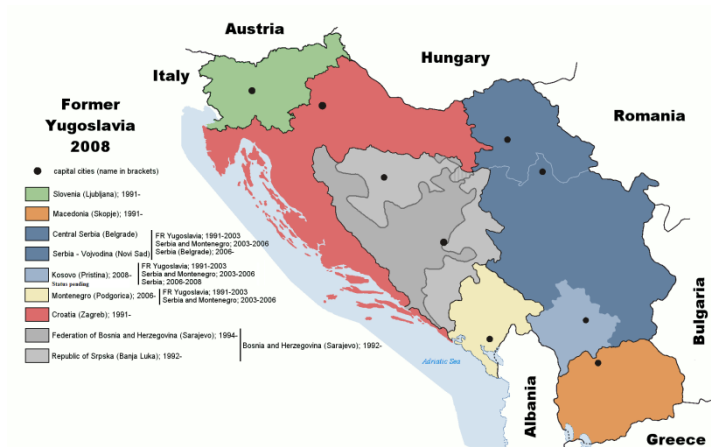# DECENTRALISATION AND PEACE BUILDING IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

A quick-scan assessment of four examples of decentralisation in one bigger conflict region: the former Yugoslavia

"True decentralisation has to touch the lowest level, each citizen. I don't believe in decentralisation without democratic principles. Citizens have to have possibilities for participation. As people we have the basic problem that we are centralised in our minds."
(Sonja Licht)

**Dion van den Berg, Tanja Skrbic, Bert van der Linde**

IKV Pax Christi - interim report for the PSD Conference, Utrecht, April 5, 2012

1. <u>Introduction</u>

The disintegration of Yugoslavia started in 1991, with the declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia. Bloody and devastating wars would follow in Croatia (1991-1995), in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995) and Kosovo (1999). Ethnic conflict rose in Macedonia and in 2001 there was a serious risk of escalation[1].

Models and elements of decentralisation have been developed in the former Yugoslavia (now often referred to as the Western Balkans), in various countries and regions, in most cases as part of post-conflict strategies. The Ohrid Agreement for Macedonia is the exception to the rule; this decentralisation effort can better be seen as part of an international mitigation effort and conflict escalation prevention strategy.

A previous version of this paper has been written as input in the work of the Working Group Local Government and Peace Building of the Network for Peace, Security and Development (PSD), notably for an expert meeting in Utrecht, the Netherlands (September 2011) and the seminars held in Bujumbura, Burundi (October 2011) and Juba, South Sudan (November 2011). Additional interviews have been held by the end of 2011. See the annex for their names and functions. A final version of this paper will be published in the course of May 2012. The draft paper was written by Mr. Dion van den Berg. Interviews were coordinated and held by Mrs. Tanja Skrbic. Mr. Bert van der Linde participated in the final editing of the paper.

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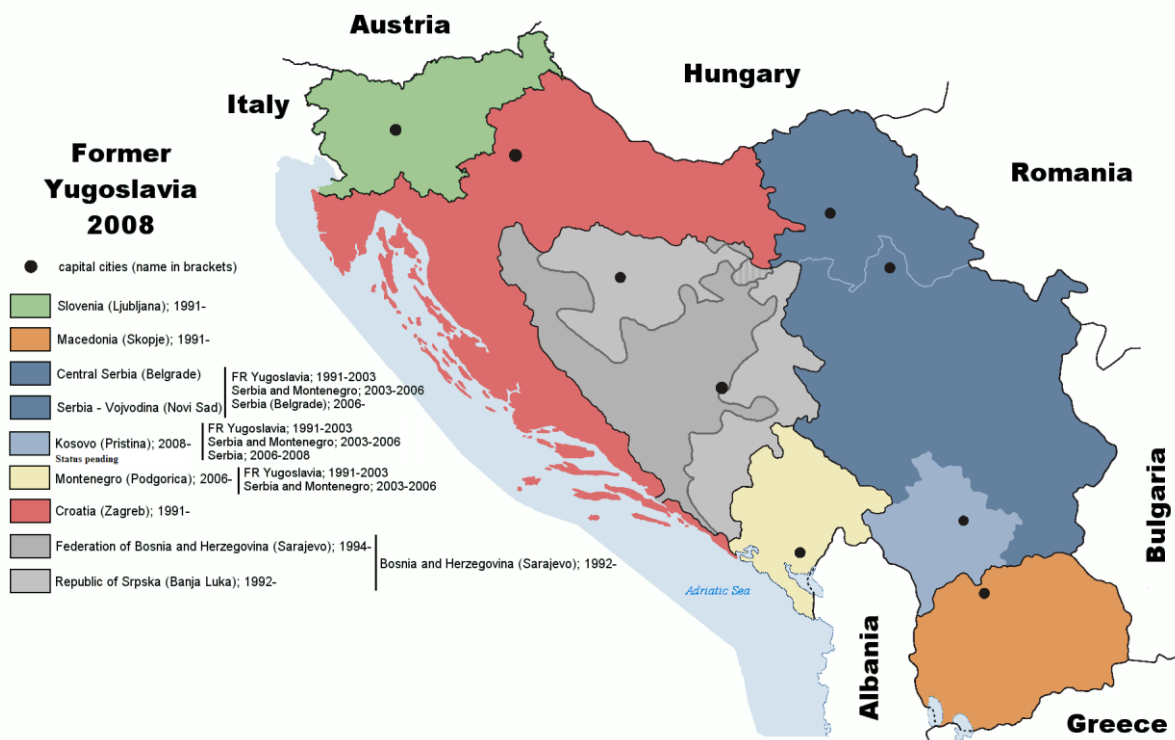
[1] Luckily, there was no explosion of violence as in parts of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but still approximately 100 people were killed in that year.

2. Croatia (Eastern Slavonia)

Parallel to the Dayton Peace Accords, the international community convinced Croatia and Serbia to reach an agreement on the so-called 'peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia into Croatia'. This part of Croatia had been under control of the Serbs since Summer 1991. All Croats and almost all non-Serb citizens (Hungarians, Ruthenians, Slovaks and others) had fled. The agreement was signed in Erdut (November 12, 1995), and therefore it is known as the "Erdut Agreement". It formed the basis for a strong UN presence: UNTAES: the United Nations Transitional Authority for Eastern Slavonia and Western Sirmium. The UN was active in Croatia since 1991, but the UNTAES mandate was a lot stronger than the mandates of the previous UN missions (UNPROFOR (UN Protection Forces), Feb. 1992 – March 1995; UNCRO (UN Confidence Restoring in Croatia), March 1995 – Jan. 1996).

"Inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation in East Slavonia was a success thanks to the contribution of the international community. That process became sustainable which was very important in the process of decentralisation. The success of UNTAES is visible in the way the Serbian community was included in the work of local authorities, police and public services. After five years of war the people received peaceful reintegration with open arms."[2]

The decentralisation program, developed in Eastern Croatia under UNTAES rule (1996-1998), implied the establishment of a number of so-called 'majority municipalities' for the Serbian communities.

UNTAES facilitated the start of the so-called Joint Council of Municipalities (JCM) as their co-operative body[3]; these initiatives provided the Serbian communities with more control over their own lives and helped slow down and stop the exodus of Serbian families.

○ - Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Syrmia: Serbian Autonomous Oblast (1991), part of the Republic of Serbian Krajina (1991-1995), self-governing entity (1995-1996), UN-administered territory (1996-1998).

Note: borders presented in this map are from 1994.

"Serbian inhabitants did not have a strong feeling of security. They did not believe in the Croatian system, because they were isolated of it. Through the presence of the international community rose the feeling of security for the Serbian population. The process also gave the feeling of control that Croatia will build up and secure long lasting anti-discrimination in the area."[4]

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[2] Daria Sajin, interview
[3] The JCM functioned as the representative body of the 'Serbian municipalities', even though it was not an official body of local governments because such an association was at the time forbidden by Croatian law. Officially, elected members of municipal assemblies and county assemblies were member of the JCM.
[4] Katarina Kruhonja, interview

In the same period, so-called Joint Implementation Councils (JICs) were set up by UNTAES to deal with issues of common concern such as police, civil administration, education and culture, return of refugees and displaced persons, and human rights. Local government representatives participated in many of the JICs. The integration of the two education systems proved to be problematic: "Just to give a chance to decentralisation is not enough. If it comes into wrong hands it can be fatal and lead to ghettos. For example: schools in Vukovar became divided in schools in Croatian language and schools in Serbian language."[5]

At the same time, education can be an important vehicle for integration and peace building: "Decentralisation also means that in the education system of young people inter-ethnic dialogue is incorporated and that teachers have to teach about multi-culturality. The state has to open the possibility for multi-ethnic schools."[6]

One of the successful UNTAES activities: a market secured by UNTAES, where Serbs and Croats could to buy and sell products and goods (January 1997)

There was a very strong involvement in this decentralisation process from the part of the international community, as the Croatian government headed by president Tudjman was openly anti-Serbian. UNTAES and other IC representatives had developed good working relationships with local NGOs that tried to create conditions for inter-ethnic dialogue and practical co-operation upon the basis of common interests[7]. "The support of the NGOs

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[5] Katarina Kruhonja, interview
[6] Katarina Kruhonja ,interview
[7] The Osijek-based Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights deserves special mentioning.

strongly contributed to the success. They promoted peace, cooperation, human rights and other issues which motivated citizens to deal with the past and to build a better future."[8]

Quite some local governments from abroad stepped in, to develop working relationships with local governments and local civil society[9]. "Involvement of the international community and especially the linking of foreign municipalities with local municipalities is a very good model and it should start as early as possible, and last as long for it to be self-sustainable. In the mean time it contributes to the feeling of security, but it also gives a public and clear verbal support to peace in practice too."[10]

Over-all, the decentralisation process that started in the UNTAES period was a success. "Important are integration, co-existence among people. We do not have to have the same opinion, but we have to live together. Collective labelling is wrong. But memories, the way we view the past, should be legitimate. Time is very important, and time needs to pass by. We can not neglect collective memories. It does not mean that the process of peace building should not start. When the Peace Centre from Osijek started with the peace process, it was weird for me, but now I see it was necessary."[11]

3. Macedonia

The decentralisation component was one of the crucial elements of the Ohrid (Framework) Agreement 2001), transferring many important mandates from the national government to the local government level.

The European Union played a key-role in the negotiations that led to the Ohrid Agreement that sought to immediately end hostilities between the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA, ONA in Macedonian, UCK in Albanian) and the Macedonian government security forces. It set the agenda of the reform process needed to bring back (more) stability to the country - outlining tangible goals, benchmarks and confidence building measures to be implemented in order to rectify the situation that led to the hostilities, fighting and general unrest. A NATO monitoring mission was deployed to prevent renewed fighting. "If we are talking about armed conflict, it is difficult to just say that there will be 'a

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[8] Sonja Licht, interview
[9] Most of them through programs initiated by IKV (The Netherlands) and Balkanactie van de Gemeenten (Belgium)
[10] Katarina Kruhonja, interview
[11] Zlatko Kramaric, interview

strong and vibrant civil society'. In that moment it is needed to support and strengthen civil society and provide capacity building."[12]

Ethnic map of the Republic of Macedonia
(based on the 2002 census municipality data)

- Macedonians
- Turks
- Mixed population
- Albanians
- Roma
- M Relative Macedonian majority

The Agreement stated among others that minority languages used by more than 20 per cent of the population were to receive official status at the municipal level, and speakers of these languages would have the right to be provided public services, primary, secondary and university level education and any judicial proceedings in their native language (Art. 6).

"It is very important to use minority languages on announcements (like for Roma people). If we want to reach all citizens we have to communicate in all languages and to promote introductions to other cultures and languages."[13]

Some political power was to be devolved to local governments to ensure that decisions are taken as close as possible to those directly affected by their outcomes, i.e. the principle of subsidiarity (Art. 3). The European Union and other IC institutions have done a lot to secure that the Ohrid Framework Agreement would be implemented well. They focused in particular on the minority rights and paid less attention to the dimension of good (local) governance.

For quite some time local governments were not well informed about their new mandates and responsibilities and in most cases local governments lacked the capacity to implement their enhanced mandates. "Capacity building is needed. We lack knowledge and we are not ready to learn from others. We are extremely weak in implementation, without knowledge of the process 'from idea to realisation'. We lack persistence, we lack knowledge in organisational skills and logistics and we don't learn from lessons learned."[14]

Local NGO's, such as IPG (Inter-Ethnic Project Gostivar) developed activities to make their local government more aware of the decentralisation, targeting both municipal staff and elected members of the municipal assembly.

But the Ohrid Framework Agreement did help ease the tensions between the Albanian Macedonians and the Slav Macedonians in most cities and regions, and on the local as well as on the national level[15]. The Albanian Macedonians were initially satisfied with the increased control over their own communities (municipalities), so that the basis for further military action ceased to exist. Nevertheless, recent developments in Macedonia is not positive. The national and local governments are not functioning to the satisfaction of the

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[12] Katarina Kruhonja, interview
[13] Klelija Balta, interview
[14] Sonja Licht, interview
[15] The exception was the city of Struga, where Slav Macedonians have had to share power with the Albanian Macedonians due to the redefining of the municipal boundaries

citizens and inter-ethnic conflicts have not stopped. Radical and nationalist rhetoric is still wide-spread and there are regular cases of small-scale ethnic violence.

4. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Now, Bosnia and Herzegovina is quite a different and special story. The decentralisation model chosen was part and parcel of the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA, formally signed in Paris, December 15, 1995). The good thing of the DPA is that it stopped the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, only few months after the genocide of Srebrenica. This was the atrocity that again dragged the USA into the conflict and led to a major shift in the approach of the international community. Fall 1995, Serbian positions were bombed and Serbian politicians were forced to negotiate towards a result – risking continued bombing if they would not comply.

Nevertheless, the state structure defined by the DPA turned out to be disastrous. Bosnia and Herzegovina now has a very weak central state and two very powerful entities: the Republika Srpska (Serbian Republic, yellow in this map) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the entity where most of the Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats now live, green in this map). In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are ten cantons – five with a Bosniak majority, three with a Bosnian Croat majority and two ethnically mixed. In addition, in both entities there are a number of municipalities.

"The model of decentralisation, although part of the Dayton Agreement, was actually re-writing of the Washington Agreement, when cantons were made based on majority populations. In that moment the Federation was not strong enough and the cantons became obstacles between municipalities and the entities and the central government. They blocked citizens in their mobility. For example, if from one canton I want to work in another canton, I have to request all new personal documents."[16]

This model of decentralisation is creating many problems, at many levels. The weak state cannot organise the reforms needed in the process of European integration, because many of the crucial powers lie with the two entities. The three-persons presidium is extremely weak and over-politicised. And how to organise the education in a country as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where you have – just to give an example! - 13 ministers of education[17]? "In the process of decentralisation cantons should get less mandates, because decentralisation

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[16] Klelija Balta, interview
[17] Ten in the cantons, two in the entities, and one at the state level

how it was done, contributed to the weakness of the Federation. If there is not a well defined government on the national level, decentralisation is leading to anarchy."[18]

The decentralisation model imposed by Dayton with its ethnic quota and veto rights has given an enormous political power to nationalist politicians. The last few years the situation has worsened, since the international community decided to take a step back. As of 2005 the High Representative, the international diplomat put in place in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Dayton Peace Accords to oversee its implementation, is more reluctant to use the so-called Bonn powers. These Bonn powers refer to the authority of the high international representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which make it possible for officials who are obstructing the peace implementation process to be dismissed from their positions. "Decentralisation has a positive effect on peace building but it is not enough. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a bad example and shows that decentralisation has to be done based on a proper analysis of the situation you want to improve. Size matters: you have to think about the percentage of the inhabitants living in the area and the regional and political context."[19]

The war is still very much visible in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and politics are still dominated by nationalist parties.

Occasionally the international community attempts to convince the Bosnian politicians to co-operate more and to invest more in reforms needed for the process of European integration (EU membership)[20], but results are altogether quite poor. One can question whether the

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[18] Klelija Balta, interview
[19] Filip Pavlovic, interview
[20] Rf. the so-called Butmir talks, held in Fall 2009

instruments for pre-accession provide the European Commission and EU member states with sufficient opportunities to promote a self-critical analysis of the recent wars. Innovative models of conditionality should be strengthened and the true promoters of democracy and European values should be supported through financial and political means and partnerships with counterparts in EU member states.[21]

For most of the nationalist politicians, it pays off not to co-operate and to blame it on the others and the international community. Regularly, RS premier Milorad Dodik, previously a moderate politician and considered an alternative for the SDS[22], is making allusions to full independence of Republika Srpska. On a regular basis, he is also questioning whether indeed a genocide took place in Srebrenica, in July 1995 – blaming both the Bosniaks and the international community of manipulation of the facts.

5. Kosovo

The decentralization that is now being implemented in Kosovo must serve a number of goals, among which better service-delivery to all citizens, European Integration, the well-being of non-Albanian communities and the improvement of inter-ethnic relations. Also in the case of Kosovo, as in Eastern Slavonia (Croatia), six new municipalities were established[23] and one municipality had its territory extended[24]. These municipalities have been given

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[21] Dion van den Berg. The Necessity of the Rehabilitation of the Citizen: peacebuilding and the EU Enlargement Process. IKV Pax Christi, June 2011
[22] The party, led during the BiH war (1992-1995) by Radovan Karadzic
[23] Five municipalities where Serbs have the majority (now operational, with the exception of Mitrovica North) and one municipality with a Turkish majority (Mamush)
[24]   Novo Brdo

some extra mandates ('enhanced competences'), as defined in the Law on Local Self-Government[25]:

> "Certain municipalities explained below shall have their own competencies enhanced in the areas of health, education and cultural affairs and shall have participatory right in selecting local station police commanders as set forth in the subsequent articles."

Even though many steps have been made in the past few years and laws are in place (in particular the Law of Local Self-Government, 2008), serious problems do occur in the field of implementation. In the first year of implementation, such problems related among others to the lack of communication to the people, lack of coordination with donors and external experts, lack of effective citizens' participation in local government work and lack of focus on ensuring sustainability.

The Serbian municipalities (here in blue in the map) in Kosovo are in the North, where the Pristina government has little de facto influence, and in the south where till today both official local governments and Serbian ' parallel' municipalities exist

"Important is to take care about investing at the right moment in the municipalities, because municipalities are very poor. It is important to show results in the first year of decentralisation. When a country is very rich like Libya, then the state can finance that. But when a country is poor than the international community has to finance water supply, the sour system, streetlights: things that are visible. This will also support entrepreneurship."[26]

"Decentralisation has to be supported with finances. Nothing is possible without the proper means. The role of the international organisations is to seriously finance development."[27] "Neo-liberalism - "the market will solve everything" - will 'punch us into our nose'. Society is losing solidarity and empathy. There are no thoughts anymore about those who have less. Poverty is a black hole and we cannot isolate it. It is not possible to solve this by decentralisation. For example a very poor municipality cannot open a public kitchen for those in need."[28]

Critics of the decentralisation model chosen fear that it will create more division in Kosovo[29]. At the same time, it is very important for the minority communities in Kosovo. And if handled well and with responsibility, it may even create more internal integration (more and better co-operation among communities within the municipality) as well as more external integration (more and better co-operation with neighbouring municipalities and the national government). "An important aspect of inter-municipal cooperation is regional cooperation.

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[25] Article 19.1., Law on Local Self-Government (adopted 20 February, 2008)

[26] Filip Pavlovic, interview

[27] Klelija Balta, interview

[28] Sonja Licht, interview

[29] Especially Albanians are critical. Some even fear that decentralization will lead to division and then to war.

In all those small countries founded after the fall of Yugoslavia, neighbouring municipalities can be in different countries, states, and sometimes people are living in one and working in another. Therefore, cooperation between municipalities is very important."[30]

Things seem to have improved in the last one-and-a-half year, at least in Kosovo south of the river Ibar. The results of the municipal elections held in December 2009, in particular the high voter turnout by non-Albanians were an important step. "We have a success story in Kosovo and that is that Serbian municipalities are integrated in Kosovo institutions. Local people believe in elected institutions, they believe in Kosovo institutions. A good example is the municipality of Partes: Local people are getting documents issued from Kosovo institutions and they participate in activities of different organisations."

Strpce is one of the Serbian municipalities, now headed by the Mayor of Serbian background, where the Serbian community started co-operating with the national Kosovo government.

Nevertheless, some inveterate obstacles are still hampering the progress – even though more and more people understand that decentralisation is now reality and is not going to be 'rolled back'.

"Decentralisation according to the Ahtisaari plan in Kosovo contributed to overcome the gap between the Serbian community and the majority Albanian community. But it is also important that it will not lead to segregation, isolation and enclaves. Integration of the Serbian community without decentralisation is not attractive. And at the same time decentralisation without integration is not sustainable."[31]

There is a lack of coordinated planning at various levels and in some cases the division of responsibilities remains unclear and there is no clear timeline for the transfer of mandates. "Decentralisation is good in the meaning that we do not have to ask the minster for all answers on the questions. But decentralisation has to be supported by financial decentralisation. Very often decentralisation is just verbal, without really transferring power, mandates and finances."[32] "Capacity building for local authorities should be a bottom up process and not donor driven. The best is if local authorities identify their needs and then we can fulfil them. Lack of communication among donors sometimes results in multiplied trainings and that is not efficient."[33]

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[30] Klelija Balta, interview
[31] Filip Pavlovic, interview
[32] Zlatko Kramaric, interview
[33] Sazan Ibrahimi, interview

"Capacity building and increasing knowledge for municipal governments is very important. Especially in small municipalities management is an unknown category and many are analphabetic in communication and computer skills. Promotion of life long learning is needed: Formal, informal and alternative education. English language courses are needed for a better participation of citizens especially regarding international cooperation."[34]
"Some of our municipalities do have friends abroad. But those are mostly Mayor to Mayor contacts without visible results for their municipalities. It should be turned more in to good projects for youth, cultural heritage, tourism, with good results and not only visits."[35]

There are also stubborn misconceptions, and – even worse - there is a serious problem that the decentralisation process is being politicized, making it part of the ongoing debate on Serbia – Kosovo relationships. "The problem is the parallel structure of local authorities which is supported by Belgrade and they ruin the whole system. Belgrade plays a very big role. If they would give people freedom to cooperate and integrate, the situation would be much easier."[36]

Regularly, people do not accept that municipalities have both a Serbian and an Albanian name. Here, the Albanian name of Strpce (Shtërpcë) has been made illegible.

Still, the "parallel" Serbian structures are partly in place. This leads to competition, on issues related to services such as health-care and education, between the Belgrade-supported parallel municipality and the official local government bodies that function under Pristina rule.

As till now, the decentralisation is not working north of the river Ibar, the area where all Pristina rule is being challenged by the Serbs living there, their leaders and their supporters in Belgrade. In that part of Kosovo, no decentralisation will come about as long as it is the main battlefield for the ongoing Albanian-Serbian standoff.

"Besides decentralisation, communication between the Serbian and Albanian communities is very important. But also vertical communication is needed, because there will be always problems if both communities are not fully integrated in the system. On the short term decentralisation can give feelings of security, but is not a solution on the long run. It can be useful to calm down a conflict area, but they have to be connected to the rest of society. Otherwise they will feel like an artificial body and also the others will view them as such. They need to be integrated, not assimilated."[37]

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[34] Klelija Balta, interview
[35] Sazan Ibrahimi, interview
[36] Sazan Ibrahimi, interview
[37] Sonja Licht, interview

The bridge in Mitrovica is still the symbol of the de facto division of Kosovo. Many citizens do not dear cross the bridge, and there is constant international military presence on the bridge

Whether the Kosovo model of decentralisation will in the end meet the expectations and the needs of the citizens, will become clear in the upcoming years. Among others, the awareness is needed that the decentralisation is not only there for the Serbian majority municipalities, but for all municipalities. For the time being, numerous Kosovo-Albanian citizens only see it as one of these compromises to please the Serbs; they have not yet understood how much they themselves can gain, in their local community, with the benefits of decentralisation.

It is for sure worthwhile to support the decentralization efforts and assist the Kosovo government and all municipalities in Kosovo in operationalizing the paper (laws) into practice. Fighting corruption is in that process crucial as well. Citizens criticise all politicians, regardless of their ethnic background, of being corrupt and misusing the power.

Many observers from the region see a crucial role for the NGOs, especially when the international community will withdraw. "It is very important to keep supervision and control after the international community withdraws from an area. Local people, who are taking over, very often neglect international recommendations. This happened in Gnjilanje when the OSCE withdrew: All their recommendations were forgotten. The international community was divided about the handing over of mandates. And when the US ambassador

was changed, everything came to a halt. It is important that the international community has consensus among themselves."[38]

"The problem with intervention by the international community is that they use huge means for some region and in a few years they are moving elsewhere. It means they are not persistent enough. They do not connect their action with the capacity building of institutions that will take over when they leave. Sometimes the international community 'invent' a new institution to take over, but which falls apart as soon as they leave. International intervention has to take into account the local situation and institutions and build sustainability on existing structures. NGOs are imperative partners to all these processes. Political culture and civil society and success of decentralisation are not possible without participation of citizens. And citizens' participation you can reach through the work of NGOs."[39]

"Also NGOs are in need of capacity building for management, sustainability, marketing, project cycle management, monitoring and evaluation. They need to inform their citizens and prepare them for the time when the international community has gone. When making action plans it is very important to involve all stakeholders and promote cooperation, because then NGOs, citizens and municipalities will all profit."[40]

"When the international community is withdrawing, NGOs will continue to support decentralisation, but also monitor that process. For this they need financial means to be able to fulfil this task. It is necessary to prepare NGOs for their strategic role."[41]

The battle of Kosovo, 1389. History still plays an very important role in the political discourse in Kosovo

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[38] Filip Pavlovic, interview
[39] Sonja Licht, interview
[40] Klelija Balta, interview
[41] Filip Pavlovic, interview

6. Isolation or integration? Some crucial conditions

It is impossible to analyse these various decentralization models in extenso in a short discussion paper. Yet, we can list some of the most crucial conditions that can help make such endeavours successful.

The most crucial point is that in a post-conflict context the decentralisation has to be organised in a way that it does not promote isolation (of ethnic communities), but that is provides security and autonomy for ethnic communities while at the same time fostering and promoting internal integration (within the boundaries of the municipalities) and external integration (with neighbouring municipalities and the national government level).

Other (related) conditions to be kept in mind are:

- Active monitoring and support by the international community, not only on the regulations and procedures, but also on the implementation and the co-operation of local governments with local civil society and citizens
- Not only transfer of mandates, but also transfer of financial resources
- Avoid the allocation of certain mandates to sub-national levels, such as the mandates on issues of national interest that are crucial for the acquis communautaire (the process of European integration)
- Organisation of platforms for increased interaction between national government and sub-national governments
- Capacity-building for local politicians and municipal staff
- Elaborated communication and awareness-raising campaigns to inform citizens and mobilise their skills and expertise by means of consultation and participation. A strong and vibrant civil society, at the local level, is needed to make decentralisation meet the citizens' demands and expectations. Capacity-building for local civil society may be a priority as well.
- Active promotion of inter-municipal co-operation
- Active promotion of international municipal co-operation

ANNEX 1: List of persons interviewed for this paper

Name	Function(s)
Mr. Zlatko Kramaric	Ambassador of Croatia in Macedonia; former Mayor of Osijek, Croatia; former MP in Croatia, former Ambassador of Croatia in Kosovo
Mrs. Klelija Balta	Former member of Tuzla city assembly, UNDP Bosnia & Herzegovina
Mr. Sazan Ibrahimi	Executive director of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities, Kosovo
Mr. Filip Pavlovic	Director NGO Fractal, Serbia
Mrs. Daria Sajin	Head of the District Southwest Banat in Vojvodina, Serbia
Mrs. Sonja Licht	Director of Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, Serbia; Former chair hCa; former director OSI Serbia; Member of group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe
Mrs. Katarina Kruhonja	Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights, Osijek, Croatia

"When talking about decentralisation it is important to view both the context and the level of political culture. It means that decentralisation will be different in the Netherlands than in Bosnia & Herzegovina. In Serbia decentralisation was used only as a demagogic form, not connected to reality. Decentralisation in Serbia meant that part of the money and responsibilities were given to the regions and then the regions continued their centralised behaviour." (Sonja Licht)
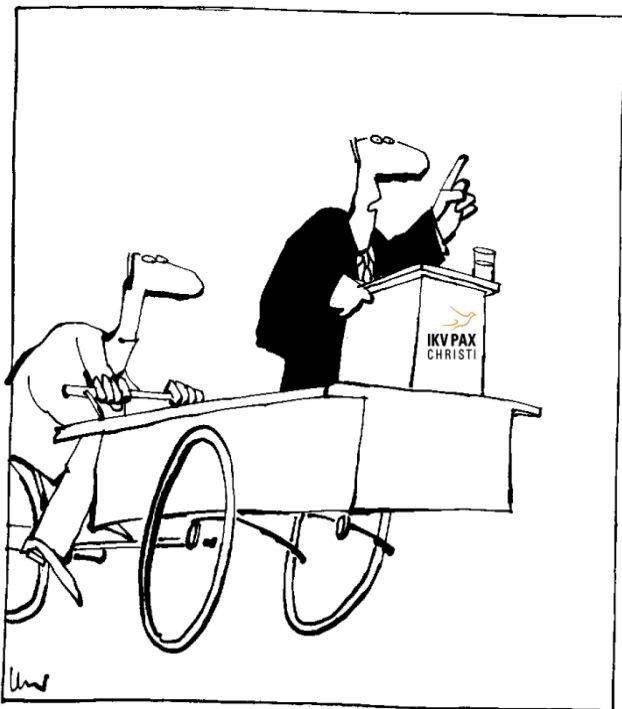
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IKV Pax Christi, Utrecht, april 2012