

# The New Bosnian Mosaic

Identities, Memories and Moral Claims  
in a Post-War Society

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## Chapter 12

# Everyday Work: Subsistence Economy, Social Belonging and Moralities of Exchange at a Bosnian (Black) Market

Larisa Jašarević

### Introduction

At the Arizona black market, nothing extraordinary happens. Bright-yellow Pokemon dolls hang off the stands. T-shirts billow in the wind, folding and unfolding an image of Eminem giving the finger. Stray dogs adopt corners and stands to mate, sleep or hang out. Wheelbarrows wheel in fast food, newspapers, and CDs. Gypsy children walk with huge, striped shopping bags for sale. Swarms of shoppers, families and couples look for bargains, dressed in their best because it is a family affair. Or because looking good makes them look out of place at the market where the alleys end in the smell of urine and hawking attracts as many people as do the signs announcing brand names: Levi's, Lacoste, and Lancôme. Between, behind and beside the stands, vendors gather around circular coffee trays.

Located in north-eastern Bosnia, in the neutral District of Brčko and on the Tuzla-Orašje highway linking Bosnia to Croatia and Serbia, Arizona spans over 45 hectares and draws a daily crowd of 20,000 shoppers from all over Bosnia, ex-Yugoslavia (mostly Croatia), and the rest of Europe.<sup>1</sup> Available for purchase is

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<sup>1</sup> The market takes its name from NATO's code name for the Tuzla-Orašje highway. Throughout the war, the municipality of Brčko was divided by the frontline and split into three ethnic municipalities. The town itself, predominantly Muslim before the war, was held by Serb forces. It was the site of massive 'ethnic cleansing' in 1992 and was settled by Serb DPs in the following years. In December 1995, the Dayton Peace Agreement postponed the resolution of the final status of this highly contested area. When the market appeared in the spring of 1996, just a few months after the signing of the peace agreement, it was located within the territory of the self-proclaimed 'Croat municipality of Ravne-Brčko', and within the four kilometre wide Zone of Separation that ran along the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) and was monitored by NATO's Stabilization Force (SFOR). Both the Croat

everything imaginable, from mundane household accessories to the stuff of forbidden pleasures: drugs, arms, and sex slaves. Contrary to the market's reputation, most goods sold there are neither shabby nor flawed and the 'vice commodities' are not so easily obtained. With an estimated 3,500 stalls in June 2002, Arizona is reputedly the second biggest black market in Eastern Europe.

Arizona is also the site of one of the biggest foreign capital investments in Bosnia, as well as the largest meeting place of Muslims, Serbs, and Croats in the region since the recent war. As such, the market has been in the limelight of contemporary regional discourses on the post-socialist and post-war 'transition'<sup>2</sup> to a neo-liberal economy and a multicultural society (see also Coles, this volume). Whether exaggerated or straightforward, claims about Arizona oversimplify its cluttered reality and conform to preconceived models of traditional (peasant) culture or transitional inevitabilities. But what does the market look like from within? What kinds of moralities of exchange are relied upon at Arizona and why?

I suggest that Arizona, as a site of extremes, brings into focus some issues that have pervaded the whole country after the war: the real, everyday ambiguities about the new realities of work in a post-socialist era and people's attempts to order social relationships at the market, which is neither traditional nor transitional, within the customary boundaries of what is moral and meaningful.<sup>3</sup> From within the black market of Arizona, the work appears uneventful and uncertain, and social belonging is negotiated from day to day.

Mico the trader tells me at one point: 'All this is illegal.' I respond (thinking he is talking about the traders): 'How come? They pay taxes.' Mico: 'What taxes? The poor pay taxes, but those on the top?'<sup>4</sup>

municipality of Ravne-Brčko and the Zone of Separation disappeared (at least officially) in March 1999, when the pre-war municipality of Brčko was turned into a neutral District. The District of Brčko belongs to no entity, has its own legislation and is headed by an international supervisor appointed by the High Representative.

<sup>2</sup> The troublesome part of thinking about post-socialism in terms of 'transition', suggest Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery, is that it implies a '*process* connecting the past to the future. What we discover, however, are theories of transition often committed to some pre-given future or rooted in an unyielding past' (Burawoy and Verdery 1999: 4). By projecting a normative future, 'transition' prescribes a quick and radical break with the whole compromising (socialist, underdeveloped, irrational) past. Put in the terms of 'transition', the ideology of subsistence, long the basis of the Bosnian economy, particularly since the recent war, is hopelessly obsolete (see also Verdery 1996).

<sup>3</sup> For other accounts of market and morality in post-communist countries, see Hann 1992; Mandel and Humphrey 2002.

<sup>4</sup> All quotations come from my notes taken during a month of fieldwork at the Arizona market. During this time I assisted with sales at one stand (Miralem and Safet's) and shuttled between four others, running errands for and taking coffee breaks with vendors and their associates. Additionally, many quotes come from my conversations with taxi drivers and passengers on the way to and from Arizona.

On another occasion, at Zlata's stand, the traders tell me of a recent loss. The goods they bought in Hungary were confiscated at a customs station in Banja Luka (a major city in western Bosnia, capital of *Republika Srpska*) when the police arrested the trucker and the customs officials for evading customs laws. One of the arrested customs officials, Huso tells me, sported a Rolex watch worth 10,000 Convertible Marks (KM) (about 5,000 €). The traders usually reimburse the transporter for customs duties after the delivery: 600 KM (300 €) for each cubic meter of imported goods. If the transporter manages to avoid customs, he keeps their money. Zlata concludes (as others laugh): 'He skims off the cream' ('*Ubire kajmak*'). The metaphor refers to the making of a homemade dairy spread, *kajmak*, in which the valuable cream collects on the surface of cooked milk: the one who collects it leaves others with plain milk.

Mico and the traders at Zlata's stand tell tales about the relationship between the market and the society. What is at stake at Arizona is not primarily a negotiation of (multi)ethnicity. Nor is it a distinction between the formal, neo-liberal, and the informal, traditional or transitional trade of petty vendors, or the morally condemned, criminal networks that underlie the market. Rather, it is the differentiation between subsistence and an unchecked accumulation of profit. The former imagines work within presumed, normative boundaries of income sufficient to sustain one's family and allowing others to do the same. It references the egalitarianism of the industrial, socialist past and reinvents the normative subsistence of the agricultural peasant tradition. Inscribed in the traders' tales is the value of work as limited and inherently social: subsisting, not 'skimming off the cream'.

Arizona is also a case study of more general social uncertainties and negotiations surrounding the self and work that haunt Bosnia in the face of economic and social changes after the war.<sup>5</sup> The traders and shoppers from all segments of society now depend on a form of trade that has historically been (and outside of Arizona still is) marginalized and ambivalent. On the one hand, the open-air market offers the cherished *domaće* (homemade) products associated with the authentic peasant – the producer. On the other hand, it displays the cheap, *šverc* (contraband, illegal) commodities and their equally stigmatized vendors – Gypsies and 'transgressional', or non-producing peasants. The traditional distinctions operating within such markets, between the peasant producers of *domaće* goods and informal traders of *šverc* commodities, are complicated and contested, but also reinvented and reused in the ordering of everyday life at Arizona. There, the ethnic Gypsy and the peasant-producer are the fewest in numbers, but they are the most stable and most frequently invoked categories in the social imagination of the remainder of shoppers and vendors engaged in the circulation of contraband commodities. While the producer is formally displaced to the (economic) periphery, the categories of peasant and peasant production surface at the very centre of everyday discourses on work and the self. The *domaće* metaphor

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<sup>5</sup> On similar issues during the war, see Maček, this volume.

describes the ideal of work as production for subsistence, qualitatively recognizable and social, and helps redraw larger national, international and global schemes within comprehensive limits of right and wrong. The category of peasant, whether the productive or the transgressional type historically associated with the open-air market, is refused and confused at Arizona as the traders posit themselves across the normative terrain of the market and against the transgressing interests of other traders, the state, and non-state agents.

This chapter offers an insight into the everyday machinations of work at Arizona against the background of national and global developmental policies aimed at the market. By no means does it exhaust the range of meaning in the everyday lives of the traders; nor does it complete the story of Arizona at the macro level. It only approximates the reality that I glimpsed and invites further study and interpretation. I therefore present it as such; as a series of events and encounters surrounding the meanings of work and categories of social belonging that extend beyond the market into contemporary Bosnia.

### **‘The Peasant has been Killed’**

My research started as a quest for migrant peasant-traders at the market but ended as a study of the categories of peasants and work, themselves migrating and unstable in the changing realities of Bosnia. The categories, I found, are neither urban nor rural, but just like the market itself, mixed and mobilized across social lines. Locating the peasantry at the market, however, and in contemporary Bosnian society in general, is not a straightforward matter of theoretical definition or ethnological description,<sup>6</sup> but rather an on-going process of recognition and self-recognition across shifting markers of culture, subsistence, and residence.

In a landmark study of peasants and markets in Bosnia, William Lockwood posits rural residence and agricultural subsistence as two clear markers of a ‘viable peasantry’ in the Bosnia of the 1960s (Lockwood 1975: 9). The markets, Lockwood further suggests, embodied peasants’ economic and cultural dependence on the dominant urban economy and society.<sup>7</sup> Situated within the town, the *čaršija*

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<sup>6</sup> To date, the only attempts made in Bosnia at studying the peasantry have been catalogues of peasant material culture and customs, as previously published by the Provincial Museum (*Zemaljski muzej*) of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Department of Ethnology at the Sarajevo Faculty of Philosophy and other centres for ethnological research. This tradition of taxonomic and static study continues in more recent texts on Bosnian culture. The exceptions are occasional articles in the local media that combine both the historical legacy and contemporary issues surrounding the peasantry in the region.

<sup>7</sup> A series of reforms in the early 1950s ended the erratic attempt to control private peasant land, promote cooperative farming, and yet retain peasant support for the communist regime, which had been established during World War II by an army overwhelmingly dominated by peasants (see Bokovoy 1998).



(market) played host to a meeting between the village and the town, 'the two poles of the traditional Balkan society' (Lockwood 1975: 7-8).

Even during Lockwood's fieldwork in the 1960s, however, socialist industrialization was beginning to blur the distinction between the village and the town and to merge industrial employment and agricultural occupations (Denich 1974; Lockwood 1973; Simic 1973, 1983b). After World War II, rapid urbanization left the ties between the village and the town sinuous and strong; the majority of urban dwellers maintained a weekend home in a neighbouring village and a place in the village genealogy. Many also grew vegetables, collected fruit, and produced their own brandy and preserves on country estates. *Domaće* products remained a source of family pride for the producers, referencing their work on the land without marking them as peasants.

Since the recent war, the dichotomy between village and town has formally disintegrated. The displacement of populations, both urban and rural, and the dispersal of income opportunities away from (both agricultural and industrial) production towards the informal sector of trade and services, has made the traditional markers of peasantry obsolete. The village is no longer obviously the 'peasant's world' as Lockwood once described it. Miralem, another Arizona trader, is exceptionally straightforward when he says: 'All of us here, we are from a village.' Most of my principal informants come from villages around the town of Srebrenik, one of the five municipalities surrounding the market. But the village as the only viable location of the peasantry is now contested, as its residents have been displaced either from or to the cities (see also Stefansson, Kolind, this volume) and many commute to urban centres for employment, education, and entertainment. Additionally, since the war, many impoverished urban families have resorted to cultivating nearby land for subsistence, further confusing the category of peasant as the original producer of *domaće* products.

Agricultural subsistence is an equally ambiguous criterion for delineating the peasantry in post-war Bosnia. At the time of Lockwood's study, Bosnia was 'a rather typical peasant society, although ... caught up in rapid change to an industrial society' (Lockwood 1975: 7). Until the recent war, heavy industries presented peasants, predominantly small landholders, with income opportunities that never obviated household reliance on labour intensive agriculture and husbandry.<sup>8</sup> Post-war deindustrialization has reversed this trend, although the transition to the 'open market' and a negligent agricultural policy now render domestic food production extremely expensive and primarily subsistence oriented. Market sales are minimal and limited mostly to livestock products.

When I tell Mico that I came to study peasants at Arizona, he gets angry:

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<sup>8</sup> With the industrialization of Bosnia after 1945, increasing numbers of peasant men found employment in industry. Peasant-workers often worked odd hour shifts which freed up time for agriculture and husbandry that continued providing both family subsistence and surplus for the market. Most peasant women remained in the village tending to the house, children, and land (see Lockwood 1973; Šivrić 1982).

The peasant has been killed [*ubijen*]. Whoever here claims to be a peasant is lying – he isn't. He didn't survive to come here and work. Who [among the peasants] came here? The destitute came here, the lowest, the dirt comes to sell me a litre of *domaće* milk for a Mark. Who else would come for such [little] money? No peasant has survived.

Mico concludes: 'The peasant is not protected. Today there is no one to work the land. No one plants. Who would?' Miralem still plants food ('I am accustomed to planting, besides, just in case, you never know') though he acknowledges, in the face of common sense, that produce is very cheap and cultivation is costly (and manual; machines are scarce). In contrast, a taxi driver on the way to Arizona, tells me: 'No one wants to work the land now. Ten marks in the shade is better than a hundred working. Only the older ones will work on the land. These younger ones will not walk cattle.' Mico blames the negligent state, while the taxi driver blames the moral corruption of the peasants; the two are common explanations for the decline of production by peasants after the war. The taxi driver maintains that peasants, many of whom are refugees, are unwilling to return to working the land, that they entertain urban, non-productive aspirations instead (see also Stefansson, this volume). Mico and Miralem, on the other hand, speak for many critics of Bosnian agricultural policy, which encourages unlimited importation of foreign produce and discourages local production. With an estimated two thirds of the necessary food imported and less than half of the arable land cultivated, critics describe the current agricultural policy in Bosnia as a 'very successful means for destroying agricultural production'<sup>9</sup> and an attempt to 'rid the country of the peasant strata – that source of conservatism that flirts with the right'.<sup>10</sup>

The peasants, however, are not at the economic periphery where students of 'transition' usually place them but rather in the midst of the current economic reordering, fully participating in trade (the staple of the Bosnian post-war, 'open market' economy) and maintaining, to varying degrees, subsistence plots and residence in villages. Located along highways and at the markets, in other words at the points of local and regional communication, these new sites of employment blur the boundaries between urban and rural.<sup>11</sup> No longer spatially contained, Lockwood's two poles of Bosnia are now (dis)integrating at the market. The peasant, whether a producer, ex-producer, or a category defined entirely by culture (idealized or ridiculed at that), is constantly invoked to order both emerging and

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<sup>9</sup> *Oslobođenje*, 17 June 2001.

<sup>10</sup> *Oslobođenje*, 4 February 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Based solely on fleeting observations, I would suggest that there has been a major spatial reconfiguration of the job market in post-war Bosnia. Refugees, the unemployed, and the temporarily unemployed (*na čekanju*, meaning on stand-by, literally 'on waiting') find jobs at open air markets and in the service activities supporting them such as transportation and catering. Most of the new markets in the region are now at the edges of towns, whereas before they occupied the town centres (as for instance in Tuzla, where the downtown market is now marginal), or at regional crossroads (as for example, Arizona and Nevada markets – the latter located on another major highway in eastern Bosnia, near the city of Bijeljina).

familiar positions in contemporary Bosnian society (see also Stefansson, Armakolas, Kolind, this volume).

Begajeta, a trader I find having coffee at Kada's stand, introduces herself as a retired teacher in special education and tells me: 'You will see everything here. Perhaps not doctors, but there are engineers, workers from everywhere. A need forced them, people are surviving [*ljudi preživljavaju*].' What Begajeta tells me is that Arizona is not an ordinary market and that many vendors, as professionals and urbanites like herself, traditionally do not belong there. Selma, Kada's assistant, once an accountant in a Srebrenik company, explains: 'It's hard [working] like this. Especially if you are schooled, this is like death to you.' Miralem disagrees: 'I did *this* before the war, too. This is not new to me. That's why it wasn't hard getting used to *it*.' (emphasis added) I find that vendors rarely name the work at Arizona, referring to it instead in vague terms. They rarely even use the word '*švere*' (from the German word '*Schwarzhandel*': black market), an otherwise widespread and thus readily available term describing the informal, open-market trade in contraband, cheap commodities which has been common in Bosnia since at least World War II (Lockwood 1975: 156-9). A Gypsy woman in the corner of what is called the *buvljak* (flea market), musing over my note taking at an abandoned stand, makes explicit the historical comparison: 'This [work at Arizona] is not hard, we always did this.'

Traditionally, and presently also outside of Arizona, the trader at a Bosnian market either sells the products of family labour, as do the peasant and the farmer,<sup>12</sup> or sells mass-produced commodities, as does the *pijacar* (literally: one who lives off of the market, usually reselling products of someone else's labour) and the *švercer* (smuggler, contrabandist, or bootlegger of items produced by others). All traders are clearly divided spatially and distinguished by the items in which they trade. The word '*švercer*' is often used interchangeably with '*pijacar*', although the latter is more widely associated with the retail of agricultural produce. The *šverceri* (pl.) themselves are conventionally either (transgressional) peasants, or Gypsies.<sup>13</sup> The assumed illegal, cheap, and flawed nature of *šverc* commodities

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<sup>12</sup> The difference between the *seljak* (peasant) and the *poljoprivrednik* (farmer) is palpable both in the production and consumption of their produce. Unlike the peasant who subsists off the land, the farmer produces for the market, under contract with agricultural cooperatives or processing factories. Furthermore, the farmer cultivates large scale plots of land, runs automated livestock facilities and generally uses the tools of mechanization and scientific technology (artificial fertilizers, pesticides and the like). In contrast, the peasant's produce, by virtue of being produced by labour intensive, time consuming, and low technology means, is deemed more natural, tastier and healthier – in short, more valuable, as expressed in the higher prices expected for *domaće*, peasant produce.

<sup>13</sup> The place of a Gypsy in the regional imagination is well captured by Marko Živković: 'perceived by most Yugoslavs as being at the very bottom of the hierarchy, Gypsies are often used at all levels to metonymically stand for the lower end of dichotomies. This conforms to a general tendency in interethnic perception to cast both oneself and others in terms of extreme contrasting terms' (Živković 2001: 25).

extends to the character of those who trade in them; such people are reputed to be morally corrupt, vulgar, and ignorant. Furthermore, the stigma envelopes the act of buying and particularly wearing *šverc* commodities, rendering a visit to the *šverc* market an embarrassment. In studying markets in western Bosnia, Lockwood notes that the 'derogatory epithet' of *švercer* is extended to 'all those who sell products not of their own production' (Lockwood 1975: 156). Juxtaposed against *domaće* products of peasant (hard) work, *šverc* denotes the open market trade in dubiously obtained commodities and farm produce, turning out easy, and therefore unearned, profits. Unlike *šverceri*, whose subsistence is fully dependent on the cash economy and the commodity form, the peasant-producers merely supplement their subsistence or income with market sales of their own produce (dairy, livestock, herbs and traditional medicines, tobacco and, more rarely, handicrafts and tools). The market exchange thus never confuses *domaće* goods with commodities. *Domaće* products enter the market and yet, by the particularity of their production, they resist being assimilated into homogenized value and straightforward exchange. In the midst of the commodity trade they retain the mark of a particular worker, along with a sensuousness quality of this work that eludes money exchange. Thus, a peasant woman is said to be clean, honest and hardworking if her sour cream is deemed good or else unclean and sly if the cream is watered down. The unassimilated value is registered by the participants in the exchange but is really acknowledged outside of it, within the realm of consumption. In this light, *domaće* goods are sold alongside identical items produced in farms or factories, at similar prices but with the distinctions of quality, taste and nutritional value that both peasants and consumers accord to the former. *Domaće* ultimately refers to the particularity of one's work as well as the person associated with the product.<sup>14</sup>

With the exception of a very few elderly peasants selling *domaće* goods, and a very few ethnic Gypsies engaged in small scale trade, the traditional distinctions between items of trade, relationships to the market, and the categories of peasant, *švercer* and Gypsy have been collapsed at Arizona. On the one hand, the majority of sales there are in commodities that are to varying degrees illegal. On the other hand, the market employs migrant traders from all ethnic and social groups, all equally displaced from the production economy and desperate for income. While in the past *šverc* was aimed at poorer buyers, the Arizona market figures as an average family's major shopping source in a region where the costs of formal trade make regular shops prohibitively expensive. A host of peasant-producers as well as urban, professional and semi-professional workers who have joined the trade confuse and refuse the existing categories of market work and market traders. I came to the market to study peasants, having in mind the classic markers, also used by Lockwood, of agricultural subsistence, rural residence and (in)dependence on the market, but found that the category is shifting in ways that reinvent and mobilize the traditional and transgressional images of the peasant. Furthermore, while the traditional producing peasant is cherished and vulnerable, though at the

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<sup>14</sup> On the notion of *domaći* as applied to people, see Kolind, this volume.

same time also a dangerous figure, recognition of the transgressional peasant is invoked in self-defence: it is always someone else.

On a slow day, while arranging bathing suits for display outside a store, I overhear the vendors at a neighbouring stand teasing Safet: 'What's that beard of yours for? [Safet has a sliver of a beard, a line running along the edge of his jaw] You look like a peasant, which is what you are.' Safet replies: '*Vela havle* [a popular phrase invoking Allah in wonder over something], it's the fashion now.' They: 'The fashion where? Up on your hill?!' Safet: 'No, downtown.' They: 'Downtown where? In Sladna [another village near Srebrenik]?!'

Earlier that day Safet himself recognizes a peasant. Motioning to a confused customer he says: 'Brother, what a peasant!' ('*Joj seljaka, braćo draga*') 'How come?' I ask later. Safet shrugs: 'Well, just like that. A peasant. Stupid. He doesn't know.'

Safet recognizes a peasant 'just like that' and is then experienced as one of them in a ubiquitous market exercise, the placing and displacing of the self within the popular Bosnian dichotomy of 'the asphalt' (*asfalt*) and 'the hill' (*brdo*). This variant of Lockwood's binary pair of the market town (*čaršija*) and village (*selo*) is no longer bound to a place and as such reflects the contemporary instability of the dichotomy. Now that asphalt runs through most villages, location is no longer a relevant distinction, but the new mobility makes the dichotomy all the more important. In the popular imaginary, peasants are noted for their illiteracy, dialects, dress and, in light of the recent history, for their nationalism and radical religiosity, all cemented in their persistent voting support for nationalist parties. Peasants appear as the origins of all the trouble in the region; having been seen to have started the war and invaded the city, they are now said to be profiting from the post-war disorder. A common, desperate lament on the asphalt is that 'peasants have come to power', 'peasants have seized the money' or 'peasants are getting university educations'. New politicians, businessmen, and other officials are ridiculed for their (peasant) dialects, despised for their (peasant) ignorance, and criticized for their (peasant) nationalist affiliations (see also Stefansson, Kolind, this volume). Neither wealth, nor new occupations or even university degrees can save peasants from recognition nor spare them from being laughed at. Laughing at perceived peasants, however, is also a privilege readily available for anyone to claim. At Arizona, I found that the exact location of 'the asphalt' is negotiable and the category of peasant (whether the genuine but ambivalent producer or the transgressional one) is necessary to mark one's own position at the market.

Lacking an unambiguous marker, the transgressional peasant is not the Other, but merely always another. Elusive, unstable, constantly available and thus threatening, the wielding of the category of peasant becomes a social skill. To spot a peasant – the menace, the embarrassment among us – is a relief; it is the comfort of knowing that it is not oneself who is being laughed at but someone else. Unlike traditional producers, peasant traders work on the asphalt, transgressing, confusing and mixing the categories of urban and rural. Safet's beard may look like a 'downtown fashion', but for those at the neighbouring stand and for Miralem, this

claim falls apart. Miralem therefore says about Safet: 'He too is a kid from a village. That's not saying anything bad [*ružno*, literally ugly] to me. But some see an insult in it.' Miralem thus refuses the aesthetic exercise of locating the peasant away from oneself, aesthetics being used here in the original etymological meaning of a sensory experience of cognition. Others remain on the lookout for the transgressional form; for them appearances need probing and testing.

The consumers of *domaće* products, those who used to produce them (Safet, Kada, Mico), or those who are still active part-time producers now fully engaged in trade (Miralem, Safet, Zlata and her partners) carry to the market the notion of morally valued work once embedded in the consumption of *domaće* products and now also in the metaphoric use of the term. I argue that it is this notion of work as subsistence bounded within normative limits of work and gain which order the self, others and the state. It renders meaningful the work that preserves the record of the individual worker and recreates a social contract between workers related by friendship or kinship.

Like Lockwood, I started my study by following peasants from a particular village to the market (five of my informants came from the village of Gornji Srebrenik). But regardless of how closely I followed them, 'the peasant' kept disappearing and reappearing in forms that made my pursuit appear misguided, outlining instead a social imagination of meaningful work and workers that transcend the bounds of the urban/rural dichotomy. At Arizona, the *domaće* product is marginalized, reduced to meagre sales off a dirt road, and the producers selling it there carry a dual metaphor of exile: of the producers, indignant and utterly poor but, due to the 'naturalness' of their productive activity, genuinely human (thus of 'the people'), and of the ideal type of work – threatened but subsistence oriented and egalitarian ('surviving').

## **Market and Non-Market**

In post-war Bosnia, the 'transition' from a centrally planned economy to a neo-liberal, global market economy is pursued with a vengeance. For local and international observers, the Arizona market embodies the tropes of the coming age of neo-liberalism and multiculturalism (it is commonly described as a 'thriving centre of business' or a 'multi-ethnic laboratory'<sup>15</sup>). But Arizona is not merely a break with the past as is typically attempted in a 'transition', nor a continuation of a regional black market form that traditionally stood for criminality and cheapness ('a market for cheap goods of dubious quality',<sup>16</sup> 'a cancer'<sup>17</sup>). For the traders, Arizona is a negotiation of customary, normative claims to subsistence against neo-

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<sup>15</sup> OHR Press Release, 8 March 2001, available at <[http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/press/pressr/default.asp?content\\_id=4268](http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/press/pressr/default.asp?content_id=4268)>.

<sup>16</sup> *Oslobođenje*, 13 June 2002.

<sup>17</sup> *Time*, 13 November 2000.

liberal claims to profit. 'This here', trader Huso says, 'is mere existence, survival of a sort.' Beneath the simplistic descriptions of outside commentators and their straightforward prescriptions to legalize, sanitize, and rationalize Arizona, life at the market brims with tensions.

Situated along the regional Tuzla-Orašje highway (the lifeline of the market), the clutter of Arizona is well organized. First there is a dirt road that runs alongside the central market. Here very small scale vendors, the elderly, and Gypsies urge you to inspect their wares piled on the ground, into wheelbarrows, on their bodies, and to buy quickly, before 'the police chases them away' ('but they come back again' says Esad). They trade informally (*na crno*), paying no taxes or fees for the dirt on which they squat to trade. Here a Gypsy cries a tongue twisting line: '*Kikiriki, kokakola, kikiriki kokakola*' ('peanuts, Coca-cola'). The road coils and cuts through the markets, the whole way lined with very old looking peasant women sitting on stools selling *domaće* products: *kajmak*, milk, cheese, and eggs.

Then there is the *buvljak* (flea market), the part of the market furthest off the dirt road, where the hawking and sales are more sophisticated. A young Gypsy man uses a loudspeaker to advertise pyjamas and shorts. His words come across all garbled. The stands here are tiny, wide enough to hold one or two vendors, although customers squeeze in, hunching down behind the displays to try on clothing. Mostly clothing and shoes, goods at the flea market are out to be touched, felt, selected. Safet, working in the labyrinth, says of the flea market: 'I wouldn't work there even if someone gave me 2,000 Marks. It's all Gypsies [*ciganija*] there, they yell the whole time. Either I would kill someone there or someone would kill me.'

Finally, there is the *labirint* (labyrinth), the orderly looking core of the market. Here the passages are covered with plastic sheeting to shelter shoppers in bad weather. Wooden stands are fully built with walls and doors and many are large enough to receive customers. There are no Gypsies and, Gypsies being the main hawkers, no hawking either. Aside from clothing, there are household appliances, tools, office equipment, professional machinery and food. The goods, mostly from Turkey and the Chinese Market in Budapest, enter Bosnia through some 400 illegal border crossings or through official crossings by means of bribes or false reporting. Clothing, the single biggest item of trade at Arizona, sold both retail and wholesale, is displayed at the labyrinth in a variety of sizes and styles unmatched at the flea market.

Along the highway are larger shops that specialize in one product only: the signs advertise Nike, Levi's, a furniture store. At each end of the market are also Chinese run stores, the novelty of their owners living here and learning Bosnian having long worn off.

For the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and NATO's Stabilization Force (SFOR), the market is within the scope of the constitution which commits Bosnia(ns) to a multicultural state and a neo-liberal economy, both apparently having materialized at the Arizona market as a pragmatic antidote to all that is wrong with the region: ethnic strife and a centrally planned economy. In 1996, the

market sprang up in the Zone of Separation monitored by NATO.<sup>18</sup> In 1999, a District with a special status placing it both within and outside of the Bosnian state was created out of the pre-war municipality of Brčko and the administration of the market passed to this District.<sup>19</sup> Western officials therefore claim that NATO was responsible for the market that ultimately ‘enabled peace to break out’. In this account, NATO’s invitation to trade was ‘all that was necessary to bring people of all ethnic groups back together’: in the words of an American NATO official, ‘Say what you will about the evils of unregulated commerce today, Bosnia’s traffic – personal, commercial and unfortunately criminal – flows across the former confrontation line as a result of the breathing space afforded by NATO troops’.<sup>20</sup>

At the market, Mico scoffs at the idea that Arizona is NATO’s or OHR’s project in ethnic reconciliation: ‘They came to bring us together?! Like they could do that if we hadn’t been living like this before. Look at me [a Serb] and Suljo [a Muslim]. We’ve been here together since the first day. And worked together before that in *Polet* [a public company] for twenty years.’ For the traders, Arizona is not the rational project of reconciliation between severed entities that the international observers imagine it to be but a continuation of interethnic relationships that were both accessible and socially validated even throughout the war.<sup>21</sup> Like exchanges across the frontlines during the war, the peacetime trade at Arizona happens without a foreign intermediary. Likewise, the trade is not replacing hostile nationalisms with an antiseptic form of multiculturalism but is displacing volatile issues to the periphery of popular discourse.<sup>22</sup> Mico will only talk about ethnicity and nationalism when I initiate the subject. Other traders, too, wait to be asked, and then tell me that ethnicity at Arizona is beside the point.<sup>23</sup>

As with nationalism, the economic rationality of free trade at Arizona is also trusted to displace the remnants of socialism. Thus the OHR, committed to the

<sup>18</sup> See note 1.

<sup>19</sup> See note 1.

<sup>20</sup> Speech held on 18 November 2000 by Alexander Vershbow, US representative to the North Atlantic Council, available at <<http://www.useu.be/ISSUES/vers1118.html>>.

<sup>21</sup> Many traders describe the interethnic relationships as a shared expectation, a legacy of the past but still a viable norm. So, Mustafa tells me: ‘I grew up in that [socialist] system and there is no way you can change me now. I am not used to distinguishing whether someone is Serb, Croat, or Muslim. I didn’t separate people out like that. I differentiate people according to their humanity. We can’t say that all the Serbs are the same.’

<sup>22</sup> It is an unstable periphery in the sense that disagreements threaten to re-centre the market around politicized identities, but a periphery nonetheless as the issues are evidently made obsolete through everyday work. At Zlata’s stand, Huso (a Muslim) gives me a beautiful example of just how normalized – not neutralized – the issues of nationality and nationalism are at the market. He tells me that trader Rašo (a Serb) is the best neighbour they could have, and a very good man (‘As good as bread’). ‘But you start talking to him about politics and all is lost. That’s how entrenched he is. So you let go.’

<sup>23</sup> For other accounts on boundary economies and their (lack of) impact on interethnic relations, see Hann 1992; Konstantinov 1996; Wilson and Donnan 1998.



promotion of a 'single economic space, a central tenet of the Dayton Peace process',<sup>24</sup> cites the District, with the market boosting its revenues and its regional fame, as 'the future Bosnia-Herzegovina in microcosm'<sup>25</sup> and 'a paragon for the organization of de-centralized Bosnia-Herzegovina'.<sup>26</sup> Harnessing the spontaneous economic gathering and the transnational governance that Arizona stands for, the District plans are pulling Arizona away from the control of the Bosnian state while at the same time promoting a Bosnia with a 'free' market that is carefully planned and developed.

In the tales of its vendors, Arizona began with people who came 'of their own will' to trade along the road and across entity lines, in secrecy during the war ('while off duty from the front lines', remembers Haris), and openly after the peace, still in their respective uniforms. It all started with 'cigarettes, coffee and flour', says Sejo. The bare necessities, in Bosnian terms, thus brought the market to being. Throughout the war, warlords and common soldiers traded through the decades-old ties with the underground economy of Eastern Europe, but Arizona opened illegal trade opportunities to the wider public.<sup>27</sup> In the guise of retail and wholesale vendors, service providers and impoverished shoppers, ordinary people disseminate contraband, unrecorded and untaxed goods supplied by the organized crime networks. However, the various means for eluding state control (underreporting, employing unregistered workers, running firms under bogus names, to name just a few) are not unique to Arizona; most formal businesses in Bosnia resort to similar practices.<sup>28</sup> The subsequent 'developmental' initiatives of

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<sup>24</sup> *OHR Press Release*, 12 December 2001, available at <[http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/pressro/default.asp?content\\_id=6570](http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/pressro/default.asp?content_id=6570)>.

<sup>25</sup> *OHR Press Release*, 8 March 2001, available at <[http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/pressro/default.asp?content\\_id=4268](http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/pressro/default.asp?content_id=4268)>.

<sup>26</sup> *Oslobođenje*, 17 March 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Far more exclusive is the trafficking of humans, mostly immigrants and women forced into the sex industry, although organized crime groups recruit wider local assistance for the logistics of this human flow. At the fringes of the market are night bars with signs now falsely advertising nudes since the sex trade was ended by a major police raid just a few months before my fieldwork. But the business, displaced further into the countryside or arranged by phone, still goes on. To distinguish among the extralegal activities at the market is an important but formidable task since conventionally 'the concept of an illegal or black market economy lumps illegal trading and small scale production together with violent criminal activities usually considered intrinsically immoral by state and society alike' (Clark 1988: 5).

<sup>28</sup> This is precisely the weakness of theorizing the informal economy as radically separate and separable from the formal sector; in Bosnia such distinctions regularly do not hold. Furthermore, the terms 'informal', 'unofficial' and 'non-formal' are preferred over the 'black market economy', which presumably overemphasizes the issue of illegality and upholds a conventional notion of legitimacy that in many states, as in Bosnia, is no longer tenable. With this caution in mind, I use the term 'black market' here because it best fits the

the District to 'graduate' informal trade to the level of a conventional economy reflect a recent trend in global developmental policy that views the informal economy as 'a living expression of liberalism's ubiquitous economic men, a genuine force for modernization' (Duffield 2001: 148). Casting Arizona as a model of free market entrepreneurship, the state and the OHR burden the meagre earnings made there with high taxes and rent and thus infringe on the very possibility of subsistence. As Miralem observes: 'A year or two ago, every day used to be [busy] like Saturday and Sunday are now.' The revenues from Arizona comprise a 'significant source of budget incomes'<sup>29</sup> despite the accrued 30 million US dollars in unpaid taxes and ongoing unrecorded trade.<sup>30</sup> The most recent plan to relocate the market to a mall under construction further north is yet another step for economic development and a strike against the remainder of the regional 'Balkan' traditionalisms as embodied in the image of an open-air market.

The plan is a conspicuous departure from the very form of informal economy comprising a wide variety of income opportunities, simple facilities and minimal ties to the state bureaucracy (Clark 1988). But the plan also inconspicuously renounces the neo-liberal ideal of free competition that Arizona has stood for thus far and surrenders the traders to ultimately unaccountable, non-state interests – those of foreign investors. In December 2001, the District and the OHR allocated Arizona to *Italproject*, a coalition of anonymous Italian investors, and the local company *Santovac* that together committed themselves to an infrastructure development project worth over 300 million KM (150 million €). Allegedly using as a model an American legal clause on urban rehabilitation that entrusts the state with the development of private land defined as underdeveloped or criminal, the District entrusted to *Italproject*, for a period of twenty years, the public land of Arizona, as well as the private lands adjacent to it. *Italproject* had already taken over from the District the collection of rent for the existing market stands and, 'with our rent money', a vendor says, has begun construction of a shopping mall north of the central market. Perpetually preoccupied with the squalid appearance of the market, the OHR is now pleased to have turned 'an old problem – the lack of infrastructure – into a real commercial opportunity'.<sup>31</sup> Miralem sums it up well: 'It will be nice to look at, like a real settlement. But it will no longer be this. It will be

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popular image of Arizona and captures the local term for informal trade (*na crno*, literally 'in the black') as well as the historical model of *šverc*.

<sup>29</sup> *Oslobođenje*, 17 March 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Since the creation of the Brčko District in March 1999, Arizona has been policed by the District police department and the International Police Task Force (IPTF). Additionally, since June 2000, the State Border Service (*Državna granična služba*, DGS) has been monitoring the flow of goods across marked and unmarked borders. Nevertheless, informal goods continue to flow through ever more sophisticated channels carved out in the marriage of capital and officialdom.

<sup>31</sup> *OHR Press Release*, 31 October 2001, available at <[http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/presso/pressr/default.asp?content\\_id=6172](http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/presso/pressr/default.asp?content_id=6172)>.

something else.’ The restrooms and street lamps envisioned for the new mall are a small comfort to the traders who cannot afford the rent of 10,000 KM (5,000 €) in advance for the smallest unit of space and the additional 25,000 KM (12,500 €) in instalments during the first year. ‘This is the biggest robbery there could be’, Mico says. The amounts are incredible in Bosnia where the average (and regularly delayed) monthly salary amounts to 400 KM (200 €), or at the market where the average monthly turnover is about the same. Zlata speaks for many when she wonders: ‘Who has the money for that? The small ones will not make it.’ The head of the District’s Department for Urbanization, Environmental Planning and Privatization agrees: ‘Of the 3,500 traders who now work there, perhaps 1,000 will remain. The rest will find some other work’.<sup>32</sup> But Mico says: ‘There is nothing else. This is the last resort.’ The private owners of the land across the road from Arizona have initiated a legal suit to regain their rights to rent and to maintain a humbler market next to the *Italproject* one. However, when the landowners cancel a strike previously proposed to the traders, Mico’s hopes wane: ‘They must have been offered some good deal’.<sup>33</sup>

The *Italproject* scheme occupies the sphere that Karl Polanyi observes within the liberal economy and terms the ‘non-market’. Removed from the sacred liberal creed of the self-regulating free market, in the non-market, capital and the state form a ‘network of measures and policies ... integrated into powerful institutions designed to check the action of the market’ (Polanyi 2001 [1944]: 79). Eliminating the competition from private landowners at Arizona and transforming municipal land into a business concern, *Italproject* and the District are replacing the existing market, accessible to a range of interests from big to small, with a market for a select few. Moreover, the move expresses a more general ambivalence in the international policy towards Arizona that sees it both as an opportunity for an interethnic meeting ground and a showcase of planned development. The *Italproject* scheme indicates a swing towards the latter course, and the traders are quick to predict that the subsequent consolidation of capital and the exit of small traders will end the substantial level of interethnic interaction among the traders. As Mico puts it, ‘They will break all this apart. Before, there was a project of bringing the people together, and now it’s a project of dividing them.’

Far above the small traders, the market and non-market rules appear ominous, mighty, and unfair. There is the reach of ghostly, foreign capital and the legal

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<sup>32</sup> *Oslobodjenje*, 11 June 2002.

<sup>33</sup> One such deal is already known: after the war, the Croat veteran organization of the local 108<sup>th</sup> HVO brigade, based in the village of Bosanska Bijela, established a company called *Posavina 108* that seized a part of the Arizona land and built commercial facilities for rent on it. When *Italproject* signed the contract with the District, the director of *Posavina 108* at first threatened the mayor that his ‘soldiers’ (*borci*) would get involved ‘if he allows foreigners to take our land’ (*Oslobodjenje*, 11 June 2002), but then quieted down after *Italproject* agreed to reimburse *Posavina 108* for the loss of land with monthly payments of 10,000 KM (5,000 €) for a period of two years (*Oslobodjenje*, 6 November 2002).

arbitrariness of the national and transnational plans. When threatened in the past, the traders organized strikes and barricaded the highway. Now, watching and waiting, Miralem and Mico say: ‘There will be social unrest.’ The uncertain and incongruous takes on order in an uneventful everyday. Within the everyday experience of work, traders locate Arizona within a shared, normative body of needs and expectations, deemed customary and fair.

### **Tighter Pants, Bigger Stand**

On my last day at the market, having had coffee with Miralem and Safet (Safet having shaved off his beard), I head for the flea market. At Zlata’s stand, where six traders share a stand, used coffee dishes sit near by: the morning coffee is through. A customer asks Muho how much the long skirts are and he replies: ‘Nine.’ Zlata looks at him, puzzled – he has been selling them for eight the whole morning long. ‘Too expensive’, she says. ‘I know’, he replies, ‘but let it be. I’ve sold enough since this morning. It’s enough.’

The traders often invoke a limit to one’s work and one’s gain. In the metaphors of ‘bread’, ‘survival’ and ‘life’, the work at the market relates the idea of subsistence as the customary entitlement that it was during socialism and as an ideal of work within the market embodied in *domaće* goods. Muho’s ‘enough’ exemplifies the logic of meaningful work as limited to subsistence. In contrast with the logic of profit generating schemes, this limit ensures the equal welfare of the workers and assumes personal relationships that permeate the working environment.

Mico, Haris and Miralem tell me that all traders, big and small, need to be able to work at the market since ‘we all get our bread from this’. Haris concludes: ‘We too [‘the small ones’] need to survive.’ The limit redraws the claims of traders, the state and non-state agents within normative and customary boundaries.

Some traders at Arizona, and by extension the District and the OHR planning the ‘transition’ to a rational capitalist economy, refuse such limits as alien to the very idea of profitable gain. ‘We are eating off a stem’, trader Mustafa says, describing the short-sighted ambition of his fellow traders. He goes on: ‘Only those who have [something] will survive. Only the strong ones will win. It’s the way it is. [It’s] The West, capitalism.’

Later on the same day, Zlata points to a store being built straight across from them and says there will be trouble. A *Podrinjka*, a refugee from the Podrinje region (in eastern Bosnia), has apparently bought the spot and is building too close to the two stands on the left and right of her site. She is a bigmouth, they say, and quick to fight, and fist fight at that. Physical fights and arguments are common at the flea market, they add, but this *Podrinjka* is notorious for both. When the District officials (or those from *Italproject*? No one knows but the confusion is telling) and the *Podrinjka* march in, traders from the neighbouring stands neglect customers to follow the scene. Rašo, the indignant owner of the stand on the left,

says: 'If only you'd left ten centimetres for the opening and closing of the stand.' She replies: 'I have a contract and what the contract says for me, that's how it will be, and I'm not giving up a centimetre of what's mine. What's mine is mine.' The neighbour to the right, Seka, also can't open her door because of the *Podrinjka's* stand. At Zlata's stand, someone comments: 'They'll have to rub behinds getting into their stands.' Alma laughs: 'Yeah, but it'll be the end of anyone whom she [the *Podrinjka*] hits with her ass.' Alija adds, in a low voice: 'Make three meters like everyone else. Why did you spread out, why does she need seven?' According to the regulations, Muho explains, businesses at the flea market are spaced at half a meter on both sides, 'but she has to be greedy' (*'treba bit proklet'* – literally: damned, hogging something at another person's expense). Muho thinks it is all the fault of the District; some officials profit from selling the half meter assigned for spacing. The *Podrinjka* is shouting in the officials' faces, explaining how she already owns three spaces at the new (*Italproject*) market, for which she paid 140,000 KM (70,000 €), and that she will visit the District personally to straighten out this mess once and for all. Everyone at the stand laughs when Zlata comments: 'If only you built in the parking lot, there is plenty of space there. You could go ahead and spread out.'

Everyone sympathizes with Rašo. The *Podrinjka's* conspicuous structure invokes disbelief ('why this big...'), disapproval ('she has to be greedy/damned'), distaste (revealed in the comments on the size of her behind 'squeezed into those tight pants in such heat!'). Everyone else is sharing the scarce space at the overcrowded market, but the *Podrinjka* shuns the others and thus should go to the parking lot, that is, truly exit the market since she has already symbolically left its 'people'. What everyone seems to be saying is that to be content with 'the same as everyone else' is to belong to the 'everyone else' whose vulnerable, indignant humanity is often invoked in the image of the producing peasant and stories about 'us': 'the people', 'the poor', 'the little ones'. The *Podrinjka*, with her open disdain, conspicuous wealth, legal contract and tight pants, remains outside.

As a rule, the state, the District and *Italproject* fall outside the customary economy; they overstep its limits. Miralem tells me: 'The state here arranges nothing, gives nothing, they are smothering the people [with revenue collections]. Already the smaller ones are not surviving. We are working here but for how much longer? They are asking for a lot and our earnings are small.' Haris puts it similarly: 'Here, to survive, to keep customers, see to your own interests, you have to buy as cheaply as possible and not record the sales. Otherwise, by the time you pay for the customs and everything to the state, you have nothing. I am not saying that you shouldn't give to the state, but there's a limit.' The state is both callous and greedy. It makes excessive claims on traders' earnings and gives nothing in return ('not even a single toilet'). It is up to the traders, then, to restore 'some limit' to the state's claims.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> On the perception of the state as a predatory agent, see Grandits, Kolind, Helms, this volume.

*Italproject*, Haris says, knows no limits: ‘If only he [‘the Italian’] wanted to make less – say he can’t make three million but he could make one million or so. We need to survive too. Don’t suffocate us. I will not buy a space down there [at the mall]. I won’t as a matter of principle.’ Similarly, Mico says that *Italproject* is a scheme ‘to suffocate this people, to prevent it from living or working. Just so they can get rich. The few of them will hold everything, and whatever happens to us is fine. And this supports some 150,000 people. The whole [region of] Tuzla lives from this’. He concludes: ‘They will make poor people here. Even now it’s the poor who are here, but they will be poorer. There will be social unrest.’

The traders’ subsistence economy at the market is similar to the ideology of customary exchange theorized by Edward P. Thompson. His analysis is pertinent to the Bosnian context inasmuch as it posits a conflict between the capitalist process of legal and contractual rationalization and non-economic customary behaviour. The main feature of the customary claim, Thompson notes, is the ‘priority afforded ... to the “non-economic” over direct monetary sanctions, exchanges and motivations’ (Thompson 1991: 11).

The contractual and legal relationships that the *Podrinjka* and *Italproject* observe are unnatural and unfair when compared to the customary and personal relationships expected at the market. Although complicated by salaried contracts,<sup>35</sup> the work at Arizona is described as mobilized along axes of friendship and kinship rather than wages, and based on reciprocal assistance rather than on unilateral stipulation. Haris complains that ‘[*Italproject*] presented me with the contract that he has printed out. He did not ask me to write it, did not give me other options. He should tell us how he got this market, on what terms, and what are his and my rights and obligations’. Haris concludes: ‘We are the sheep and he shears us.’ *Italproject* is exploitative, its claims are unfair: by blatantly disregarding the concerns of the traders and forcing them into its own income generating scheme, it seeks to turn the people into a profitable, dumb mass: the sheep. *Italproject* denies subsistence, both as a possibility at Arizona and as an economic concept; it violates the normative order of customary claims.

The normative limit of ‘enough’ divides the market’s economy in two: within the bounds of subsistence lies the sphere of belonging to ‘the people’, ‘the little ones’, ‘the poor’, those who, like the peasant-producer, have been displaced to the margins of the market but are dependent on it for ‘survival’. This economy of subsistence redeems traditionally stigmatized work at the market in a legitimate

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<sup>35</sup> While wage work is not new to Bosnian peasants, its current form is unfamiliar to Bosnians. In the past most of them worked in public companies. Present day employment in private enterprises makes blatant the formal loss of social equality. However, outside of large scale projects mediated between companies by contracts, I argue that (a ghost of) the claims to social equality still inform relationships between owners and employees. Thus, for example, the skilled workers one hires for a personal project are treated no differently than friends and relatives recruited as traditional, reciprocal work parties. They are served a good meal, treated with coffee and sweets, and assisted by the ‘contractor’.

commodity trade by relating it to the egalitarian idea of workers' welfare associated with the socialist and small scale agriculturalist 'past'. Transgressing the bounds of the customary and common is the other all-inclusive sphere comprising the state, non-state agents and investors, and other traders. By virtue of their presence beyond the limit and away from 'us', 'they' ('the big ones', 'the top'), like the other transgressional form of social imagination (*šverceri*, non-producing peasants), mark the insecurity of the everyday. The market is thus not traditional, but neither is it transitional in the sense that traders are realizing some type of neo-liberal potential bound to deliver Arizona to an anticipated state of development. Instead of the eternal, inevitable presence of peasant nationalisms, the freedom of the neo-liberal market, or the promise of planned development, in the routine of Arizona it is uncertainty that rules.

## Everyday

At Zlata's stand on an ordinary day, we sit around and talk. Customers come and go. There is a shortage of small change, and the traders keep borrowing from one another. Velid gets some Euros (they are still very new in the region), two bills of 500, and he gets really nervous about whether they are 'real'. He repeats, 'I'm afraid of these Euros' and passes them around the stand for the rest to inspect. He gives it to each one of them in turn, saying, 'You would know', and each looks it over saying, 'I wouldn't know. They are fine'. Shortly afterwards, a tax collector shows up, looks at everyone's records one by one, and asks for paperwork that no one seems to have – some sort of tax declaration. With the tax collector gone, all gather to tell each other exactly what happened. And they are not sure. All seem to have received different instructions. Alma then says, 'Here you can't know whether to tell the truth or lie.' Amidst the mundane, the shortage of small change, long coffee sessions and tax collection, there is the unknowable. What exactly did the tax collector say? What should one say? Are the Euros real?

The aim of this study, as of any ethnography I think, is to move behind the apparent or extraordinary and into the ordinary as people experience it and explain it. So within a notorious regional black market I looked for the mundane values of work and found them very much connected, just as the market itself is, to the rest of Bosnian society.

While to me the notion of work as subsistence and the boundaries it implies are made explicit at Arizona (and in the wider society outside it), the continued validation of *domaće* products and the peasant-producer who sells goods at a market are far more convoluted and, some might suggest, entirely irrelevant to contemporary Bosnia. Absenting the peasantry from 'serious' transitional economics discourse as a quaint, obstinate category of culture, however, is a denial of the economic reality in which the quest for subsistence fuses and confuses the rural and the urban. I suggest that the peasant-producer and *domaće* products, even when they exit the core of the dominant economy (as in Arizona), are central to

local notions of work and self produced within a society negotiating transgressional categories and claims. Recognition of transgressional forms of social imagination (*šverceri*, non-producing peasants) and violations of the normative ('the big ones', 'the top') is a pertinent exercise throughout the Bosnian market. Engaged in subsistence that no longer accords a 'natural' differentiation between productive and non-productive work, and powerless before the claims of capital and the law, traders displace themselves away from what is compromising and within the shared universe of right and wrong.

All appearances aside (the open sewage, the hawking, the squatting trade), Arizona is not peripheral. As a traditionally marginal form of trade that figures now as a prominent regional employment opportunity, Arizona speaks bluntly of the ongoing reshuffling of the Bosnian economy away from formal production to informal trade, of social fluidity outside the clear markers of urban and rural and away from ethnic or national distinctions. These are significant developments since the Bosnia of the 1960s, when Lockwood classified Bosnian peasant markets as 'peripheral' (Lockwood 1975: 208-11). Not only were the peasants self-sufficient within the village and only sporadically engaged in the market, but the peasant market was also marginal to the (cultural and normative) interethnic integration otherwise taking place in 'the more highly developed and rationalized economic and social institutions of the new nation state' (Lockwood 1975: 211). In contrast, Arizona is a site of regular employment for a host of full-time and part-time traders, and of daily economic and non-economic exchange, whereas the majority of formal economic and social institutions in the region have rested idle since the war. No longer a traditional peasant institution, the market recreates daily relationships across and around the lines of ethnicity, subsistence and residence that vary in intensity and form from friendship to partnership. Many relationships precede Arizona, having been forged through formal institutions before the war, and many extend outside the market.

Market relationships are subject to the shared, daily reinvented social norms ordered around the claim to subsistence and referenced in the ideal of market trade (*domaće* products) and market relationships (the independent peasant-producer). Thus, it is markets like Arizona rather than the institutions of a rational state or rituals of self-sufficient communities that are redrawing a larger social universe in post-war Bosnia. No longer occasioning merely the 'fleeting and materialistic contacts' that Lockwood observed as unsuitable for interethnic integration (Lockwood 1975: 210), neither are these new market forms the mechanisms of integration fuelled by amnesiac powers of trade that OHR and NATO envision. Instead, what is evident at Arizona is a more holistic exchange that reinvents both the socialist norms of worker welfare and peasants' independence from the state.

The experience of work for both socialist workers and peasant-producers (and the two often overlapped) is remembered in terms of subsistence, thus limited within the scope of 'enough' that is granted to everyone. In the personal experience of a socialist worker, 'enough' delineated an effort required at work to earn a salary on similar terms as every other worker. The peasant-producer defined



'enough' in similar terms; as the effort needed to support a family. On the other hand, the meaning of work for socialist peasants and workers hinged on the recognition of one's particularity within the community and an innate motivation to work without regard for the work's immediate, material utility.

Furthermore, the legacy of socialist and peasant notions of work informs an ideal of the state (see also Helms, Kolind, this volume). At Arizona, traders call for equality and welfare as well as the kind of independence that the Yugoslav socialist state bestowed on the landowners, whether producing peasants, peasant-workers or urbanite landowners making weekend pilgrimages to their land. But the state imagined at Arizona is also devoid of the socialist bureaucracy with its initiative-stunting pace and paperwork. The traders, who come to Brčko from all over the region to register their businesses, cite Brčko District as a model of an administration reformed to the needs of entrepreneurship.

Thus, the traders do not merely reinvent customary (socialist, peasant) expectations but instead invent novel customs and claims. What is claimed as customary transcends the distinctions of rural, urban, and ethnic without a formal ideology of 'Brotherhood and Unity', and without the assimilation required by multiculturalism. Navigating the uncertain and the unfair in the course of everyday work preoccupies the traders with ongoing differentiations, but the logic of subsistence limits the work and occupies the traders with everyday meanings.

Arizona is a metonym: its informal economy and the future enclosed in a mall, its claims to subsistence and the transnational investment plans, its uncertainties and the mundane all in a sense stand for the Bosnian whole. And in Bosnia, too, after the war, nothing extraordinary happens – just the orderly clutter of everyday life.