

PEDAGOGY FOR UNDERSTANDING KOSOVO SOCIETY (II)

Greater Than Its Parts



Schoolchildren are quite familiar with the construction of cylinders. They simply cut a long, rectangular piece of paper and then attach the two ends together with some glue

A cylinder has some distinct topological properties; for example, it has two surfaces and two boundary edges. A quick inspection of a paper cylinder confirms both. It is also an orientable surface. Perhaps one easy way to understand what this means is to draw a little man with an outstretched right hand (call him the fixed man, one who has made a place his own) onto one of the surfaces while positioning a second man (call him the traveling man), who is a paper cutout with an outstretched right hand, alongside that of the fixed man. If the traveling man is slid farther and farther along the surface, he will eventually be reunited with the fixed man, and each will have the same handedness (an outstretched right hand).

Topological Surfaces

The Moebius strip is slightly more complicated to make and it has far more interesting properties. Discovered independently by the German mathematicians August Ferdinand Moebius and Johann Benedict Listing in 1858, the Moebius strip is topologically distinct from the cylinder even though it has sometimes been called the "twisted cylinder." An example of a Moebius strip can be created by using a piece of translucent plastic, cutting a long, rectangular piece, giving

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one of its ends a half twist, and then attaching the ends with glue. What makes the strip so interesting is that it has only one side and one boundary edge. Consequently, mathematicians call the Moebius strip a non-orientable surface. To get a better grasp of what this means, take the technique that was employed above with the cylinder and apply it to the Moebius strip. Sliding the traveling man farther and farther from the fixed man, far enough in fact so that he comes "full circle" and is reunited with the fixed man, we find that the traveling man is upside down compared to the fixed man. When the traveling man is turned right-side up, he is found to be mirror-reversed to that of his fixed counterpart. Handedness has been changed. This is interesting in its own right, but how can the cylinder and the Moebius strip demonstrations be used as pedagogical tools?

On the one hand, the cylinder demonstration can be used as an image of the plural monoethnic arrangement. Each surface represents a distinct and separate ethnic enclave. With Kosovo's two dominant ethnic groups in mind, one could think of the inner surface as a Serb enclave and the outer surface as the greater Albanian enclave. Positioning a traveling man on each surface

and having each move along a path will eventually return each to their starting point. They are truly going around in "circles." If this were to continue, they would see the same surroundings over and over. But surely this is neither exciting nor interesting, for each knows only their own community. Since the Serb and the Albanian do not share a surface, there is no integration and interaction, thus rendering their communities informationally opaque to each other.

Pedagogy to the Rescue

On the other hand, the Moebius strip demonstration captures the multiethnic arrangement. It is the simple half twist that transforms the cylinder into a Moebius strip, taking us from a representation of the enclave to the possibility of the sort of integration found within the multiethnic arrangement. The twist itself represents the various institutional designs, such as displacement/refugee relocation programs and the re-engineering of landscapes in regards to antagonistic evocative objects, which help with the integration of ethnic Others. But integration does not take place until there are travelers, those who seek interaction, perhaps to the point of engaging in dialogue, with others. Dialogue is especially important because it entails informational transparency and the openness to the possibility of change.

This becomes clearer when we populate

the surface with even more fixed and traveling men, some being Serb (left-handed) and some being Albanian (right-handed). Given that there is only one surface, members of each group will eventually come in contact with Others. However, travelers are disconnected from fellow travelers because they are all simply passing one another, as well as disconnected from their fixed counterparts (regardless of ethnic identity) because they are upside down and unable to engage in dialogue. It is only when they right themselves through the process of dialogue that the travelers become aware of changes in handedness with respect to members of their own ethnic group and with respect to the Others. Those Albanians who have traveled and have engaged with their fellow Albanians are made aware of a difference in handedness, whereas engaging with the Others leads to the same handedness. The point being stressed here is that those engaged in dialogue will undergo changes that will not be experienced by those of their own group who have not made a similar journey and those changes will allow them to have more in common with the Others. And when some travelers of each ethnic group decide to make a place their own by becoming fixed, their similarities with ethnic Others will be made ever more clear. This is community-building in the abstract.

Granted, these topological surfaces with their host of characters are quite removed from the realities of Kosovo. But seeing what can be done with those surfaces in a remarkably down-to-earth way may stir an openness to rethink something that was thought to be already achieved. Being more imaginative and smarter might be just what is needed. "Only more and wiser intelligence," as the British philosopher Bertrand Russell once put it, "can make a happier world."

Will this rethinking of what sort of society they live in invite utopian visions by future generations of Kosovo? Will the peoples of Kosovo ever be inspired by this renewed sense of a multiethnic Kosovo? I do not know. But if Kosovo is to become greater than its parts, it will be through countless interactions between its ethnic peoples over a very long period of time, at which point it may become a little more like Denmark.

The Apparent Lack of Women in Bosnian Governments



Women are traditionally underrepresented in the governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina; none of the 14 governments (the Council of Ministers of BiH, entity and cantonal governments and the government of the Brcko District) to date has been appointed without violating the state-level Law on Gender Equality

According to a policy paper produced by the Sarajevo Open Center, there are two women appointed in the current convocation of the Council of Ministers of BiH, four in the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while there is one woman prime minister and three ministers appointed in the Government of Republika Srpska. In the governments of the cantons there are no women appointed as prime ministers of the cantonal government, while the percentage of women ministers in cantonal governments was around 17.5% (the number of women ministers varies from 0% to 25% depending on the canton). The most drastic example is the government of the Zenica-Doboj Canton, where not a single woman was appointed. Policy paper "Where Are Women in Governments? Representation of Women and Men in the Executive Branch in BiH", available online, explores the complicated process of government formation in BiH from the standpoint of gender equality and argues possible solution to the apparent lack of female representation in governments on different levels.

According to the paper, the citizens expect that all groups in the society influence the decision-making process, whether those groups in society have

some common traits such as: ethnicity, skin color, race, gender and the like, or whether they have the same geographical origin. In the context of gender equality, the expectation of representation refers to the idea of a critical mass which implies that there are a corresponding (critical) number of women in decision-making positions able to represent the interests of women as a group.

Not even one legislative body so far has considered the cause of the underrepresentation of women in the executive branch nor has it considered the possibility of adopting special measures from Article 8 from the Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the goal of achieving equal representation of women and men. At the same time, none of 14 governments so far was created in such a way to meet the requirement of 40% in accordance with Article 20 from the Law on Gender Equality in BiH.

In the absence of progress, but also in the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where ethnic equality is mainly achieved through the introduction of quotas, the expectations that a similar solution will be achieved when it comes to the participation of women in governments are legitimate.