

In the Wake of War: A Cultural Criminological Perspective on the Growth of the Sex Industry in Kosovo

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1 Introduction

It is a quiet evening in a brothel close to Camp Bondsteel, the main US military base in Kosovo. Mimoza and Shqipe do not have any clients. They are killing time by dreaming about possibilities abroad but a Kosovar passport does not allow for much travelling. ‘Where would you go if you could travel anywhere?’ I ask. Shqipe takes a moment to think and says ‘Afghanistan’. Mimoza nods in agreement ‘a lot of our friends are in Afghanistan’. I am puzzled. ‘The American and other soldiers from Bondsteel, Roos; they left Kosovo but work in Afghanistan now. We could make money there.’¹

The exact borders of Kosovo were first created when Josip Broz Tito established his Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia after the Second World War and designated Kosovo² as an autonomous region within the Republic of Serbia.³ Kosovo was predominantly inhabited by a majority of Albanians and a minority of Serbs.⁴ Tensions between the ethnic groups increased when Serbian president Slobodan Milošević used xenophobia in order to rise to power in the late eighties of the 21st century and installed an apartheid-like regime which largely repressed Kosovar Albanians.⁵ Albanians in Kosovo initially refrained from taking up arms in the hope that intervention by the international community would just be a matter of time. Support inside Kosovo grew for the more militant approach of the ‘Kosovo Liberation Army’ (KLA) after the Dayton agreement put an end to other armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia without enforcing a final settlement in which the interests of Kosovar Albanians were respected.⁶ The

1 Informal conversation with Mimoza and Shqipe, 16 April 2013.

2 The official name given to the territory was Autonomous Region of Kosovo-Metohija and later Autonomous Province of Kosovo-Metohija. For simplicity’s sake the territory will be called ‘Kosovo’.

3 Malcolm, 1999, p. 316.

4 Perritt, 2008, p. 5.

5 Malcolm, 1999, p. xlvi; Ramet, 1999, p. 299.

6 Perritt, 2010, p. 33-34; Ramet, 1999, p. 309; Malcolm, 1999, p. 350-353; Troebst, 1998, p. 7.

KLA carried out a growing number of attacks on Serbian officials and police officers as well as Albanian collaborators from 1996 onwards.⁷ Milošević's forces tried to crush the armed resistance and evict the majority of the Albanian population from Kosovo. Hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes. When Milošević refused to sign a peace agreement initiated by the international community, and Serbian forces continued to attack Albanian villages, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began airstrikes on 24 March 1999. The aerial bombardment initially intensified the cleansing operation of the Serbian forces on the ground but led to their withdrawal in June 1999.⁸

The end of the war left Kosovo facing an unknown future. Whilst the question of Kosovo's status was being settled, a NATO-led peacekeeping force (KFOR) was established and the United Nations were tasked with governing the area through the Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).^{9,10} Mimoza and Shqipe learned from experience that the wake of a war can be economically lucrative. Both women tried to earn money in the Kosovar sex industry when its small-scale prostitution market transformed into a large-scale industry with high demand for commercial sex right after the war.^{11,12}

The growth of the Kosovar sex industry after the war is predominantly explained as a matter of forced prostitution which followed the demand of international peacekeepers, UN staff, diplomats and relief workers that settled down in Kosovo. According to Mertus and Bertone '(...) the arrival of an international community catalysed the growth of the sex industry' in Kosovo.¹³ Amnesty International reported that 'within months of KFOR's arrival, brothels were reported around military bases occupied by international peace-keepers. Kosovo soon became a major destination country for women trafficked into forced prostitution.'¹⁴ And in May 2000, the chief of mission of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the lead anti-trafficking agency in Kosovo at the time, stated that 'KFOR troops and UN staff in Kosovo had fed a mushrooming

7 Perritt, 2008, p. 8; Troebst, 1998, p. 12.

8 Malcolm, 1999, p. xxxiv-xxxviii; Ramet, 1999, p. 317-318; Perritt, 2008, p. 9. On 9 June 1999, Milošević agreed to withdraw almost all of his forces from Kosovo and (at least temporarily) hand over the exercise of sovereignty in Kosovo to the United Nations in the Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force (KFOR) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia (commonly known as the Kumanovo Agreement).

9 Perritt, 2010, p. 51.

10 Kosovo declared independence on 17 February 2008. Today Kosovo is recognized by 110 countries including most of the Member States of the European Union and the United States of America. On 13 August 2014, the Solomon Islands were the last state to recognize Kosovo so far.

11 Mertus & Bertone, 2007; Friman & Reich, 2007; Amnesty International, 2004; Terre des Hommes, 2010.

12 Studies in South Korea (Moon, 1997), the Philippines and Japan (Pollock Sturdevant & Stoltzfus, 1992) observe that prostitution more often flourishes after the end of a war.

13 Mertus & Bertone, 2007, p. 42.

14 Amnesty International, 2004.

of nightclubs in which young girls were being forced into prostitution (...).¹⁵ Although these publications generally allude to other factors that influenced the growth of the sex industry and it is generally acknowledged that the industry nowadays serves a wider clientele, the emphasis is on forced prostitution and the role of international clients in the development of the post-war prostitution business in Kosovo. This is a representation still voiced today, for instance by a Kosovar Albanian human rights activist who informed me that ‘the demand was the international military and police forces. And because of the demand we had trafficked women coming from all parts of Europe, and further.’¹⁶

Victims of sex trafficking have indeed served international clients in the Kosovar sex industry. This representation, however, moves attention away from the numerous other political, social and economic features of Kosovar society after the war which have influenced the development of post-war prostitution and the variety of experiences of women involved in it. Based on a cultural criminological analysis, in this contribution, I will challenge the main views that, firstly, the growth of the sex industry in Kosovo after the war was a direct consequence of the demand of internationals¹⁷ for commercial sex and, secondly, that this demand was largely met through forced prostitution. I argue that an emphasis on the demand of internationals and the victimhood of women can be effective for aid organisations and the media but paradoxically enhances the vulnerability of women involved in the Kosovar sex industry. These women are depicted as criminal if they do not meet the highly symbolic and stereotypical images of victims of trafficking. To develop this analysis I will first discuss the cultural criminological perspective and then apply some of its central analytical concepts (i.e. meaning, representation and power) to the dominant explanation that the influx of large numbers of internationals triggered forced prostitution in post-war Kosovo.

The study builds on the ethnographic tradition of criminologists at the Willem Pompe Institute. Empirical data at the basis of this contribution springs from my ongoing PhD research on prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes in Kosovo. Since 2011 I have conducted an ethnographic study on how war and post-war transition processes shape the Kosovar sex industry. During various fieldwork periods I made a habit of spending several days and evenings a week in bars and motels where prostitution was taking place. I spent time with women when they were waiting for clients, joined them

15 Chief of mission of IOM Pasquale Lupoli in ‘Group launches campaign against forced prostitution in Kosovo’ AFP, 24 May 2000 cited in Amnesty International, 2004.

16 Interview with a Kosovar Albanian human rights activist, 8 November 2013.

17 In Kosovo, people generally use the term ‘internationals’ to refer to foreigners in Kosovo who work for embassies, international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In this text I will use the term in the same meaning.

on short trips or necessary visits to institutions, discussed ‘business’ with bar owners and observed them being offered new employees. Additionally, I spent time with a woman who used to be involved in prostitution but was now in witness protection, and held in-depth interviews with local experts on human trafficking and prostitution as well as women identified as victims of trafficking in reintegration programmes. Finally I followed court cases in this field.

2 The cultural criminological perspective

In cultural criminology the concept of culture is specifically applied to the analysis of (the reaction to) crime, or better to transgressive and penalised behaviour, given that the term ‘crime’ is already coloured with meaning attached to certain acts. According to cultural criminology that which is understood as crime and just crime control is shaped by specific cultural forces¹⁸ and social processes¹⁹ in societies. Since different cultural forces and social processes prevail in different societies, transgressive behaviour, such as offering commercial sex, is considered a crime and penalized in some countries while understood as a job in others. Cultural criminology thus firmly roots transgressive behaviour in the context in which it takes place, looking at crime as a cultural product instead of an objective fact.²⁰

2.1 *The concept of culture*

In his article ‘What is cultural about cultural criminology?’ O’Brien poses that cultural criminology claims this dual focus on culture and crime without ‘a proper reflection on what, precisely, is intended by the concept of culture’.²¹ Some of the ‘founding fathers’ of criminology, Ferrell, Hayward and Young understand ‘culture to be the stuff of collective meaning and collective identity’.²² But what does this mean? Is culture a reality by itself with people being ‘cultural dopes’²³ acting in compliance with the structures provided by society or is culture continuously constructed by individuals and ever changing?

I agree with O’Brien that the centrality of culture in cultural criminology requires a critical theoretical reflection on the concept of culture, following sociological and anthropological debates.²⁴ Sociologist Anthony Giddens’ exploration of whether society or individuals themselves shape our social reality (culture if you wish) is relevant here.²⁵ Giddens rejects both extreme

18 Ferrell, Hayward & Young, 2008, p. 2.

19 Presdee, 2000, p. 11.

20 Ferrell, Hayward & Young, 2008; Presdee, 2000, p. 17.

21 O’Brien, 2005, p. 601.

22 Ferrell, Hayward & Young, 2008, p. 2.

23 Garfinkel, 1967.

24 O’Brien, 2005.

25 Giddens, 1984.

positions by arguing that, at the same time, individuals construct society and are constrained by it. Following Giddens, I regard culture from a social constructivist perspective by which culture is continuously constructed by individuals as a result of socialisation within a specific political, economic, historical and social context as well as through gained experiences. This opposes an essentialist view, in which ‘cultures’ are seen as clearly confined, differing entities.²⁶

2.2 *Meaning, representation and power*

With this notion of culture in mind, a cultural criminological perspective on crime does not ‘accept criminal acts for what they are, but [interrogates] them for what they become’²⁷ as a consequence of the specific political, economic, historical and social context in which these acts are conducted. This is strived for in cultural criminology by analysing the meaning that is given to certain transgressive acts, examining how such an act is represented, for instance in mass media, and considering who has the power to define an act as criminal. Attention is shifted from the act of crime itself towards ‘everything that happens before crime occurs’²⁸ and is perceived as such.

Sexual intercourse between an American peacekeeper and a Ukrainian woman in Kosovo in the year 2000 can be perceived in various ways, for example. Specific circumstances (e.g. following marriage, force, a nice evening or payment) determine whether the intercourse is seen as an act of love, violence, passion or commerce. The intercourse is understood differently because these various circumstances infuse the objective act of sexual intercourse with subjective *meaning*.

In the following sections, I will first analyse the meaning post-war prostitution in Kosovo holds to various actors, such as aid organisations and women actually involved in prostitution. Subsequently I will examine various social as well as economic features of Kosovar society after the war which influenced the growth of the sex industry. In this analysis, I challenge the dominant representation of, firstly, women involved in post-war prostitution as sole victims of trafficking and, secondly, international men creating all demand.

3 **Meaning of post-war prostitution in Kosovo**

3.1 *Prostitution as a crime*

Let us say the American peacekeeper from the previous example paid the Ukrainian woman to have intercourse with him. This makes their intercourse an act of prostitution. Engaging in prostitution is an offense according to

²⁶ See also Oude Breuil, 2011.

²⁷ Ferrell, Hayward & Young, 2008, p. 22.

²⁸ Quinney in Presdee, 2000, p. 16.

the law on peace and public order in Kosovo irrespective of whether the act was considered beneficial by both parties for reasons varying from lust to financial gain.²⁹ The sexual intercourse between the American peacekeeper and Ukrainian woman is therefore a crime in Kosovo.

This legal meaning of prostitution as a crime shaped the way in which UNMIK dealt with prostitution. The use of any commercial sexual services by UNMIK and KFOR staff was forbidden given the criminality of the act. UNMIK listed bars, brothels, strip clubs and nightclubs in which women were allegedly involved in prostitution in their ‘UNMIK Directive for Off Limits Premises’. UNMIK and KFOR staff were not allowed to frequent any of the premises on this list since ‘international representatives and by default their organizations [could not be seen, RdW] condoning and supporting the sexual exploitation and slavery of women and contributing to the profits of organized crime’.³⁰ Non-compliance resulted in disciplinary actions, such as the termination of work contracts.³¹

Holding responsibility over the civil administration in Kosovo, ‘United Nations’ first colony’,³² UNMIK leadership must have felt to be having a certain exemplary role. It is therefore understandable that the UN expected its staff to maintain high standards of integrity and stay away from any act defined as criminal in Kosovo. However, by depicting the sex industry in general in terms of exploitation, slavery and organised crime, the UN, as many aid organisations on the ground, produced a specific image of post-war prostitution in Kosovo and the different actors embroiled. It portrays the women as victims, wanting to be saved from their clients and other profiting delinquent individuals.

Women indeed suffered severe exploitation in the Kosovar sex industry. As is the case with prostitution worldwide, stories of force and abuse are multifold. It is important to acknowledge these abuses and act against it. Yet, the existence of abuse does not imply that prostitution in general can be depicted in terms of

29 Article 7 Law on public peace and order, Law No. 03/L-142. In case of force, the act could also fall under Article 171 trafficking in persons, Article 241 facilitating or compelling prostitution and Article 169 Slavery of the Criminal code of the republic of Kosovo, Code No. 04/L-082.

30 For an example of what the UNMIK Directive for Off Limits Premises looked like in March 2005, see: http://kosovo6b.tripod.com/March_2005_Off-Limits_List.xls. The directive was constantly updated during its existence.

31 As shown by this post from 2011 on the Internet forum <http://forum.cityxguide.com/topic/other-areas-67> (checked on 16 December 2013) the ‘UNMIK Directive for Off Limits Premises’ is paradoxically used by some men to find places where commercial sex is being offered: ‘Search for “UNMIK Off-Limits Premises” Kosovo, or something like that. Anyway, if the UN is telling its people it’s a NO GO Zone, you can bet it’s the type of place you are looking for. Good list for Kosovo overall, but I was only in Pristina, downtown area, and didn’t have a lot of free time to venture outside of town. (...) There were a half a dozen other places listed on the UNMIK list that were maybe a 20-25 minute cab ride from downtown Pristina, I didn’t have time to try them, hope you all have more luck. That list is the only item I found regarding establishments.’

32 Perritt, 2010, p. 51.

exploitation and slavery, and should be criminalised. If one mingles prostitution and exploitation, amongst others through criminalization of prostitution in general, this stigmatises all parties involved. For Mimoza and Shqipe, post-war prostitution meant a chance to improve their socio-economic standards of living. Prostitution as a window of opportunity for some of the women involved does not coincide with the perception of prostitution as a crime from which women need to be saved. This perspective of post-war prostitution as an opportunity is explained by Oksana from Ukraine.

3.2 Prostitution as a window of opportunity

Oksana and I are standing on the balcony of her temporary apartment in downtown Prishtina, Kosovo. The apartment is part of the witness protection programme in which Oksana is placed after her release from prison. Oksana was detained for the facilitation of prostitution and money laundering but received witness protection afterwards as the main witness in the trial against the owner of the brothel where she provided commercial sex with a group of other Ukrainian women since 2008. After two years in detention and subsequent short stay in witness protection, Oksana is eager to travel to Ukraine to see her family and especially her daughter again. 'I can't wait to go to Ukraine. Nobody knows what I did. To not be ashamed. How I feel ... I can't meet a boy. I only think he will want something from me. I feel so bad.' Oksana experienced her work in prostitution as mentally and physically challenging. She has a panic attack when we go out to buy shoes one day. 'I don't really know what I like, what I want anymore', she mumbles through her tears when she looks at the different pairs of sneakers. 'I just did what was best but didn't think if I liked it or not. I blocked those thoughts. It was easier. Now I don't know what I like anymore.' Yet Oksana feels that her involvement in the sex industry structurally changed the lives of her family members and herself for the better. 'With the money I earned I bought an apartment. I also put heating in the floor. (...) I went on holidays with Anna [Oksana's daughter, RdW]. She saw Egypt in cartoons. And I want her to see those things.' Oksana takes pride in the fact that she and her daughter have their own apartment now and never have to pay rent anymore. Therefore any job in Ukraine would allow her to have a reasonable life. Through her earnings Oksana also sent her sister to university and bought her father a minibus to secure him a steady income as a bus driver. 'It brought good things.'³³

The desire to improve her living standards was a principal reason for Oksana, and many women like her, to engage in prostitution in Kosovo.³⁴ Worldwide the narrative of dire poverty is rather accepted as an explanation for women to get involved in prostitution. Yet, economic incentives vary from women who

33 Informal conversations with Oksana, January 2014.

34 See also: Laczko et al., 2002; Agustin, 2007.

opt for prostitution out of poverty in order to survive as well as desires to take part in the luxurious lifestyle that is presented on the television and the Internet as voiced by Oksana.³⁵

An economic explanation alone, however, does not suffice. Mobility, sociologist Zygmund Bauman outlines, ‘fast becomes the main stratifying factor of our late-modern or postmodern times’.³⁶ Different opportunities regarding both vertical (e.g. wealth and well-being) and horizontal (i.e. between countries) mobility³⁷ inform women’s decisions on how to improve their socio-economic living conditions.

Women in the Kosovar sex industry, who migrated from primary source countries such as Moldova, Ukraine and Romania, not seldom had middle to higher levels of education.^{38,39} The fact that these women were unable to find well-paid and reliable occupations matching their training reflects the limited possibilities for vertical mobility in terms of employment and economic opportunities in their home countries. At the same time their freedom to move abroad, their horizontal mobility, is limited by strict border controls and visa procedures as well as limited financial means.⁴⁰ Kosovo is seldom the first choice of destination for foreign women involved in its sex industry. Women often tried to go to countries in the European Union and settled for Kosovo after entering the Union had failed. In the chaos after the war women could enter Kosovo relatively easy together with refugees flocking back to their homes. ‘I really wanted to go to Italy’ 28-year-old Sofia from Moldova explains. ‘I found someone in Moldova who could arrange false documents for me. I paid him 1,000 euros for these documents and was supposed to pay him the same amount upon arrival in Italy. I travelled to Italy with four other girls but we were stopped at the border with Bulgaria.’ With her false documents having been taken from her Sofia went back to Moldova from where she arranged to go to Kosovo instead. ‘But I still plan to go to Italy. Maybe I can arrange a Romanian passport when I’m in Moldova this summer. Romanians can travel to Italy so that must work out’.⁴¹

Since women like Oksana and Sofia had limited possibilities in their home countries and limited possibilities to travel abroad to more preferred

35 See also: Siegel, 2012, p. 258; Andrijasevic, 2007, p. 97-98; Franko Aas, 2007, p. 40; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002.

36 Bauman, 1998, p. 2.

37 Siegel, 2012.

38 Andreani & Raviv, 2004, p. 9; Surtees, 2005, p. 256.

39 Shortly after the end of the war foreign women, from countries such as Moldova, Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria, entered Kosovo and engaged in prostitution. Growing numbers of girls and women from Kosovo and neighboring Albania are currently involved in the Kosovar prostitution business. Since this contribution specifically considers the growth of the sex industry after the war, the later involvement of Kosovar Albanian women is not discussed here.

40 See also: Andrijasevic, 2007.

41 Interview with Sofia, 30 November 2011.

destinations within the European Union, one of the remaining options when aiming for improved socio-economic living conditions was prostitution in Kosovo. The resolute representation of women involved in the Kosovar sex industry as victims of trafficking rarely correspond with these lived experiences. I do not want to deny the exploitation women encountered along the whole continuum from voluntary sex workers to victims of human trafficking for sexual purposes, as well as all possible forms in between these extremes, but the dominant representation completely dismisses Oksana's, Sofia's and other women's 'resistance to structural inequalities and their struggle to transform their lives'.⁴² Struggles that also generally inform the decision of women who move abroad without prior knowledge about involvement in the sex industry.

Post-war prostitution in Kosovo as one of the limited opportunities to improve one's socio-economic living condition provides another level of meaning that competes with prostitution as a crime from which all women need to be saved. This understanding of prostitution, as voiced by many women actually involved in the business, however, seldom finds its way to the public dialogue, contrary to the meaning given to prostitution by UNMIK, human rights organisations and the media. The women involved generally lack the *power*, and to a certain extent the incentive (since they often prefer to remain as invisible as possible, especially since prostitution is considered a crime), to give prominence to their understanding of prostitution dynamics. This different way of seeing prostitution is therefore missing in the popular *representation* of the sex industry in post-war Kosovo.

4 Obscured causes for the growth of the Kosovar sex industry

The one-sided representation of the blossoming sex industry in Kosovo as forced prostitution following the influx of internationals does not only deny that prostitution can be seen as a window of opportunity by some of the women involved but also obscures other factors which influenced the growth of the Kosovar sex industry after the war; notably the inflow of money, the influence of weak law enforcement by UNMIK as well as the impact of coping mechanisms adopted by Kosovar Albanians under Milošević's regime. These features give an insight into the political, economic, historical and social context in which the sex industry took shape or, in other words, into the cultural forces which shape crime according to cultural criminology. These underexposed other causes will be considered in the next section followed by the negative consequence of overlooking them and singling out one cause and 'solution'.

42 Andrijasevic, 2007, p. 98.

4.1 *Arrival of mobile elites*

The dominant representation emphasises that the growth of the sex industry directly springs from the illicit demands of peacekeepers. They supposedly formed a group of ready-made customers, being relatively wealthy and anonymous far from their homes, which catapulted the prostitution business.⁴³ Women, like Mimoza and Shqipe, indeed regularly refer to international clients who were an especially influential clientele in the first years after the war and online fora show how international peacekeepers inform each other about places to find commercial sex in Kosovo: ‘Can any of you guys add an up to date report on the general situation in Kosovo and what the current P4P scene is like. I am being contracted to work there and will be arriving in a couple of months, probably staying for one year. Any advice would be really appreciated’.⁴⁴ This 2010 post is followed by reactions from various internationals sharing their experience and trying to meet up to go to brothels together.

The arrival of the international community, however, not only encouraged the growth of the sex industry through direct demand for commercial sex but also stirred the demand of the local population who, through their earnings in the ‘peacekeeping economy’, could suddenly afford to spend money on commercial sex. The term ‘peacekeeping economy’ is first presented in the 2002 UNIFEM report *Women, War and Peace*⁴⁵ and describes the ‘industries and services such as bars and hotels that spring up with the arrival of large [numbers of, RdW], foreign, comparatively well-paid peacekeeping personnel’.⁴⁶ In Kosovo the relatively wealthy international community spent money in a wide array of businesses established after the war. Restaurants are packed during lunch and dinner hours. Bars organise parties and drinks every night of the week. Beauty treatments can be reserved in the spa of a five-star hotel where diplomats and aid workers check in for visits to Kosovo’s capital. Relatively luxurious gyms and swimming pools are available for those who can afford it and UNMIK and EULEX cars line up at petrol stations and car washes where local attendants clean vehicles that have become dirty with the ever-present dust for just a few Euros.

Kosovar entrepreneurs benefitted from meeting the illicit (e.g. sexual services and drugs) but also the licit demands of the well-paid international staff. These entrepreneurs also find clientele amongst local personnel of the many international organisations that settled down. Kosovars work as experts and translators at EULEX, UNMIK, OSCE and a wide range of aid organisations,

43 Amnesty International, 2004, p. 7-8; Terre des Hommes, 2010; Friman & Reich, 2007.

44 Post from 2010 on the Internet forum <http://forum.cityxguide.com/topic/other-areas-67> (checked on 16 December 2013). P4P refers to ‘Pay for Pleasure’ and refers to any sexual services in return for money.

45 Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, p. 62.

46 See also: Jennings & Nikolić-Ristanović, 2009.

staff the launderette and kitchen of military bases, earning a salary which often more than triples average earnings at local organisations.

The arrival of the relatively wealthy international community therefore had a large economic impact on the local population. As a Kosovar Albanian respondent explained: 'the years after the war were not the economically most challenging ones with all the internationals spending money and the large amounts of international aid'.⁴⁷

Furthermore Kosovar Albanians living abroad as labour migrants or refugees (i.e. diaspora) stimulated the Kosovar economy through remittances and formed a large part of the clientele of the sex industry when returning to Kosovo with relatively large sums of money to spend during their holidays. This diaspora causes peak seasons in the sex industry in July and August, as well as in the weeks before and after New Year. Some women even anticipate on the presence of the diaspora and come to work in Kosovo in the summer and around New Year, while otherwise working in Macedonia or Albania. 'I only stay here for the high season', explains Dea from Albania when interviewed in a bar some weeks before New Year.⁴⁸

It was therefore not only the peacekeepers as clients that stimulated the growth of the Kosovar prostitution business. Since its initial growth, clients of the sex industry in Kosovo, have generally been more heterogeneous, including men from the international community, local men and men from the diaspora. Instead, the money of diaspora and primarily the overall peacekeeping economy, through the expenses of international staff and hiring of local personnel, boosted the Kosovar economy, including the sex industry.

This highlights the broader influence of the arrival of a mobile elite on a specific locale, in this case Kosovo. In Kosovo the mobile elite consist of international peacekeepers and other international staff as well as diaspora who are all moving from the 'west' to the 'east'. They do not belong to the power elite of the world; the men and women at the zenith of fame and power and fortune on a world scale, as described by Mills in his book *The Power Elite*.⁴⁹ While setting foot in Kosovo they, however, are the relatively wealthy and mobile and have a large economic as well as social and cultural impact.

The social and cultural impact is reflected for instance in the fact that prostitution was rare in Kosovo. Before the war Kosovo could be depicted as a small and close-knit society where everyone knew everyone. Families were largely controlling and would not accept involvement in prostitution from either men or women. To escape this control, men would for instance visit brothels while abroad. Inhabitants of Kosovo were therefore involved in prostitution

47 Informal conversation with a Kosovar Albanian respondent, on 25 September 2013. The described relative economic prosperity is no constant. Kosovo is one of the poorest areas of Europe nowadays.

48 Interview with Dea, 2 December 2011.

49 Mills, 1956.

but primarily outside the region. Later, during Milošević's reign, the Kosovar Albanian majority had little freedom to enjoy going out in Kosovo at all. After Serbian forces withdrew part of the population was happy to celebrate life, amongst others in clubs where Eastern European women were dancing and providing commercial sex. The disruption of family ties as a consequence of the war (with families no longer being in one place since people had fled in different directions) and the habits of some of the mobile elites all had a socio-cultural impact which also allowed the sex industry to flourish.

4.2 *Weak law enforcement by UNMIK*

Right after the war, prostitution primarily took place in coffee bars and nightclubs. In these premises women also provided their clients with sexual services. This made the sex industry rather visible, although engaging in prostitution was and still is an offense in Kosovo. The rather public display of the sex industry, despite its illegality, was possible because of the initially weak law enforcement by UNMIK.

In the Kumanovo Accord, Milošević agreed to withdraw almost all of his forces from Kosovo and (at least temporarily) hand over the exercise of sovereignty in Kosovo to the United Nations. Security Council Resolution 1244 authorized UNMIK to exercise executive, legislative and judiciary authority until the final status of Kosovo would be resolved.⁵⁰ However, 'the United Nations discovered that it would lead the civilian intervention in Kosovo only after the military-technical agreement ending the warfare was signed'.⁵¹ UN Missions are not standardized and, while learning of their role only shortly before arrival, a confusing mix of personnel from all over the world settled down in Kosovo. While establishing a new criminal code for Kosovo, legal advisers tended to propose the criminal code with which they were familiar in their country of origin; implementing different elements from their own legal system with little attention for the specific context of Kosovo.⁵²

Effectiveness was further hampered by the fact that not all UN staff had the competence required for their position. As one former UNMIK police officer, who was employed in Kosovo in the wake of the war, explained: 'There were people from different countries in charge of large units that supervised a lot of people but [back home, RdW] their job was keeping elephants of railways.'⁵³ This criticism on the competence of UN staff is not unique to Kosovo. Comparable criticism has been voiced in relation to the hiring process of international staff in other post-war settings. In his memoir, former UN worker Kenneth Cain describes he was hired as a UN lawyer at the mission in Somalia while 'I'm not

50 Perritt, 2010, p. 51-54.

51 Serwer & Thomson, 2008, p. 370.

52 See also: Serwer & Thomson, 2008, p. 367-370; Perritt, 2010, p. 66; Picarelli, 2002, p. 17.

53 Interview with former UNMIK police officer, 7 October 2013.

a licensed lawyer in the U.S., but it's anarchy here, that distinction matters in Cambridge, not Mogadishu'.⁵⁴

Autesserre raises another point of criticism while arguing that international staff in the Congo are hired based on their technical expertise without paying attention to their knowledge of the local situation,⁵⁵ which generally remains limited due to time restraints and a lack of reliable information made available to them upon arrival. The latter is recognisable in Kosovo where internationals regularly move within the 'international bubble' without having extensive contact with local people, who could provide valuable insight in the situation in Kosovo.

International efforts did achieve positive results in Kosovo. Reconstruction of the shattered houses and infrastructure as well as institution building largely followed valuable international initiative. The limitations mentioned, however, resulted in an UNMIK administration that functioned less than optimally. The period before and directly after the arrival of UNMIK and KFOR was one characterised by a climate of impunity.

This social context allowed for the public development of illicit activities in the wake of the war in Kosovo, including prostitution. Owners of premises involved in prostitution regularly mentioned not fearing the (international) police. Bar owner Bujar never fails to ruminate on UNMIK times when I visit him in his bar. He is full of stories which not only question the competence of law enforcers at the time but also their willingness to act: 'There was a UNMIK police officer from Bangladesh just drinking a beer in my bar one night. A Macedonian guy was making trouble. He put his gun on the table. I beat him, took his gun and gave it to the Bangladeshi police officer. "Solve it! Do something! You are a police officer!" He only stiffened up and said: "if you report this to the police – please don't tell them I was here".'⁵⁶ The sex industry could flourish publicly, despite its illegality, in the first years after the war because of the weak law enforcement by UNMIK.

4.3 Indifference towards official institutions

This disregard of the law did not only follow shortcomings from the side of UNMIK but relates to a tendency of, at least in the first years after the war, indifference of the Kosovar Albanian population towards official institutions in Kosovo. It is my thesis that this indifference developed as a reaction to experiences in former Yugoslavia and especially under Milošević's reign.

Between 1988 and 1990 Milošević quickly abolished Kosovo's once considerable autonomy. His measures included dissolving Kosovo's assembly and government, giving Serbia control over Kosovar police, courts and civil

54 Cain, Postlewait & Thomson, 2004, p. 109.

55 Autesserre, 2012, p. 208.

56 Interview with Bujar, 17 October 2013.

defence, banning Albanian as a language of instruction from primary school to university, and closing down Albanian media as well as sports and cultural associations. Arbitrary arrests and home searches during which the police confiscated goods became routine, as did police violence. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of Albanians employed by the state (e.g. in school, hospitals, factories and public services) were fired from their jobs and replaced by Serbs, some of which came from outside Kosovo as part of a resettlement programme, as well as Montenegrins and pro-Serbian Albanians.⁵⁷ The dismissal of medical doctors led to deaths following badly treated diseases while the sacking of teachers left children without education. In reaction to this, Kosovar Albanians established a parallel social system.⁵⁸ As part of the parallel social system, health clinics and schools were set up in private premises such as living rooms. Teachers and doctors involved were paid from a voluntary three-percent levy on the incomes of the diaspora (i.e. Kosovar Albanian labour migrants in Western Europe). Kosovar Albanian printing agencies were re-established and petty business surfaced.⁵⁹

Kosovar Albanians learned to trust upon each other and organize their daily life through the parallel social system. This parallel social system has some overlap with the shadow economies and networks described by anthropologist Carolyn Nordstrom as 'the complex sets of cross-state economic and political linkages that move outside *formally* recognized state-based channels and networks'⁶⁰ but often intertwine state and non-state actors. These networks exist worldwide but are often characteristic of war-torn societies where distrust of state institutions with a possible role in the conflict reigns.⁶¹ In Kosovo however it was not only global networks of people providing goods and services, but a vast network of Albanians providing money from abroad to build basic institutions, albeit in an improvised form, as once provided by the state, outside the Serbian loci of power; not with the aim to make a profit but aspiring to provide a basic social system for the Kosovar Albanian population of Kosovo.

As voiced by a Kosovar Albanian police officer, people became used to organising their lives irrespective of the regime in charge instead of primarily in line with the regime: 'We used to live under the Yugoslavian regime. Even in that time Albanians had the last place in entire Yugoslavia. All the time Albanians were fighting with the state. Trying not to pay taxes; trying not to give anything to the state. Because the state was foreign; not ours. Then we had the parallel system. From 1989 until 1998 we had, for ten years, a parallel system. Then when the war came and later when it was finished; the

57 Troebst, 1998, p. 16-18; Malcolm, 1999, p. 341-350; Ramet, 1999, p. 308.

58 Malcolm, 1999, p. 347-349.

59 Troebst, 1999, p. 19; Malcolm, 1999, p. 349-350.

60 Nordstrom, 2004, p. 106.

61 See also: Arsovska & Kostakos, 2008, p. 373; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2009, p. 118, 125-126.

foreign administrative government came again and said: 'you have no right to independence.' So this is all influencing the mentality.'⁶² This was not so much out of rebellion but a mechanism to cope with the exclusion faced under Milošević's reign and to a lesser extent before that time as well.⁶³

People were not primarily focussed on the legality of their actions as decided by the authorities, especially right after the war, since they had become accustomed to arranging their lives through unofficial channels. This is reflected in the way bar owners described their initial involvement in the sex industry. After the example of some of his friends Bujar changed his qebabtore (kebab shop) into a bar with various female waitresses involved in prostitution⁶⁴ while Rrustem closed his car wash and took over his brother's bar and network for recruiting Moldovan women to work in the Kosovar sex industry after his brother passed away.⁶⁵ Their shift from involvement in the informal economy to the crime of engaging in the facilitation of prostitution did not seem to occupy their minds. Both men had worked in various informal businesses for years. Now that the money could be earned in the sex industry it was seen as just another opportunity. Inside or outside the criminal code was no primary consideration because of the tendency of, at least in the first years after the war, indifference towards official institutions in Kosovo and their initially weak law enforcement.

5 Effects of a one-sided representation

As shown, representing the sex industry in terms of trafficking and forced prostitution, brought to Kosovo as a consequence of the demand of internationals, leaves some voids. Such a relatively one-sided representation, however, can be effective for some actors and is therefore given prominence. Autesserre explains the power of simple narratives in her description of dominant stories on the cause, consequence and solution to violence in the Congo.⁶⁶ She argues that stories which 'assign the cause of problems to the deliberate actions of identifiable individuals (...); which include bodily harm to individuals (...); [and] suggest a simple solution' have more impact on people and are therefore effective in prompting action.

Even though it can be doubted if initiatives springing from a dramatic and comprehensible account of the sex industry achieve their aim, they are effective for the raising of funds. Aid agencies depend on the projects that are granted to them and therefore can be tempted to emphasize the helplessness of the women

62 Interview with a police officer, 8 January 2014.

63 See also Perritt, 2010, p. 77-78.

64 Interview with Bujar, 17 October 2013.

65 Various interviews with the special prosecutor in the trial against Rrustem, observations during court hearings and analyses of testimonies between January and November 2013.

66 Autesserre, 2012, p. 206-210.

at whom their projects are aimed. As outlined by anthropologist Agustin who critically describes the 'rescue industry',⁶⁷ aid agencies benefit from describing perfect victims who are innocent, deceived and exploited, versus evil pimps and other exploiters since this generally makes them more successful in receiving project and grants. Likewise, the media need straightforward stories, which the public can grasp in a few headlines, and policy makers generally welcome brief representations of the situation with concrete policy recommendations.⁶⁸

Worldwide donors will be eager to spend money on helpless victims of trafficking exploited in the sex industry. This is no different in Kosovo, a donor darling after the war. International donors do not cut back on projects developing billboards and brochures which call the population not to turn a blind eye to trafficking in Kosovo as well as reintegration programmes for survivors of human trafficking. These well-intended initiatives have undeniably been of value, for instance for women who experienced commercial sexual exploitation and were able to reintegrate in society and restore relations with their families after enrolment in rehabilitation programmes.

However, the focus on completely helpless victims can also prevent well-intended projects and policy, developed in line with this representation, from achieving its goals. Highly symbolic and stereotypical images of victims of trafficking are at the core of posters and brochures warning about the dangers of trafficking worldwide.⁶⁹ This results in women not easily identifying with the helpless victims portrayed. In Kosovo an organisation which assists victims of trafficking developed a brochure with a drawing of a girl with a rope around her neck to illustrate the slavery-like conditions in which victims of trafficking are kept. I accidentally put this brochure on the table when a woman involved in prostitution and I were flipping through some magazines I brought to the bar where she was working. Upon seeing the drawing the woman said 'that poor girl. Terrible such things happen' while she herself was the intended target group of the brochure, given the fact that she could not leave her place of work whenever she wanted, although she agreed to being kept inside in order to gain money.⁷⁰ The overly dramatic depiction of victims of trafficking causes any links with actual experiences of women to be lost, which means that these organisations defeat their own purpose.

Furthermore, the stereotypical images make women in the sex industry more vulnerable. The highly symbolic images confirm stereotypes of women involved in prostitution as naïve and passive victims. By representing women as completely helpless victims, such campaigns disempower the exact people they claim to help. Because the moment a woman no longer behaves as a passive, deceived victim but decides to make the best of her situation, for instance by

67 Agustin, 2007, p. 4, 128, 192.

68 Autesserre, 2012, p. 207.

69 Andrijasevic, 2007, p. 42.

70 Informal conversation with Manda, November 2011.

earning money from commercial sex or recruiting friends, she magically turns into a sexually promiscuous woman or even a criminal because engaging in prostitution is an offense according to the law on peace and public in Kosovo.

Women therefore rarely go to the police after they have encountered violence by a client, the main reason being that they are afraid the police will arrest them. 'One evening I agreed to go to a motel with a client. He called a friend and told him where we were going. When we finished he brought in his friend. I never agreed to have sex with him as well. They started to hit me when I refused. Then they took all the money I had on me and left. I really wanted to go to the police but didn't because I was afraid that they would arrest me'.⁷¹ The stereotypical images and criminalization of prostitution at large move attention away from the struggles of women involved in the Kosovar prostitution business who do not completely meet the image of the ideal victim. Projects aimed at providing health services to women involved in prostitution (e.g. regular check-ups and treatment of sexually transmitted infections) face severe difficulties in gaining support. Acknowledgement of human rights abuses and assistance needs for women involved in prostitution are only considered in the framework of forced prostitution and are largely ignored.⁷²

Another example of how the oversimplified representation leads to inefficient policies is found in UNMIK's zero-tolerance policy. This zero-tolerance policy deals with the rise of the sex industry as if it is the act of some delinquent individuals, 'rotten apples' which can be dismissed.⁷³ However, if the growth of the sex industry is seen as something more inherent to peacekeeping economies, as outlined above, other actions would be more effective to combat cases of exploitation and protect the rights of women who opt to engage in commercial sex, such as decriminalization of prostitution at large and free health services. None of this should suggest that the intentions of all projects aimed at women involved in the sex industry and all dramatic depictions of the situation are flawed. However, a certain one-sided representation of the growth of the sex industry after the war and the women involved benefits the actors that give prominence to this story. Aid agencies, the media and policy makers sometimes emphasise elements of a story that helps them achieve their aim if the productivity of a story is key.⁷⁴

6 Concluding remarks

Cultural criminology firmly places transgressive behaviour in the specific political, economic, historical and social context in which it takes place, approaching crime as a cultural product instead of an objective given. It is no

71 Interview with Lindita, 5 December 2011.

72 Doezema, 2002, p. 43-45.

73 Jennings & Nikolić-Ristanović, 2009, p. 21.

74 Barsky, 1994.

objective fact that the growth of the sex industry in Kosovo after the war was directly linked to the demand of internationals for commercial sex, nor that this demand was met through forced prostitution; this is the way the phenomenon is predominantly represented.

This dominant representation of especially the victimhood of women involved in prostitution allowed (non-)governmental organisations to develop projects and policy combating exploitation in the Kosovar sex industry as it is effective in accessing funds and triggering action. Some of these initiatives have achieved very positive results. At the same time the one-sided representation of the growth of the sex industry moved attention away from numerous other causes that influenced the growth of the sex industry and the experiences of the women involved in it, such as the influx of money after the war, weak UNMIK law enforcement, a mentality of indifference towards official institutions, and women's desire to improve their socio-economic living conditions despite limitations regarding vertical and horizontal mobility. Neglecting these influential factors paints an overly one-sided picture of the blossoming of the Kosovar sex industry and the women involved. It essentializes suffering by focusing on forced prostitution and victimhood, rather than women's resistance efforts to structural inequalities. This way, aid agencies paradoxically enhanced the vulnerability of the women they claim to help. It led to the tendency to only protect women involved in prostitution as long as they remain ideal victims. As soon as a woman does not completely comply with this image she turns into a criminal whose suffering of human rights abuses is largely ignored.

The cultural criminological perspective illustrated the cultural construction of the growth of the Kosovar sex industry as well as its unintended consequences. I would like to conclude with the observation that vice versa some issues springing from this case study can feed cultural criminology. The overwhelming majority of cultural criminological studies focus on the Western societies where cultural criminology was founded, namely Western Europe, specifically the UK, and the United States. Cultural criminology's emphasis on the specific political, economic, historical and social context in which crime is constructed as such asks for more ethnographic studies of how meaning, representation and power shape transgressive behaviour, outside this Western realm. Such ethnographic studies outside Western Europe and North America should not be seen as 'exotic' studies which highlight their versus our 'Western' reality, because the specific development and construction of crime outside the Western realm is very much connected to the West. The growth of the Kosovar sex industry during a UN peacekeeping mission is only one example of this.

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