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Women's NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union

The Imperialist Criticism[1]

Nanette Funk

In the 1990s in postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (hereafter referred to as "the region"), the creation of civil society with active Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) was high on the agenda of many transnational organizations, western states, and private foundations. Increased citizen political participation was considered necessary to build democracy; women's NGOs were one vehicle for that participation. The European Commission's program Poland and Hungary Aid for Restructuring the Economy (PHARE) was the source of much funding to women's NGOs in east and central Europe, the Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) program to women's NGOs in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union (NIS). The United States' Agency for International Development (USAID) funded US women's NGOs working in the region and those from the region, as did private foundations, especially Soros, MacArthur and the Ford Foundations.

At first sight, it would appear to be an unalloyed positive step to include women as agents of state transformation and expansion of democracy. However, as western support for NGOs grew, so did criticism. I consider a set of criticisms I identify as the Imperialist Criticism and their bearing on women's NGOs in the region. I distinguish "western" and local woman's NGOs (i.e. any women's NGO from the region), and introduce a typology for categorizing forms of this argument, contrasting them with my examples of local women's NGO activities in the region, their funding and its relevance to the Imperialist Criticism.

Imperialist Critics do not accept neither NGO means nor ends, and often reject all NGOs.[2] The Imperialist Criticism suggests local women's NGOs and their western supporters foster an imperial or western agenda and do not promote gender, class or transnational justice. What critics mean by an "imperial agenda" or "western interests" differs; yet in the 1990s in the region, a central meaning was the creation of a neoliberal economic system and political regime, to the advantage of western capitalism but the disadvantage of the region, criticizing western women's NGOs working in the region and women's NGOs from the region.

There are also feminist versions, which accuse western and local women's NGOs of imperialism if either: (1) the western feminist NGO promotes "western" feminism in the region and/or the western NGO's own interests; or (2) the local women's NGO in the region adopts western feminism or promotes its own interests in cooperation with

western NGOs; and (3) either (1) or (2) succeeds at the cost of harm to local woman's NGOs and/or women in the region. In what follows, I focus on the adequacy of the arguments for the non-feminist Imperialist Criticism and the moral and political criticisms of NGOs they draw. In fact, the empirical evidence presented in favor of many of these arguments is remarkably meager.

Non-feminist Imperialist Critics

The non-feminist Imperialist Critics include Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000), James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer (2001), as well as David Rieff (2002). Petras and Veltmeyer as well as Hardt and Negri call transnational humanitarian NGOs "the most important" instruments and "frontline force[s] of imperial intervention", functioning through appeals to universal rights. They claim "these NGOs are completely immersed in the biopolitical context of the constitution of Empire"(Hardt/Negri 2000, 36). Rieff (2002, 60-61) speaks of humanitarian action "as a helper and partner of imperialism" and of an "alliance of late 19th century imperialism, and … 20th century humanitarian interventionism" based on "relieving suffering". Petras and Veltmeyer (2001, 128ff., 132f.) attack women's NGOs for failing to raise class issues, challenge neoliberalism, privatization, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), multinational corporations or imperialism. They accuse NGOs of attacking state provision of social services, of being "grass roots reactionaries … pushing privatization" from below, and of doing whatever foreign donors, to whom NGOs are accountable, want. Women's NGOs are said to stress gender and "patriarchy in the household, family violence, divorce, family planning, etc ..." and of "demobiliz[ing] popular women's organizations" (ibid., 134f.). They are criticized for using the concept of "civil society" believed to obscure class divisions. The conclusion drawn is that it would be better if NGOs "stop being NGOs" (ibid., 135, 137).

Susan Woodward (2004) offers a familiar argument about the World Bank, IMF and the United Nations (UN). Her functionalist account speaks of the promotion of "western interests", and of the IMF creation of "a specific culture of conditionality for the country within which all other donors work," which "institutionalize[s] restraints" on the state and donors who "give priority for the same reasons to civil society, decentralization, and (programmed) participation".

Kristen Ghodsee (2004) offers feminist and non-feminist Imperialist Criticisms. Adopting Petras' and Veltmeyer's formulations, she claims Bulgarian women's NGOs "may be unwittingly complicit" with neoliberalism, replacing class by a gender analysis without challenging "the social or economic relations" of patriarchy and working within donors' "neoliberal ideological constraints" (ibid., 728, 742). Women's NGOs in Eastern Europe are also said to "undermine the possibility of a united proletariat by narrowly focusing on projects for women and discursively constructing women as somehow less suited to capitalism" (ibid., 742). In addition, they are accused of "co-

opt[ing] educated middle class women" who could have organized "a solid class based opposition" and may "weaken grassroots opposition to neoliberalism" (ibid., 742-743).

Feminist Imperialism Criticisms

Ghodsee also offers a feminist Imperialism Criticism in its claim that western feminists came to the region on "a tidal wave of grants" without understanding the region's history or politics, imposing a "feminism-by-design": an essentialist "cultural feminism" that harms women (Ghodsee 2004, 731, 733f., 736). Francis Olsen (1997, 2223ff.) similarly criticized the "small armies of [western] feminists ... marching into Central and Eastern Europe," "privileging … gender," and their categories of analysis as defined by them and their interests. She argues that western feminists bring "domination, essentialism", misunderstanding, a "new colonialism" and "de-emphasize" imperialism.

Cautionary claims, generalizations and reductionist imperialist claims

There are functionalist arguments (Woodward), appeals to donors' intentions (Petras and Veltmeyer, Rieff), and consequentialist arguments about the consequences of women's activities, including NGOs (Petras and Veltmeyer, Ghodsee, Rieff, Olsen). Several interpretations of the Imperialist Criticisms are possible: (1) A Cautionary Claim to beware that benefits of women's NGOs are limited by structural conditions, donors' intentions to foster neoliberalism, and that some NGOs are not beneficial; or (2) a Generalization Argument that generally western and local women's NGOs, whatever else they do, promote western imperial agendas and interests, and thus it would be better without these NGOs. The feminist Generalization Argument claims western feminist NGOs support local women's NGOs out of their own interests, do not promote gender justice and should be rejected. A still stronger interpretation of the Imperialist Criticism is (3) a Reductionist Claim that all local women's NGOs do is to promote neoliberalism, or western feminist and non-feminist interests harmful to the region; thus, they are morally and politically unjustifiable and it would be best if they did not exist.

NGOs are indeed vulnerable to imperialism, neocolonialism, and feminist imperialism. I do not debate many of the empirical premises of the Cautionary Claim, in fact, I affirm them. Julie Hemment (2004), Sabine Lang (1997) and Olsen (1997) hint at such a position. I also accept the assumption that neoliberalism is neither in the interest of women nor the region. However, from the Cautionary Claim no generalization follows about most women's NGOs and their overall impact. All that follows is a need for caution, a case-by-case analysis, and awareness of limitations to NGO effectiveness and possible problems.

My position, a *Compatibilist Cautionary Claim*, differs from a simple Cautionary Claim in that I argue that NGOs promoting "western", imperial or neoliberal agendas,

western or western feminists' own NGO interests can be compatible with the interests of women, the region and justice. The very thing that promotes neoliberalism can also benefit women and the region as well as, on balance, promote justice. An assessment must be made in each case whether or not a given compromise is justified to get funding. It is better that NGO women decide than that outsiders like Petras and Veltmeyer make blanket decisions for them.

The nonfeminist Generalization and Reductionist Imperialist Claims are more problematic, with stronger empirical assumptions and drawing stronger normative conclusions as do Petras and Veltmeyer stating NGOs "should stop being NGOs". These claims rely on broad generalizations, oversimplify, trade on vagueness, and are in need of empirical evidence. They both assume any NGO contribution to neoliberalism is sufficient to delegitimate that NGO. The Reductionist version is even stronger, implying that women's NGOs in the region do nothing but promote neoliberalism, which is empirically false. Even those that promote neoliberalism have other functions, intentions and consequences. The Reductionist claim also does a disservice to the actual practice of local women's NGOs and some western women's NGOs active in the region. I therefore do not take the Reductionist Claim as a strong contender. This leaves the Imperialist Generalization Claim whose theoretical and empirical difficulties I discuss below.

General problems of the Imperialist Criticisms

Several reasons for the persuasiveness of the Imperialist Generalization Argument include an implicit "dirty hands" argument, traditional old left assumptions, oversimplification and overgeneralization, and false empirical and theoretical assumptions.

The dirty hands argument

The "dirty hands argument" assumes that any complicity with unjust institutions or practices is itself unjust. The Imperialist Generalization Argument trades on this argument, assuming that whatever else local and western women's NGOs do in the region is unjust, since they enter into practices designed to promote neoliberalism. Thus, because the EU and USAID promote either a competitive Europe within global neoliberalism or neoliberalism itself, and purportedly funds women's NGO projects with this intent, accepting their funding is unjust. However, all reform of injustices, including gender and racial injustices such as sexual harassment in the military, corporations, or media would be unjust since these institutions all promote some unjust ends; any reforms can make them more efficient. One cannot demand "moral purism" and effect change in the real world, fraught with global injustice and power imbalances. This was especially true in the 1990s for women active in the region, and those in the western women's NGOs who supported them. Women did not generally have the political power to set basic state and institutional policies in accordance with feminist principles. The

dirty hands criticism of local women's NGOs on the grounds of accepting "dirty" money also misses the mark because what matters is what NGOs actually do.

Traditional old left assumptions

Petras and Veltmeyer as well as Ghodsee criticize women's NGOs for a focus on gender instead of class and "the unifying of the proletariat". They thereby make the traditional old left assumption that fails to acknowledge gender and race injustice as equally fundamental forms of injustice, which intersect with class, but cannot be reduced to it. In the class formation underway in the region women are a disproportionate percent of the least well off. Nor did local women's NGOs ignore class issues. Domestic violence, trafficking, discrimination in employment, women's under-participation in formal politics all contribute to women being so strongly represented among the least well off, and reinforce both gender and class injustice. Some are issues of especial importance to the poorest women. Moreover, in 1989 most women had enough of talk of class struggle.

Oversimplification and overgeneralization

Criticisms of "the West" : The Imperialist Criticism of women's NGOs rests on claims about "the West's"agenda. This falsely assumes that there is "the West" and all NGOs are funded by it. Western funding came from sources with diverse goals. It included global and regional transnational organizations (e.g. UN, EU), various European states and parties (including Germany, Britain, Sweden, the Netherlands, US, Canada, Japan and Australia) as well as private foundations. Major women's foundations committed to gender justice contributed, especially Kvinna till Kvinna (Sweden) in the Balkans, the major donor in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Republic Srbska in 2005, The Global Fund for Women, the British Know-How Fund, the Network of East-West Women (US) and Mama Cash (the Netherlands). Women's NGOs in the region unanimously praised Kvinna till Kvinna; the main concern being they would leave! The German Greens' FrauenAnstiftung, which in 1998 became part of the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation, funded 20 women's NGOs in the region concurrently from 1990-1999 and did not promote neoliberalism. At first, they turned to grassroots groups, and then focused on finding political partners in the absence of Green parties in the region. They funded very active women's NGOs including Profem, the Prague Women's Center (Czech Republic), the St. Petersburg Center for Gender Issues, and the Russian Independent Women's Forum.[3]

The EU funded women's NGOs in the region since 1989 through the PHARE (1989-2004) and TACIS Democracy (for NIS countries), Link Inter–European program (LIEN) and Partnership programs (the latter mainly for state institutions), the Civil Society Development Program and the Foundation of Local Democracy of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Since 2001 the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation program (CARDS)

funded the Balkans. After 2000, the ACCESS Program[4] assisted accession countries building civil society. The European Social Fund's EQUAL Program (2000-present), the Daphne Initiative (1997-1999), solely for NGOs, the Daphne Program (2000-present), applicable to post-accession countries, although not exclusively for NGOs, funded women's NGOs. EU funding was to stabilize countries, aid the most disadvantaged, build democracy, and make accession countries compatible with the EU's *acquis communautaire*. It included support for ombudspersons for equality, tightening borders, against trafficking of women, as well as support for a capitalist transformation. This agenda is not the same as USAID and not specifically neoliberal. Thus, the Imperialist Criticism of women's NGOs needs a much more complex view of western donors than that presumed by Imperialist Critics.

The Variety of Women's NGOs in the Region: Any generalization is also bound to fail because of the diversity of women's NGOs. There were professional groups, groups offering legal, economic, social assistance and training to women, those concerned with women's rights, changing and monitoring laws self-help groups, gender centers and gender studies and women's groups in political parties. Feminist organizations were a small percent of women's NGOs, with some also active on non-gender specific issues. Some former Yugoslavia women's NGOs were major peace activists and anti-nationalists during the wars, later working on ethnic reconciliation. As anti-nationalist feminists they were able to conceptualize war rapes as crimes against women and not, as nationalists would have it, a crime against Croatian women and the nation.

Non-western funded women's NGOs: The Imperialist Generalization Argument grossly oversimplifies in assuming all local women's NGOs were funded by foreign western states or western dominated transnational bodies. There were also NGOs and "quasi-NGOs" supported by local governments. These include the former communist party women's organizations in almost every country. Women's NGOs in the Czech Republic received approximately 1/5 to 1/7 of their budgets from the state in 2004 (Prague Gender Studies 2004). The Russian government funded many Russian quasi-NGOs that changed from state to non-state bodies and with whom independent women's NGOs sometimes worked. Members of women's professional organizations often retained governmental positions (Zdravomyslova 2000, 55). Eastern German women's activities were almost all funded by local German governments.

There were also women's parties, women's subsidiaries of political parties and unions in the region supporting women's NGOs in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Russia and women's NGO networks (Schmedt 1997, 24f.; Fabian 1999, 213; Prague Gender Studies 2004). Some were active on other issues than were western funded NGOs. Other women's NGOs were ethnically defined and nationalist such as Rossija in Russia, the Hungarian Mothers' Party in Hungary and the League of Albanian Women in Macedonia (Bagić 2002; Fabian 1999, 213).

"Strong" vs. "weak" women's NGOs: We have to distinguish "strong" from "weak" or donor drivenwomen's NGOs. "Strong" women's NGOs are not donor driven, have

a sense of purpose prior to being funded or shortly thereafter; they insist on their own agendas. Some know how to navigate the foundation field, have many funders, and a record of accomplishment. Such NGOs existed in the former Yugoslavia, Eastern Germany, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and Slovakia. This included dozens of NGOs with self-identified feminists or activists already within state socialism or shortly thereafter in Be Emancipated, Be Active (B.A.B.E, http://www.babe.hr/eng), the Center for Women War Victims in Croatia; the S.O.S. Hotline in Serbia; the Ost-West-Europäisches FrauenNetzwerk (OWEN) in Eastern Germany; AnA (Romania), those building gender studies centers throughout the region, those with a self-defined interest in defending abortion rights, women's and lesbian rights, equal employment opportunity for women and fighting violence against women. In Croatia in 2002, B.A.B.E. listed 19 different donors from several Scandinavian countries, the EU and the US. Feminist NGOs such as Women Against Domestic Violence (NaNE) in Hungary, and B.A.B.E. in Croatia rejected funds for projects in which they were not interested, which initially included trafficking, a popular project with western donors. Strong NGOs challenged and publicized unacceptable donor practices. A Croatian women's NGO exposed one western donor claiming credit for work the NGO did before receiving funding, shaming that donor into changing such practices.[5] OWEN in Eastern Germany initiated their own projects based on support for women's dignity and self-respect in Ukraine, Russia, Poland and Eastern Germany, receiving funding from the Berlin and Brandenburg governments, and later from the EU. Imperialist Critics over-generalize from weak women's NGOs, more likely to carry out neoliberal agendas, or countries in which weak women's NGOs predominate, to an unwarranted conclusion about *all* women's NGOs in the region or in a given country.

False theoretical and empirical assumptions

Non western influences: The Imperialist Generalization Argument, in claiming women's NGOs are "wholly immersed" in the pursuit of neoliberalism, assumes "the West" or "western feminism" wholly determines the nature, function, structure, and/or impact of local women's NGOs. This mistakenly assumes local women's NGOs are passive, powerless victims lacking their own agendas and strategies by which they sidestep the "conditionality" imposed by the IMF, World Bank or donors' neoliberal agendas. It also exhibits arrogance and ignorance of the influence of past and present economic and political contexts, local political influences including those of state socialism. It ignores the empirical evidence of the East-West "Feminismusstreit" in which women from the region challenged and contextualized "the premises of western feminist politics" (Fuchs 2003). It belies the claim of a Romanian woman who said "we write what they want … and do what we want" (Grunberg 2000, 317). It also ignores factors such as: government limitations on NGOs through registration and tax laws; the impact of currency changes; the interests, values and agendas of active NGO women; the sometimes positive influence of western feminism and

women's commitment to feminist principles; women's sense of entitlement to health care and other benefits; and women's institutions in the country. Jointly these conditions can undermine the intended function of women's NGOs. Some women's NGOs such as the Center for Women War Victims in Croatia, the Feminist Network in Hungary, and the PSF Women's Center in Warsaw shared western feminism's organizational principles of democratic decision making, participation, and shared leadership. Many strong NGO women's projects were not donor driven, such as: the Prague Gender Studies (2004) projects on women's lack of formal political participation and similar Czech-Polish-Slovakian projects in 1997-1999; the SOS Hotline (Serbia) focus on domestic violence; women NGOs' commitment throughout the region to abortion rights; fights for non-discrimination laws and women's studies; and many women NGOs' projects on women's memory. Strongly anti-nationalist autonomous feminist NGOs resisted nationalism and preserved women's contacts throughout the former Yugoslavia.

Problematic NGO hierarchical structures and conflicts were also not due just to donors, but to former state socialist experiences, and to substantive differences among NGOs. Hemment (2004, 826, 828f.) argued how Russian women's past conceptions of "crisis centers" influenced their adaptation and redefining of donors' meanings of centers for domestic violence to include "economic crisis". In all these cases neither NGO function nor impact was determined solely by "the West."

Assumptions of Western Success: The Imperialist Generalization Argument assumes local women's NGOs and western feminist NGO intermediaries carry out their donors' intentions or assigned function, and *de facto* work to eliminate and reduce state welfare. However, some women's NGOs were the strongest critics of neoliberalism. Moreover, pragmatic critics claimed that women's NGOs accomplished little, much less "the West's" agenda. Donors', especially the EU's, accounting rules, late payment schedules, bureaucracy and inaccessibility seriously undermined local NGOs' ability to do much, consigning them to a continuous search for funding (Fabian 1999, 116; McMahon 2002; Richter 2002).[6] EU TACIS and PHARE macro-grants required local women's NGOs to have NGO partners in EU member states, often as lead partner, resulting in less funds to the local partner (Schittenhelm 1995, 34f.) Even Ghodsee (2004, 731, 746) claimed, if women entered formal politics, as donors desired, they would likely be "anti-World Bank or anti-EU government", supporting the "potential center or Left", not imperialism. Many governments in the region constrained women's NGOs by vetoing projects or by expensive registration rules (PTDP 1997, 24, 85).

Secondly, western government donors often depended on western feminist NGOs without neoliberal agendas to work with and identify local women's NGOs. This included OWEN in Eastern Germany, the Network for East–West Women (NEWW) or the STAR Foundation in the US. Other funders, e.g., Mama Cash in the Netherlands, Kvinna till Kvinna in Sweden, the FrauenAnstiftung or the Global Fund for Women

did not promote neoliberalism; they were not only interest driven, but "principled" or "value" driven. Those deciding women's NGO funding, such as Irena Grudzinska Gross (Ford Foundation), Anastasia Posadskaya and staff (Soros' Women's Network) and some in the EU, UN, and even US State Department tried to promote gender justice. Of course, western donors and NGOs active in the region, and local women's NGOs, had mixed motives including desires to promote their western feminist NGO by winning grants and being known as effective actors in the region. They wanted personal power, status, worldwide invitations to give lectures, build careers, earn good salaries or any salary at all; some did want to promote neoliberalism, or ensure the stability of Europe and strong borders. However, such motives are compatible with having principled motives.

The extent of Western Support: Although western grants were crucial to some women NGOs' survival, such support was a small percent of funding. EU PHARE's 1989-1997 mission was to promote political stability and economic transition; from 1997-2004 it was to reconcile pre-accession countries with the EU *acquis communautaire*. Total PHARE funding for 1990-2001 was huge (12 billion Euro) with almost 3 billion Euro to Poland. From 2000-2004 the EU allocated 3 billion Euro per year to pre-accession countries, with 1.5 billion Euro per year to PHARE, which ended funding in 2004. But total PHARE NGO funding between 1993-1996 was about 27 million ECU, less than 50 percent of its budget. Macro-grants (10,000-200,000 Euro) for one to three year projects often had to be shared with EU partners in member states. NGOs often had to *de facto* cover costs, to be repaid only later, and provide 20 percent of their budget, prohibitive for most women's NGOs. PHARE LIEN funded 25 projects for disadvantaged women in 1994 (Penny 1995). The post-1998 accession focus meant 70 percent of PHARE grants went to agriculture, the environment, finance and justice. Less funding than before went to gender projects and more of that targeted trafficking and domestic violence, the focus of the Daphne Initiative and Daphne Program, main sources for women NGOs' funding (cf. European Commission 2002). Women were not a target group for PHARE Democracy micro-projects (3,000-10,000 ECU). After accession, in Poland ACCESS grant evaluators interpreted EU gender mainstreaming policy to exclude specific gender project grants (Fuszara 2004). No EU grants went for abortion rights. Soros and USAID money also dried up after 2000 as they moved farther east.

The maze of documents make it difficult to determine which women NGOs were PHARE funded pre-1997 or in what amount. PHARE funding data had virtually no gender breakdown. None of Bulgaria's PHARE (1994) grants were for gender projects; its 1996 and 1992-2002 Civil Society Development Program grants, as in Slovakia, were mainly for Roma minority rights. In 2004 GERT had a 200,000 Euro Daphne grant. Slovakia's PHARE Community Programs for Gender Equality grant 2001-2005 was 18,000 Euro. Three of 37 Czech Republic ACCESS grants (1999) were gender specific (7718 Euro). Some women's NGOs funded in the Czech Republic are:

Prague Gender Studies Center (1998: 10,000 Euro ; in 2000 a grant on lesbian and gay discrimination (13,908 Euro); LIEN grants (1997-1998) went to Diocesan Catholic Charity (248,788 ECU), Kolpingsfamilie Prag 8 (58,254 ECU); LIEN micro-grants (maximum 10,000 Euro), went to Prague Gender Studies and the Czech Women's Association (for women's unemployment), Magdalenium, Brno (trafficking in women), Green Doors (employment for mentally ill women); and Bliss Without Risk, safe sex programs for sex workers.[7] Daphne Grants on trafficking (1997) went to: La Strada (the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, with TACIS funds) and Profem, with a Dutch women's NGO as main partner (109,000 ECU) (Busheikin/proFem 1998, 53-60). A similar Daphne grant went to KAFOS (Poland). PHARE Partnership programs in 1997 gave a macro-project grant for business networks among women (Lithuania), women's employment (Poland) and exchange between rural women's organizations in Sweden and Estonia (ibid., 64). The EIDHR awarded non-EU member grants in 2002-2004 to: the Montenegro Women's Forum for gender equality and women's rights (45,500 Euro); the Foundation of Local Democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina (117,424 Euro); and the United Women in Banja Luka (74,609 Euro) on domestic violence and trafficking of women.[8] The EIDHR Foundation for Local Democracy micro-projects program also funded two women's projects in Kazakhstan.[9] European Social Fund EQUAL grants were also available after accession. Other EU funded women's NGOs include (1990-2006): AnA (9000 ECU in 1996, 7500 ECU in 1999), XXI Century Foundation (Romania), Autonomous Women's Center (Belgrade 2001), NEWW (Poland, 2001), OWEN (eastern Germany), B.A.B.E (Croatia), MONA (Hungary) for gender equality; and Vivežene/Tuzla (European Commission 2003). Paradoxically in 2005, pre-accession countries may have better gender funding than new members whose laws accord with the *acquis communautaire*, although gender practices have not changed. Absolute and relative amounts spent by the EU on women's NGOs is less than in the mid 1990s, except for trafficking and domestic violence grants. Gender mainstreaming in other programs is not easily tracked, and was noted to be very weak in the Balkans, except for Kosovo (European Commission 2004).

TACIS funding to NIS countries for women's NGOs between 1991-1999 was a subclass of democracy programs, itself in the catchall category ("Others"), which was 9.10 percent of funding.[10] The figures for women's NGOs are not available. In 2004, total TACIS funding for all NGOs was 13.5 million Euro.

Women's NGOs as Replacing State Services: Some donors insisted on only funding "political" work and not service – although the separation was in the region much less rigid than in Western Europe.[11] For example, the FrauenAnstiftung criticized the Center for Women's Rights in Poland, to their frustration, for providing legal services although the separation between service and political activity in the region was much less rigid than in Europe. Like the Center for Women War Victims (Zagreb, Croatia) during the 1991-1995 Yugoslav wars, the Polish Center did not replace state-provided services, since there were no such services. Conversations with those assisted politic-

ally changed those women, some becoming activists, as in the Zagreb Center. Some NGO efforts led states to provide such services or include women's studies, started by NGOs, into universities, as in Serbia, the Czech Republic and Russia.

Criteria for a Valid Consequentialist Argument and Implausible Conjectures: The Imperialist Generalization Claim is basically a consequentialist argument. However, such arguments have to consider *all* effects, long and short term, benefits and harms, and need to distinguish being non-benefical or not maximally beneficial from harmful. Imperialist Generalization critics do not make these distinctions, and provide no empirical evidence, often baldly generalizing from some, to all, women's NGOs.

Under the following conditions the Imperialist Criticism is unproven, even if some women's NGOs do benefit neoliberalism: 1) Long and short run benefits overall were important; 2) they would not have occurred without women's NGOs in the 1990s; 3) it is not shown that harmful effects such as aiding neoliberalism override benefits or that there would have been on balance greater benefit or less harm without women's NGOs, and 4) women's NGOs did not generally adopt inherently immoral practices, such as racism or ethnic cleansing.

The strongest harms the Imperialist Critic can cite are: in the early 1990s, funded by the EU and USAID, some western funded women's NGOs did, quite minimally, help undermine state socialist governments, aid neoliberalism, help replace state communist elites, contribute to the EU becoming a more stable environment for business, and some NGO members did develop a business mentality and learn small business skills. It could be argued that the 1997 EU ACCESS program focus on trafficking of women as well as the PHARE and EQUAL program funding projects on employment discrimination against women, as part of its mission to synchronize accession country law with that of the EU, contributed to a more stable business environment. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that women NGOs' contribution to entrenching neoliberalism was relatively small and neoliberalism would have come to the region without them. It is also true that women's NGOs were often not movement based, competitive rather than in solidarity with each other. Many did little, did not really function, or were hierarchical, non-democratically structured, without a grassroots orientation, and donors often did not fund the most urgent issues. But this only shows some NGOs were not beneficial or not maximally beneficial, but not that they were harmful. Nor can one know what women would have done without western funds.

On the other side of the ledger, donors and women's NGOs benefited women and the region by supporting women in learning how to be active citizens. Women could then work for gender justice, women's and citizen's rightsincluding abortion and the rule of law. In the 1990s, and in the first decade of the 21st century, there were urgent issues of individual survival, war, and traumatic economic crises; NGOs often offered the only possibility for women's political activity and survival. Not all NGOs were donor driven and their importance goes beyond their numbers.

The benefits of women's NGOs included: framing public discourse by introducing

concepts of "sexual harassment", "domestic violence" and "discrimination in employment"; learning how to participate in the new public sphere; increasing women's parliamentary membership; helping create new political parties; monitoring market issues, employers, job discrimination and gender biased laws (Prague Gender Studies 2004). Czech and Polish NGOs worked to stop foreign companies' use of extreme gender discriminatory practices not used in their own country. Women's NGOs proposed equal opportunity policies and anti-discrimination laws; provided urgent services states did not offer, leading some states to later provide them; created women's centers, gender studies and integrated gender into some university and law school courses, influencing future journalists, lawyers, activists, and researchers. Women in NGOs wrote textbooks to change gender stereotypes, addressed media stereotyping; fought nationalism, neoliberalism and ethnic cleansing. By the early 2000s in Poland, the concept of "discrimination in employment" began being used by all parliamentary parties, even conservatives, whereas before such talk was labeled "aggressive" feminist confrontation (Grzybek 2003).

Active women defended the rule of law, developed concepts of citizen and human rights for women and men as well as for women's rights as human rights. Active Polish women repeatedly introduced the *Polish Act Concerning the Equal Status of Women and Men* and stressed the principle of subsidiarity. Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka's Office of the Polish Governmental Plenipotentiary for Equal Status in 2003 educated all Polish parliamentary parties, whose members did not know they were under a legal obligation to provide equality for men and women. Jaruga-Nowacka (2003) stated that active feminist NGOs reinforced her, and enabled her to gather gender-disaggregated statistics supporting arguments for the need for gender equality. 40% of Polish women's organizations focused on jobs, training and retraining (Fuchs 1999). The Prague Gender Studies informed the public of labor practice changes needed for EU accession. The EU funded women's NGO efforts to create mechanisms for gender equality, and enabled challenges to governments' lack of such efforts. NGO participation enabled some women to gain know-how and salaries to survive during class formation in the region. Petras' and Veltmeyer's as well as Ghodsee's claim that women's NGOs focus only on issues in the family is thus false.

In the late 1990s Czech women's groups drew attention to women's low political participation, a topic for the Foundation of Women of Hungary (MONA) in Hungary and women's NGOs in Slovenia (CEDAW 2002, 21f.). Women NGOs brought attention to the gendered nature of wars and transformation in the region; they were the lone oppositional voice to conservative abortion advocates. In the former Yugoslavia, they helped establish rape of women in war as a violation of women's human rights and a war crime, violence against women as a violation of women's human rights and challenged problematic family laws in Russia and Croatia. They created ombudspersons, fought corruption, and cutbacks of social benefits. They challenged their governments' reports to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) that exagger-

ated state efforts towards gender equality. They worked on issues of domestic violence and trafficking in women, which may have benefited the EU's desire for strong borders, but also aided women. The longer run consequences of such activity is the slow transformation of public consciousness and discourse in Poland, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia, Eastern Germany, and the Czech Republic, among others. Olga Pietruchova (2003) from ProChoice, Slovakia, described a politician who disparaged the idea of Slovakian women serving in chemical corps in Iraq and then had to publicly apologize, reflecting a major change in public consciousness. By 2000, women's activities got media attention in Poland and Serbia (Graff 2003; Milić 2004, 73).

Women's NGO activity enabled them to enter global feminist networks, officially register with the UN, and file Shadow Reports to the UN CSW. NGO women participated in the 1995 *UN Fourth World Conference on Women* in Beijing making public their demands in the *Statement from a Non-Region*; they joined follow-up meetings in 2000 and 2005. Women learned how to defend the principle of subsidiarity by appeal to international documents such as UN documents on human rights, International Labor Organization conventions, international human rights agreements, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), as well as EU gender laws and policies. This legitimated women NGOs' legal and political activity for local politicians. Women's NGOs networked in their own country, the region, and the world. For example, B.A.B.E. helped create a transnational NGO, the South Eastern Europe Legal Initiative (SEELINE, http://www.seeline-project.net), with ten member countries from southeastern Europe, to monitor and influence laws from a gender perspective. KARAT, with 44 women's NGOs from 21 countries in the region, formed after women networked at the 1995 Beijing Meeting (http://www.karat.org). Some women's NGO members entered formal politics and helped to start new parties (e.g. Green parties in Croatia and Poland).

What matters is the impact of NGOs, versus not having them at all and the balance of harms to benefits. This very long list of benefits, though by no means complete, reveals a more substantial significance to NGO activity than the Imperialist Generalization Claim acknowledges. It is not *a priori* true that women NGOs' contribution to neoliberalism overrides these benefits, and without such empirical evidence, the Imperialist Generalization Claim cannot be defended. Nor can it be defended that the region and women would have been better without women's NGOs.

Conclusion

Why does all this matter? Because in the 1990s NGOs in the region were the arena for women's political activity, thousands of women's NGOs arose. Imperialist Criticisms of women's NGOs tarnishes and condemns the public activity of some very courageous and creative women in the region. A Compatibilist Cautionary Claim does not do so and makes no generalization, but advocates a case-by-case analysis, which, given

the complexity and difficulty of making a generalization, is the position most compatible with the evidence.

Some western and local women's NGOs in the region, though by no means a majority, did provide invaluable support for women's political participation, ethnic justice and peace. At a time of debate on how and whether or not NGOs should have an increasing role in the UN and global governance, it would be a shame to dismiss women's NGOs in the region as agents of imperialism and western interests. In any particular instance, women in NGOs in the region have to assess what funding to accept, which western NGOs to work with, and whether likely accomplishments are worth the concessions. It is better to leave that decision to those active in NGOs.

Notes

1 I thank all those in the region who gave generously of their time and information, including Karin Aleksander, Marina Beyer, Hana Havelková, Vesna Kesić, and Mihaela Miriou.
2 In contrast, Pragmatic Criticisms note inefficiencies, ineffectiveness and injustices of NGOs, but generally accept what they take as the goals of NGOs, proposing changes to improve donor and recipient NGO practices.
3 Personal interview with Walter Kaufmann, Böll Foundation, Berlin, Germany.
4 Cf. http://www.osi.hu/brussels/guide2000/fundingsection03.html
5 Personal interview with Vesna Kesić in Zagreb, Croatia.
6 Personal interviews in Poland, the Czech Republic, Eastern Germany, and Croatia.
7 Cf. http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/phare/pdf/phare1999.pdf, http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report_11_00.
8 Cf. http://europa.eu.int /comm/enlargement/cards/pdf/cases/009.pdf
9 Cf. http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/calls-for-proposals/cfp- micro-results-kazakhstan-2001_en.pdf
10 Cf. http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/tacis/an_report_en.pdf
11 Personal interview with Walter Kaufmann, Böll Foundation, Berlin, Germany.

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