel one. Specifically operationalized in developmental discourses in recent history, particularly those of international organizations, it nevertheless represents a constitutive part of the modern concept of education. This is not surprising: both the modern concept of education and the concept of development are children of the Enlightenment, firmly rooted in rationalist thinking and belief in the gradual progress of humankind. In this view, education is the primary method and instrument of development: by transmitting knowledge, skills, beliefs and values, education enables individuals to constructively contribute to their own and the welfare of their families, as well as to the wider groups such as societies and/or nations. Thus, the idea of education as vital instrument of individual development is almost inseparable from the idea of its relevance for *societal* development. In line with this, lacks of access to education and/or low education attainment are constructed as obstacles to both individual and societal development (Paulson and Rappleye 2007; Robertson et al. 2007; OECD 2007a; OECD 2007b; World Bank 2005).

The positive relationship between education and development of societies is even more pronounced in the cases when the societies in question have experienced a violent conflict in the recent past. Individuals in these societies often face issues related to perceived threats of violence and lack of security, fragility of institutions and the state, and the need to define and re-define relationships between groups (fractions) in the society, which is often closely tied to their relationship with the violent past and own role in the conflicts (cf. Robertson et al. 2007). These issues pose grave problems even when the society in question is not extremely poor (for instance, Northern Ireland – cf. Boyle and Hadden 1994), and are exacerbated by poverty, social inequalities and lack of access to resources. In these cases, education institutions have a difficult double burden: in addition to the struggle to provide access, safety and funding for their students, they – inevitably – become vital parts of the effort to maintain peace, rebuild, and further develop the society (Goddard and Anderson 2010).

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□ This paper is a result of reflection based on a number of past research project related to higher education in post-conflict environments. It was presented at the CHER (Consortium of higher education researchers) conference in Oslo, Norway, in June 2010. However, it is still very much a work in progress, so please contact the author should you wish to quote it.

The fact that this effort takes place within the aftermath of the conflict makes education central to at least two goals: one is to restart economic activity, in order to ensure sustainability; the other is to reconstruct the social relations between communities in a way that will ensure the conflict does not repeat (the two, of course, are closely related, having in mind that conflicts are more likely to occur in societies where at least a part of population is significantly deprived). In this sense, education has a dual task: one is to transmit knowledge and skills necessary for economic development; the other is to transmit values and behaviors that are conducive to peace and the reconciliation process, and – in the long term – lead to political stability and prosperity.

This paper will be mostly concerned with the second aspect. In this context, two broad paradigms can be discerned (cf. Nolan 2007). One is based on the belief in the power of reason and the ‘enlightening’ aspect of education. In essence, it assumes that if people are taught (and adopt) the same values, no conflict can ensue: in this view, ‘peacemaking is a “skill” to be learnt like woodwork or knitting (...) “Peace” is a matter of rational understanding, of rational control, of learning’ (Morrow, Wilson and Wright 1993). It relies on the assumptions about the ‘power of knowledge to dispel prejudice’ in an attempt to create a world of shared values (*ibid.*). This approach is very close to, although it should not be equated with, the integrationist policies in education. Although both presuppose the existence of multiple groups in society, with possible conflicting agendas, and see the development of shared values as a way of ensuring peaceful existence, the civic approach extends further than the integrationist in terms of not focusing on the mode of education (i.e., whether pupils/students from different groups will be educated jointly or separately), but rather on the importance of the establishment of a common culture – the system of values and beliefs – that can be shared between representatives of different groups and hence ensure a viable middle ground. The second paradigm is based on the premise that such middle ground is neither achievable nor desirable. Instead of seeking to create it through a common, shared set of values, it sees the solution to the multitude of groups and agendas in the recognition of the specific cultural values of each. In this view, education should not be about universal knowledge and values, but rather about those specific for each social group (*ibid.*). In post-conflict societies, it is often aligned with the political realization (or assertion) that different groups have conflicting political agendas and that hence no common values are achievable, which can give ground to consociational power sharing, such as, for instance, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Lebanon. This approach in education will further be referred to as *multicultural*. Again, it should not be confused with segregationism, which essentially claims that members of different groups should be educated separately. In this sense, multicultural approach is a much broader paradigm that entails a view on the purpose of education as well as its mode of delivery. The main difference between paradigms is that while the civic approach sees the role of education in post-conflict environments as creating a shared culture from which peace can be built, the multicultural approach sees education as building the peace from the respect and acknowledgement of different cultures. Similarly, these paradigms should not automatically be equated with liberal, communitarian or multicultural politics and policies (cf. Kymlicka 1995; Taylor 1994) although they are obviously informed by them.

These paradigms have for a long time primarily been used in research and policy relating to primary, secondary, and non-formal education. Of course, there are very good reasons to focus on these levels, especially in post-conflict environments: primary and secondary education are essential for a number of things – from basic literacy to women’s emancipation. Non-formal education, especially in the form of peace education, can play an extremely important role in the processes of reconciliation. However, the expansion and massification of higher education indicate that it should not be left outside of these discussions. Besides having obvious relevance for economic development, both national and regional, higher education institutions develop and transmit knowledge, skills and values that are important for social and political participation. Thus, no investigation of policies related to post-conflict reconstruction can be complete without taking into consideration the roles higher education institutions play in these societies. However, much of the previous literature, both in the academic and policy domain, has tended to either focus on the economic impact of higher education (e.g. World Bank 2005) or to remain satisfied with general remarks affirming the role of higher education in developing stable democracies (e.g. Trnavcevic 2010). Thus, the role of higher education in post-conflict societies remains quite obscure.

From a number of perspectives, though, this is quite understandable. For one thing, the social effects of higher education tend to be long-term and are thus difficult to both measure and isolate (cf. OECD 2007b). In post-conflict societies, policy cycles are often short, and research projects adapt to these time frames, dictated by the urgency of the situation and/or international donor policies, which means that the long-term effects of higher education on post-conflict societies are not very likely to become academic or policy focus. Secondly, although there is a high level of consensus among academic and policy communities about the relevance of higher education for social development, and the need for higher education institutions to contribute to their respective societies, so far the operationalization of this concept has been almost entirely missing. This means that there is no clear definition of what the contribution of higher education institutions to societies (and, accordingly, post-conflict societies) actually is. Thus, there is neither a grand theory nor sufficient instances of empirical evidence to substantiate it. In such cases, it might be useful to start from the ‘bottom’ (cf. Clark 1998:xv), in the sense of looking for cases that could provide some evidence as to the functioning of higher education in post-conflict environments.

### **Description and methodology**

This paper chooses to focus on higher education institutions in the post-conflict societies in the Western Balkans – in particular, Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo. Six universities were chosen as case studies, two in each of the areas. All of these institutions developed in the period between 2000 and 2010; two of them had existed before, but in the given period had undergone changes that, it will be argued, constitute significant breaks with the preceding period and thus profoundly influence institutions’ functions, roles and missions.

The methodology chosen in this paper can be located within the family of political science approaches commonly known as new institutionalisms (cf. Powell 2007). These approaches focus on the role of institutions in structuring social and political life, and the ways they respond to different influences from their environments (March and Olsen 1989). However, it does not follow any of the particular explanatory paradigms within this group, such as interpreting the development and design of particular institutions exclusively in terms of their histories (path dependency), actors' preferences (rational choice), or social/cultural forces. Rather, institutions are taken to be a complex interplay between these (and other) factors, all of which contribute to their design. The objective of the research is rather to look for explicit or inherent ideas and values concerning the role of higher education institution and its relationship to the society; in this sense, it emphasizes the role of ideas and discourses in shaping institutional setup, design and functions (cf. Schmidt 2008; Lieberman 2002; Douglas 1986). The paper looks at a number of characteristics of the given higher education institutions: political, historical and social contexts in which they were founded; their type and structure in terms of ownership and funding; their target groups, or communities they are perceived to cater to; and their public discourses, such as web sites, charters, statutes, mission statements and strategies.

These characteristics are analyzed within the frame of reference of two paradigms described above – the civic and the multicultural. Of course, this is not to argue that any or all of the institutions will neatly 'fit' into either the civic or the multicultural paradigm; as has been said, these paradigms are not reflections of any particular institutional setup, but rather of the governing ideas and concepts related to the roles education is supposed to play in post-conflict societies. Thus, the interpretative focus of this paper is more on ideas and discourses that structure higher education institutions' involvement in the society, and less on any tangible 'cause-and-effect' relationship in this context. In this vein, the paper will not argue that the civic or multicultural inclination of any institution represents an outcome of particular ideas and agendas of institutional actors. Rather, it aims to emphasize the complexity and interconnectedness of the process.

However, some limited conclusions will be drawn as to the implications of these paradigms for post-conflict development in the context of the Western Balkans. It will be argued that - depending on the paradigm and the context - higher education institutions will not necessarily contribute to post-conflict reconstruction, but can also reflect and, indeed, reproduce social divisions that figure among causes or consequences of the conflict (cf. Offe 2003). A reflection will be offered on how the institutions analyzed in this paper conceptualize those divisions, and what implications this can have for the processes of post-conflict reconciliation and development.

The data used in this paper were gathered from documents, articles and official presentations, as well as from conversations with various stakeholders, some of which were directly or indirectly involved in the processes that gave birth to the institutions analyzed here. Some of these data were gathered during the course of other research projects (Centre for Education Policy 2010; Bacevic 2010; Bacevic and Popovic 2009; Babin forthcoming). In this sense, they are necessarily imperfect; in addition, a lot of data

are inconsistent or missing, which, unfortunately, does not allow certain types of comparisons to be made<sup>1</sup>. However, the objective of this analysis is not to offer a complete overview of the roles and functions of higher education institutions in post-conflict environments, but rather an attempt at conceptualization of this research problem in the context of the Western Balkans, which, hopefully, would inspire similar efforts.

## Setting

The higher education institutions analyzed here were developed in the period after 2000 in the post-conflict environments of Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo. These societies are part of the post-Yugoslav space, which was profoundly marked by violent conflicts throughout the 1990s, which, in some cases, persisted until 2001. Although open conflicts in the region are considered to be a matter of history, the environments analyzed in this paper are by many analysts still seen as volatile, for a number of reasons. All of the environments are ethnically mixed – in some cases, minorities can present up to and over 95% percent of the total population, as for instance in Presevo and Kosovska Mitrovica. Interethnic tensions, poverty and unemployment are high, resulting in significant international presence in all of the areas. International organizations such as UN and OSCE, but also a number of smaller INGOs and NGOs are investing substantial efforts in the peace and reconciliation programs in these areas; these initiatives often include education.

Two of the analyzed universities are located in the town of Novi Pazar, the administrative center of the Sandzak region in the south of Serbia. Its ethnic composition is mixed, with around 75% Bosniaks, 20% Serbs and the rest Muslims, Roma and Montenegrins; the situation is further complicated by the significant influx of refugees and internally displaced persons from Bosnia and Kosovo. In the political sense, the region is split between allegiances to the more extreme Bosniak Muslim political leaders with strong connections to the Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina (headed by the mufti Zukorlic), and those who are considered to be more ‘middle ground’ – often also Bosniak Muslim or Turkish - but aligned with Serbia’s mainstream political parties (represented by Sulejman Ugljanin). This division is by no means implicit: in the past, it manifested in sporadic violence that even ended in deaths<sup>2</sup>; currently, it is representing a source of ongoing conflict in local governance and the media, which threatens to escalate further<sup>3</sup>.

The situation in the region is further complicated by the proximity of Kosovo, as well as the south Serbian municipalities of Preshevo and Bujanovac. The latter have been the site of 1999-2001 conflict known as the ‘Preshevo Valley insurgency’. This conflict, in turn, is closely connected (sometimes even conceptualized as having ‘spilt over’) with the uprising of the local Albanian population in the neighboring republic of Macedonia. The latter conflict ended in 2001 with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and Albanians, which make up for more than 25 % of its population, are today recognized as

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, not all education institutions have data on the ethnic or gender composition of their student or teacher body.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/main/analysis/5075>, and <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1101521.html>, accessed 01/12/2010.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/muamer-zukorlic-the-outcast>, accessed 01/12/2010.

a constitutive nation in Macedonia. However, this was only achieved with substantial brokerage from the international community, before which clashes between the Albanian population and Macedonian government were frequent. Although, again, the conflict is officially over, substantial political tension still remains.

Finally, the conflict in Kosovo – perhaps the best known of the three sites and one that certainly warranted most international attention – also revolved around the relationship between the Albanian and the majority (Serb) community, and the former’s relation to the state. Although the ‘Albanian question’ has been an issue in the province for a long time, the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a culmination of conflicts that resulted with the NATO bombing of Serbia (then Yugoslavia) in 1999 (Judah 2008). Following the war, the province was under international administration until the declaration of independence in 2008, which Serbia still disputes. Currently, Kosovo is on a slow road to recovery, although ethnic tensions are still high; there are frequent sporadic incidents, including those with fatal outcomes, especially in the north. There hasn’t been a census in Kosovo since 1980, which, together with high migration, makes even approximate population sizes very hard to ascertain, but the region is multiethnic with Albanians as the most numerous population. Most of the Serb population is situated in the north towards the (administrative) border between Kosovo and Serbia, around the town of Kosovska Mitrovica, and the rest in enclaves; the Bosniak and Turkish population is mostly concentrated around the town of Prizren, in the south; and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian populations are scattered across the area. Of the three societies analyzed here, Kosovo is by far the most volatile, with the highest ethnic divisions; this is not surprising, having in mind that the length and extent of the conflict, and human rights violations that preceded and/or followed, were by far the gravest among the analyzed regions.

This summary – briefly and necessarily imperfectly – describes the context. The ensuing text will look at the setup, design and implications of the institutions that were developed in this context in the preceding decade. In the given environment, of course, education initiatives were almost automatically viewed as a positive contribution towards post-conflict development; for these reasons, all six universities received (and are still receiving) substantial financial and, when needed, academic and technical support from the state(s), international organizations, or (frequently) both. Thus, one needs to bear in mind that - while their charters or mission statements do not necessarily say so – all of these institutions are, in a very fundamental sense, products of their post-conflict environments.

## **Case studies**

### **1. Sandzak**

#### **1.1. The International University of Novi Pazar**

The International University of Novi Pazar (IUNP) was founded in 2002 as a religious endowment of the Islamic community in Serbia (*vakuf*). Its founding was supported, if not even in part initiated, by the then-Government led by Zoran Djindjic, one of the main

opposition leaders during the time of Milosevic and a firm supporter of European integration. As the prime minister of the first democratically elected government after the fall of Milosevic, Djindjic was more than inclined to manifest a decisive change of political course from the legacy of his predecessors: this included economic liberalization, rule of law (in particular the prosecution of war criminals), and increased recognition of the rights of minorities, especially within the context of processes of decentralization and development of local governance. In the domain of education, the policies included the introduction of confessionally defined religious education to elementary and secondary schools (cf. Bacevic 2005), and support to the International University of Novi Pazar.

Although it was established as a private education institution, then-Minister of Education said at the opening ceremony: "...a legal formula is being sought to support the [International] University of Novi Pazar financially (...). We will treat any region that shows a similar degree of incentive and initiative in such a noble endeavor in an absolutely identical way...also, Novi Pazar was first to come up with this idea"<sup>4</sup>.

As a matter of fact, the International University of Novi Pazar remains privately funded, and it would have been the first and only private higher education institution in Serbia to receive substantial funding from the state. But, as can be seen, during the first years of its existence (coinciding with the mandate of Djindjic's government) it received significant political support from a number of government officials, who paid visits, commended the university and particularly underlined its importance for local and regional economic development.

The focus of the university was, from the beginning, squarely on the Bosniak Muslim community of Sandzak. This was not strongly reflected in the language of instruction – Serbian and Bosnian are very similar, the language and literature department was called the Department for Bosnian/Serbian language – nor in the curriculum, although the University has "strong ties" with the Faculty of Islamic Studies. However, it was made clear in the discourse of the institution's leaders: in the opening address, the then-President mufti Zukorlic begins by quoting a passage from Qur'an, relating to the importance of knowledge in Muslim religious practice. Although IUNP – just like all other higher education institutions in Serbia - is officially secular, the ownership and management of all of its property belongs to the founder, which is the Islamic community in Serbia. The representatives of the founder make 20% of the highest managing structure.

The speeches featured in the *About us* section at IUNP's website are indicative in the sense of understanding the conceptualization of the role of higher education in the context of the position of the Muslim community in Sandzak.

"Indeed, the birth of an University is a big historical event, for Sandzak Bosniaks perhaps the most important since they had been faced with the insecurity of survival. Bosniaks

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.uninp.edu.rs/ouniverzitetu/poznationama/poznationama.php>, accessed 30/05/2010, own translation.

can only go freely ahead, towards modern and European values, if they invest in scholarship (...) This University should contribute to that end. I leave to the people of Sandzak a legacy to help this University and the honourable intention of those who founded it. It shall not be easy for, as soon as it is noticed that this is becoming a center, adversaries will appear who will claim monopoly on everything good done for the Muslims, as well as those who will consider this sort of thing dangerous for themselves, their interests and the state. But rest assured. Good things have immanent power, for if it were different, shaytaan would have won, and evil would be ruling the world". (Muhamed Filipovic, 2003)<sup>5</sup>.

The focus of the university on one community in particular seems to go hand-in-hand with the perception of the "endangerment" of that community. Mr. Filipovic talks about the "insecurity of survival"; the President, in the opening statement, says:

"There are many dark clouds over these and other lands, so it will take a lot of time to chase them away. But, we are certain that, with the help of God, we will succeed to chase them away, be they in the form of drugs, crime, corruption or some other form of immorality. We are completely aware that God gave us a lifetime in this crossing. This Sandzak crossing is in hard times a hard area where it's not easy to exist and survive. But, at the same time, it is the place of encounter of cultures, civilizations and religions"<sup>6</sup>.

This type of discourse lends arguments for the assertion that, on the civic-multicultural scale, the International University of Novi Pazar has a predominantly multicultural approach. However, the fact that it is clearly focused on one community (or group) calls for a slight amendment of this classification. Its role and function, despite being grounded in regional development, are clearly oriented primarily towards the Bosniak Muslim population of the region. This is not only reflected in its ownership and funding structure, but also in the discourse that addresses primarily one religious tradition – Muslim and one ethnicity – Bosniak. Hence, IUNP could actually be classified as a *monocultural* institution – one whose mission is motivated primarily by the needs to develop and preserve the identity of one particular population.

Of course, within the regional political context this approach is understandable. Bosniak Muslims are a minority in Serbia, and, after the initial state support (even if only rhetorical), their community was left to take care of higher education itself. Coupled with the perceived 'threat' of extinction (not uncommon among minorities) and fear of assimilation, developing higher education in a way that affirms and maintains particular religious and ethnic identity might seem as a logical solution. However, understanding the role of higher education in regional development in Sandzak would not be complete without analyzing the case of the second university in this area – the State University of Novi Pazar, established in 2006.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.uninp.edu.rs/ouniverzitetu/poznationama/poznationama.php>, accessed 30/05/2010, own translation.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.uninp.edu.rs/ouniverzitetu/rijecpredsjednika.php>, accessed 30/05/2010, own translation.



## 1.2. State University of Novi Pazar

The political circumstances that enabled the founding of the State University of Novi Pazar in 2004 were rather complex. Namely, the International University of Novi Pazar already existed. The time of elections came, and the coalition that got the most votes needed support from a representative of a minority party in order to secure parliamentary majority. One of the representatives of the more ‘moderate’ political stream in Sandzak offered his support – in exchange for university funded by the state in Novi Pazar. Thus, the State University of Novi Pazar came into existence.

The institutional design and structures of SUNP reflect in many instances the fact that it is embedded within the framework of the Republic of Serbia. Its funding comes almost entirely from the state budget. Similarly to other universities, representatives of the founder constitute approximately 20% of the Senate. Interestingly enough, although there are currently four or five<sup>7</sup> other state-founded universities in Serbia, Novi Pazar is the only to feature ‘State’ in its name: other universities feature only the name of the cities where they are based (e.g. University of Belgrade, University of Novi Sad...). Its strategy of cooperation is slightly ‘slanted’ towards other state institutions: it has signed Memoranda of Cooperation with other state universities, and names “close cooperation with all universities and higher education institutions in the country and abroad, *in particular with state Universities*” a priority. Other authors also find strong identification with the state, other public universities, and pride relating to the fact of being a public university (*cf.* Babin forthcoming).

Although teaching and curriculum are (again) in the Serbian language, and the Department of Language and Literature is for Serbian/Bosnian, there is a slight preponderance of Cyrillic script in official communication (documents, web site, presentation and information boards). Until 2006 both Cyrillic and Latin scripts were official in the Republic of Serbia, but Article 10 in the 2006 Constitution established only the Cyrillic script, used mostly by the Serbian population, as the official one. In contrast, the International University of Novi Pazar uses mostly Latin script, which is also the official script of the Bosnian language.

What might appear as the civic orientation of the SUNP can be considered a consequence of the nature of its founding. As noted, it is a university that derives its identity primarily from its cooperation with the state. However, its identity is equally – if not even more – derived from its opposition to the International University of Novi Pazar. As mild as this opposition between the ‘integration’ of SUNP and the ‘independence’ of IUNP might seem in the legal framework, in everyday life the two institutions are marked by a sharp rivalry. Representatives of one institution use every opportunity to blacken the name and denounce the educational quality of the other, and there are cases of degrees from one institution not being recognized by the other – indeed, horizontal mobility between the two is literally non-existing. Of course, to some extent this rivalry could be explained by

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<sup>7</sup> Depending on whether one includes the University in Kosovska Mitrovica, as a Serbian public university but in the territory of Kosovo.

the competition for prospective students. However, it is also clear that, at least to some extent, it represents a reflection of the existing political divisions.

The State University of Novi Pazar is the one that identifies with the state and the integrative approach to education. In this sense, it could fit the ‘civic’ paradigm. Contrasted to this is the International University of Novi Pazar that emphasizes a particular (Bosniak Muslim) cultural identity, and hence could fit the multicultural, if not even a ‘monocultural’ paradigm. The fact that these approaches correspond neatly to the political divisions in Sandzak – between the, conditionally speaking, ‘moderates’ who believe in integration within the state and participate in governmental decision-making, and ‘radicals’ who still fight for the rights of a particular community, hint that this sort of ‘rivalry’ is in part maintained by the central government in Belgrade for fear of the uniting of these two options and the development of strong political voice of Bosniak Muslims in the region. This lends an even more problematic perspective to the whole issue. But, even outside that discussion, rivalry and tension between two higher education institutions in such a small area seem worrying. Regardless of their respective missions, it is quite certain that the perpetuation of animosities between universities is not a good way forward for the building of peace and political stability in the society.

## **2. Macedonia**

### **2.1. Tetovo (State) University**

Tetovo University was established in 1994 by members of the Albanian community in Macedonia. Since the republic seceded from Yugoslavia in 1991, Albanians have put forward the lack of possibilities for higher education in their native language, which they previously could attain at the University in Prishtina in Kosovo (Czaplinski 2006; Daftary 2001). The question of higher education in the native language was, however, posited within the wider framework of problems of the Albanian minority in Macedonia: poverty, high unemployment and relative under-representation in government institutions, as well as perceived discrimination and lack of communication between the Albanian and Macedonian communities were all parts of the problem. The Albanian community, confident that the solution cannot be found at state level, set up a higher education institution in Tetovo, a town with a high proportion of Albanian population. Somewhat expectedly, the initiative was perceived negatively among Macedonian authorities, who deemed it ‘unconstitutional’ and refused to recognize the institution and its degrees. The university officially had 13 faculties, but most analysts claim it was in fact a form of ‘open’ university in which many units exist only ‘on paper’, and teaching practices, quality and academic freedoms were at best erratic (*ibid.*). Needless to say, during this period the University catered almost exclusively to the Albanian population, and its mission was conceptualized in terms of needs of the Albanian community in Macedonia.

After the end of the conflict in 2001 and the Ohrid Framework Agreement the situation changed somewhat. The Agreement provided for a changed constitutional status of the Albanian minority, as well as for an increase in rights to use of own language in official contexts for all groups that represent more than 20% of respective populations at the local

level. The South-East European University (SEEU), whose case we will examine next, was already being established, but it didn't solve the problem of the Tetovo University. The final agreement was reached a couple a years later: it was decided that the Macedonian government will establish a public (state) university in Tetovo and also undertake its funding – thus basically legalizing the Tetovo University. In order to enable this, Macedonian Constitution and Law on Higher Education were amended in terms of provision of higher education in minority languages (see CEP 2010), and a separate Law on the Establishment of a State University in Tetovo was brought in 2004. Tetovo State University (TSU), as it was called, basically included most of the faculties and students from the previous establishment, but integration into the state also meant more space for Macedonian students and teaching in Macedonian language. However, this proportion was never significant, as TSU was – and still is, to some extent – perceived as an 'Albanian university'. Although this is not prominent in official communication, the dominant discourse in TSU is still focused primarily on the educational needs of the Albanian population. In this sense, TSU can be viewed as a form of 'multicultural' university, since it is included in the Macedonian public higher education system, it – at least officially – caters to both major ethnic groups (Albanians and Macedonians), and has teaching in both languages. However, this model is to a high extent a reflection of the shift in the status of the Albanian minority in Macedonia following the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The current position of the Albanian community is quite similar to a consociational power-sharing model, in which politics is defined by a balance of powers between the major communities. In this context, Tetovo State University – as part of the Macedonian public policy - reflects this, sometimes uneasy, balance of powers. At least within the current political layout, chances that this model will be replaced with a more integrative approach that could be identified with the 'civic' paradigm are very slim.

## **2.2. South East European University**

Another higher education institution was developed in Tetovo as a solution to the needs of the Albanian population for higher education in the mother tongue: the South East European University (SEEU). Founded in 2001 it has, however, quite a different story from the Tetovo (State) University. The concept of SEEU was developed by the international community, most notably the OSCE then-High Commissioner for National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, and received initial support from both Macedonian and Albanian political actors. Paradoxically enough, the breakout of the conflict in 2001 gave the necessary momentum to fundraising and SEEU was established as a private higher education institution in 2001.

The fact it had actually been developed as an external and not a local initiative determined in a significant proportion the form and function of SEEU. Both the fact that it was an international endeavor and the fact it featured education in other languages destined its legal status as a private institution of higher education. In this sense, its funding came almost entirely from donations and, later on, from tuition fees (Farrington and Abazi 2009:14). Its management structure and decision-making mechanisms, as well as those of quality assurance, were made after examples of Western European universities. The decision-making bodies featured representatives of both Macedonian

and Albanian communities, but even more importantly, members of the international community who could in this sense play an ‘intermediary’ role. Although there is no doubt that the initial motive of its founding was to satisfy the needs of the Albanian population for education in the mother tongue, probably recognizing the segregationist potential of such a particular approach to education, this was remodeled as to include all (or most of) the communities. Hence, teaching was officially established in Macedonian, Albanian and English, but with a ‘flexible’ approach whose goal was to encourage students to take courses in all three languages and prevent the forming of two separate language ‘streams’, Macedonian and Albanian. Besides classes in English, joint social activities were developed as means of integration, or instruments for bridging the social divide between Macedonian and Albanian students.

The discourse of South East European University reflects this approach. For instance, Article 2 of its Statute states that:

“The SEE University (‘the University’) will

- i. pursue excellence in teaching and research;
- ii. be open to all on the basis of equity and merit regardless of ethnicity;
- iii. actively seek co-operation with other universities, both in the Republic of Macedonia and in South East Europe as a whole

and will have as its main aims:

- i. to contribute to higher education in the Albanian language;
- ii. to promote inter-ethnic understanding;
- iii. to ensure a multilingual and multicultural approach to teaching and research; and
- iv. to develop its teaching programme in a broad international and European perspective”<sup>8</sup>.

The Rector, in the university’s *Mission* section, echoes this in saying that

“Its mission from its conception has been to pursue excellence in teaching and research, to be open to all on the basis of equity and merit regardless of ethnicity and to actively seek co-operation with other universities, both in the Republic of Macedonia and in South East Europe as a whole. The founders of the University adopted its main aims, incorporated in its Statute, as being to contribute to the solution of the problem of Albanian language higher education, to promote inter-ethnic understanding, to ensure a multilingual and multicultural approach to teaching and research and to develop its teaching programme in a broad international and European perspective”.

Here we can observe a preponderance of integrationist, civic discourse or approach to the role and mission of higher education. Although “higher education in Albanian language” is cited as a problem that SEEU set out to solve, “openness to all (...) regardless of ethnicity”, “promotion of inter-ethnic understanding”, “ensuring a multilingual and multicultural approach to teaching and research” are used to affirm the role of university as providing higher education for all, and not just for students of one ethnicity or group,

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.seeu.edu.mk/en/the-university/presentation/brochure>, accessed 30/05/2010.

and as providing the sort of higher education whose aim is to bridge the divides, not deepen them.

Of course, to which extent the institution is succeeding in this mission is always a question. Although EUA (2005) and OECD (2004) have commended SEEU for both academic quality and integrative success, and it is often portrayed in international discourse as a 'model solution' for the issue of higher education in minority languages, Farrington and Abazi (2009) note this is a constant challenge for the institution. There have been indications of a tendency to separate into dual language streams, as well as issues concerning integration into the Macedonian labor market. However, these might change since the Macedonian state is beginning to give more substantial support to SEEU, which has the status of 'public-private' institution since 2008. Outcomes of these policies are still to be seen, but the institution could have potential to transform to a fully integrated, civic model.

### **3. Kosovo**

Situation with universities in Kosovo is particularly complicated. Currently, three public universities are operating in the territory of Kosovo – the University in Kosovska Mitrovica, the University of Prishtina and the University of Prizren, opened in academic year 2010/2011. The history, as well as form and function of the two older public universities reflect to a high extent the background of the conflict in Kosovo. During the 1990s, as relationship between Serbs and Albanians deteriorated, after a brief total ban of teaching in Albanian at the University of Prishtina, the two language streams continued being educated separately, with higher education in Albanian becoming a form of 'shadow', parallel system. The situation overturned after the NATO bombing in 1999, following which the Serbian staff and students of the University of Prishtina left the city, temporarily residing in the Serbian town of Krusevac, and by the decree of the Government of Serbia settling in Kosovska Mitrovica in 2001 and assuming the name 'University of Prishtina temporarily located in Kosovska Mitrovica'(see Bache and Taylor 2003; Pichl and Leutloff 1999; Tahirsylaj 2004). In this sense, the history of the University starts again in 2001, after the conflict, and for that reason it is used in this analysis. Its example will be contrasted with the university in Prizren, the youngest public university in the territory of Kosovo.

#### **3.1. University in Kosovska Mitrovica**

Kosovo was under UN interim administration from 1999 until it proclaimed independence in 2008 (the unilateral declaration is still not recognized and strongly disputed by Serbia, ever after the ruling of the International Court of Justice stipulating that the declaration had not violated international law). The peculiarity of the University in Kosovska Mitrovica is that, to this day, it remains in the Serbian higher education system. As a public university, it is funded from the state budget; however, it also uses sources that are under the auspices of the Republic of Kosovo, such as water, heating, electricity etc. There are relatively strong indications that the management and teaching staff of UKM receive higher salaries than those in other public universities in Serbia,

presumably as incentives to remain in Kosovo. Teaching is carried out in Serbian language only, and staff and students are predominantly Serbian (Bacevic and Popovic 2009).

It comes as no surprise that the discourse of the institution frequently features issues of national identity and its perseverance. It is often portrayed as jeopardized, as in the Rector's address on the web site: "Even in these hard times, the University of Prishtina located in Kosovska Mitrovica shares the destiny of its people in Kosovo and Metochia<sup>9</sup>, and strives to participate in the solution of difficult and fateful questions pertaining to the survival and future of the Serbian people in this territory"<sup>10</sup>.

This role of the University as 'defender' of national identity is further promoted by Serbian government officials. For instance, in a relatively recent visit to Kosovska Mitrovica, the Minister of Education said:

"The strongest weapon of every country is education, and you are academic citizens, members of University of Prishtina, you are the ones who will teach others and, together with us, defend Serbia and Kosovo and Metochia"<sup>11</sup>.

This rhetoric is, again, supplemented by the mentioning of hardships:

"I know this is not simple, it is very difficult to live here, and we are trying to make life easier, and you should know you are not alone because this is a long and difficult struggle in which only those determined and confident in their goals can succeed, and I am certain that all of us in the Republic of Serbia have the same mission".

In this context, we can see a similar approach as the one in the International University of Novi Pazar – the accent is on the protection and defense of needs of a particular community, perceived as 'endangered'. Although this perception is somewhat less prominent in the case of Bosniak Muslims in Sandzak, it is exacerbated in the case of Serbs in North Kosovo because of the persistence of unresolved issues concerning the status of the province, as well as lower levels of security and higher levels of unemployment/poverty. Of course, since University in Kosovska Mitrovica is a state (public) university, it is also to an extent influenced by the Republic of Serbia's rhetorical portrayal of North Kosovo as a sort of 'line of defense' of Serbhood, which in turn fuels nationalism within the university. This defines it primarily as a monocultural institution; furthermore, it is disputable whether the University in Kosovska Mitrovica represents primarily communal interests of Serbs in Kosovo, or interests of the Serbian political elite.

### **3.2. University of Prizren**

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<sup>9</sup> The official name of the province in Serbian is Kosovo and Metochia.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.pr.ac.rs/index.php/sr/home/o-univerzitetu/rec-rektora>, accessed 30/05/2010, own translation.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.pr.ac.rs/index.php/sr/home/info/vesti/445-ministar-prosvete-posetio-univerzitet>, accessed 30/05/2010, own translation.

The University of Prizren is the last institution to be analyzed, because it is the newest. It has been created by the decree of the Government of Kosovo in October 2009, and opened in academic year 2010/11.

Prizren, located in the south end of Kosovo, is a multiethnic community, with particularly high proportion of Bosniak, Turkish and Gorani populations. Department of the Teachers College of the University of Prishtina located in Prizren is one of the rare public higher education institutions within the auspices of the Kosovar education system that features instruction in a language other than Albanian – namely, Bosniak and Turkish. To this end, it was presumable that the new public university in Prizren would include this function of catering to the needs of minority communities. In fact, one of the first steps in the planning of the future institution comprised signing an agreement between the Rector of the University of Prishtina and the Rector of the University of Sarajevo, thus clearly establishing links with Bosnia and Herzegovina; it was said the project “will enable local minorities in Prizren, be they Turks, or Bosniaks and Albanians to study together”<sup>12</sup>. The Rector of University of Prishtina said on the occasion that the institution he leads “believes in cultural and linguistic diversity”. It seems that foundations were laid for an institution that could recognize particular identities, but still cater to all. However, the call for applications for the University of Prizren has only been made available in Albanian; its current website features text and documents in Albanian only (the links to English language pages are not working). Although the institution the Department of German language and literature, there is no department of either Bosniak or Turkish. It is not clear whether the new institution will in time come to include the Department of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Prizren that catered to Bosnian, Turkish and Gorani students so far, and how will the teaching be organized. A German legal scholar was appointed as rector of the university in August, which gives grounds for assumptions that the management and administration of this university may attempt to resemble the model of the South-East European University in Tetovo. However, it is still too early to make such predictions. The University of Prizren may develop in any of the directions within the civic-multicultural framework. The actual approach will most likely depend on the status of particular communities within Kosovo, and the government’s relation to them.

## **V Analysis**

The analysis of some of the higher education institutions that were developed in the past decade in the post-conflict environments of Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo shows that these institutions are often developed with the goal of solving strikingly similar problems: unemployment, poverty, lack of security, lack of relationships between communities, and inequalities in access to education, work and healthcare. The environments they exist in are also strikingly similar – multiethnic areas that are not only marked by a history of recent conflict but also by ongoing tensions, as well as poverty and inequalities. However, the understanding of the role or mission of higher education in this context varies somewhat, and correspondingly, so do forms and functions of higher education institutions. The table below offers a comparative overview of the characteristics of higher education institutions analyzed in this text:

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/main/news/19354/>, accessed 30/05/2010.

**Table 1: Comparative Overview**

Region	Sandzak (Serbia)		Macedonia		Kosovo	
<b>Institution</b>	International University of Novi Pazar	State University of Novi Pazar	Tetovo State University	South East European University	University in Kosovska Mitrovica	University of Prizren
<b>Ownership</b>	Private	Public	Private (1994-2004)	Private (2001-2008)	Public (Republic of Serbia)	Public
			Public (2004-present)	Public-private partnership (2008-present)		
<b>Funding</b>	Private	Public	Private to 2004; mostly public since	Private (international donors); since 2008 partially public	Public (Republic of Serbia)	Public (partially donor)
<b>Target group</b>	Not specified, but in practice Bosniak Muslims	Mixed (Bosniaks, Turks, Serbs)	Primarily Albanians, although after 2004 Macedonians as well, but small numbers.	Initially Albanians, but now almost 25% Macedonians.	Serbs from North Kosovo	Mixed (Bosniaks, Turks, Gorani, Albanians)
<b>Language</b>	Bosnian/Serbian	Serbian/Bosnian	Albanian/Macedonian	Albanian/Macedonian/English	Serbian	Albanian
<b>Paradigm</b>	Multicultural (monocultural)	Civic	Initially monocultural, later multicultural	Transformation from elements of monoculturalism (HE in Albanian) to multicultural (HE in Alb, Mac, English); in case language streams continue to divide might transform into multicultural, but public-private partnership might reinforce the civic approach	Monocultural	?

This overview shows that the institutional setup can take different forms: from private institutions under more or less direct control of the leadership of a particular ethnic or religious minority (as is the case with the International University of Novi Pazar and was the case with the University of Tetovo until 2004), to public institutions that nevertheless cater primarily to a specific ethnic group or groups (as is the case with the University in Kosovska Mitrovica and the University of Prizren); and from private institutions whose aim is to aid the integration of all *ethnic groups* (such is the case with South East European University in Tetovo), to public universities whose aim could be described as the integration of *citizens* into a society (in this case, State University of Novi Pazar). Of course, many other solutions and variations on this theme are possible.

However, it seems to be less the concept of the role that higher education can play in post-conflict reconciliation, and more the political situation in the region and the respective countries in question that define the forms and functions of higher education institutions. Sometimes, they are reflected in legal provisions, such was the previous Law on Higher Education in Macedonia that did not necessarily provide for public higher education institutions in minority languages. In this case, the transformation of Tetovo University into Tetovo State University, as well as the transformation of SEEU into public-private partnership, required substantial revision of the structural power balance between the two ethnic groups – Macedonians and Albanians – that, in turn, allowed for the increase of rights of minorities to higher education in native language. In the case of Serbia, the difference in type and orientation of the two Novi Pazar universities is most likely less the product of ideological or philosophical differences, and more of the rift



between the two local political powers. Finally, the cases in Kosovo differ most radically from each other, exactly because the political context is still the most radically divided in the region.

In the same vein, it becomes obvious that there are no ‘natural’ links – such as that between public higher education and the civic approach. In cases when the state opted for a resolution of the conflict that comprises a form of ‘power-sharing’ model between communities, such as in Macedonia, higher education institutions were likely to reflect such a balance of powers in a ‘multicultural’ setup that most likely comprised culture- and language-specific streams. Of course, there is no ‘ideal’ solution: the civic model is not necessarily better than the multicultural, or vice versa. However, the fact that multi- or even mono-cultural models are dominant in the analyzed cases shows a strong tendency, if not towards the ‘petrification’ of the concept of identities and identity politics accordingly, then at least towards perceiving them as fixed, discrete and constant.

## **Conclusions**

What are the implications of these tendencies? Of course, there is no single role or function that higher educations should perform in any given society (cf. Castells 1996); the same goes for post-conflict societies. Similarly, there is no single or confirmed road to post-conflict recovery and prosperity. In this sense, this paper does not attempt to ‘match’ the models of universities established here with their potential to contribute to the post-conflict development of their respective societies, let alone attempt to predict how this process may look in the future. Rather, it will offer a few limited conclusions on the roles higher education institutions have performed so far.

Case studies analyzed here have demonstrated that higher education institutions in post-conflict environments can indeed choose a variety of approaches: from strong ‘civic’ institutions relatively insensitive to differences, to ‘multicultural’ models that aim to integrate different communities – although often in *de facto* segregated arrangements, to ‘monocultural’ institutions that cater primary to one community and perceive others as enemies or threats. The chief factor determining the orientation of the institution seems not to lie in their traditions or heritage (given that most of them have none), or necessarily in the preferences of their staff or students. Rather, the design and discourses of these institutions seem to closely resemble the balance of political powers in their societies.

Of course, it is not the ambition of this paper to draw conclusions on whether or not this sort of design of higher education institutions will aid post-conflict reconstruction and recovery, and how. However, some aspects warrant mentioning. Historically, universities have had a number of different functions, which arguably included the reproduction of social inequalities, the socialization of elites and the creation of a cultural basis for the nation-state (cf. Neave 2000). At the same time, however, universities can also exercise great emancipatory potential. Higher education can influence primordial identities by creating higher-level loyalties; as many authors have argued, it can play an indispensable role in transmitting skills and values relevant for democracy and civic participation in

today's multicultural societies (cf. Nussbaum 2010; Palfreyman 2006). These skills are all the more important in post-conflict environments, where the issues of diversity are confounded with problems related to the history of conflict, ethnic divisions, lack of trust etc. It appears obvious that universities have a great potential to play a positive role in this context: they could become sites of different academic and civil society initiatives that would aim to establish links between communities that were previously in conflict; they could foster interregional and international exchanges that would aim to increase the quality and scope of higher education provision; they could form partnerships with local businesses and thus stimulate economy and employment; they could provide analytical and technical expertise in different projects related to post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation and trust-building processes; finally, they could create a 'neutral' territory where past conflicts could, perhaps, be discussed and analyzed. Sadly enough, the universities in question seem not to be doing any of those things. With the possible exception of South East European University, in which it represents more of a function of the circumstances at the time of institutional creation than of a strategic plan or set of activities, universities in the region seem largely to pretend that the past (and existing) conflicts either did not happen, or, alternatively, use them as symbols for the justification of their own political positions and exclusionary policies. In this sense, instead of representing a progressive force that might contribute to the transformation of the post-conflict societies, these higher education institutions in many cases end up reproducing the social divides that were the causes and/or consequences of the conflict. Higher education should be able to do much more, and better.

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