‘Waiting is Hoping’: Future and Youth in a Bosnian Border Town

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Abstract

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This thesis challenges a widespread perception that young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina were ‘lethargic’ and that they ‘did not care’ for the collective or for the future. Based on one year of fieldwork in a small town called Bihać, located near to the border with Croatia, I show how young people rather than being ‘lethargic’, in fact, most of the time felt that they were in the wrong place and the wrong time. This resulted in a feeling that one’s ‘agentive capacity’ was limited, which made people feel stuck and not in control of the future; it made them feel that they were heading nowhere in particular. I illustrate how this sense of ‘stuckedness’ was manifest (e.g. through café routines), negotiated (e.g. through engagement with practices that have an immediate result), and the results it led to (e.g. various types of waiting).

In order to better comprehend the experiences of contemporary youths in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I put them into ‘conversation’ with the narratives of older people, who were once at a similar ‘vital conjuncture’, making decisions about the future that would have meaningful effects on their lives. I show that in Bihać, within post-WWII Yugoslavia, the sense was that hope resided among the people. Despite many difficulties in that period, the general feeling was that things were in the ‘right’ proportion and that one, more or less, knew what one could get and expect from the state and its institutions. Within contemporary Bihać, the sense was that the ability to know was reduced to the ability to hope, but that hope itself was presently felt to be outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s borders. Instead, everyday lives were saturated with what I call institutionalized unpredictability. This had debilitating effects on people, both in practical and in moral terms, and has inevitably shaped how young people, coming of age in present day Bosnia and Herzegovina, experienced their location, and consequently their sense of ‘agentive capacity’ and how they aspired.

I argue that young people were neither alienated nor disinterested in the future. Rather, while dealing with too much unpredictability and at the same time undesirable predictability, a condition that both was and was not of their own making, they were actively and ‘resourcefully’ (Jeffrey 2011: 245) living their present routines. In this thesis I show how young people engaged with the immediate, near and distant future on both the collective and individual level. Moreover, I illustrate how they partially created, partially responded to and partially ignored Bihać and Bosnia and Herzegovina as places in space and time as they engaged with their surroundings.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: leaving hope behind the border

Ethnographic scene 1: Leaving hope behind when coming to Bosnia

Late November 2009, evening. Typically for this time of the year, darkness has descended upon the streets of Bihać already in the early hours of the day. It is cold and wet. I am in the Kulturni Centar [cultural centre]. It is a large building; some would consider it an example of typical socialist architecture. Its great hall is looking rather dim. The weary colour of the big red curtains at the edges of the stage hint that they have been there for quite some time. I am here to see Toni Janković's performance. I have come alone. Somewhat later Emina and Nikola, both 22 year old students, join me. I think that they are here for me, more than for the actual performance. In Yugoslav times Toni Janković was a member of a famous Yugoslav pop band, Divlje Jagode [Wild Strawberries]. It was his past popularity and the fact that his solo performance was free that shaped my expectations: I thought that the hall would be relatively full. I was wrong. Not many people came. This did not pass unnoticed by Toni Janković himself. Climbing the stage, he started the evening by commenting:

Toni Janković: (sarcastically) It is so nice that we have gathered in such great numbers.

(all those present laugh)

Husein Dervišević: (local poet and writer, presenter of the concert): Toni, didn’t they tell you at Izačić (the border crossing between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia near Bihać) to leave your hope behind when coming to Bosnia?

What did it mean to leave hope behind the border when coming to Bosnia? This study will aim to answer this question by focusing primarily on young people living in Bihać, a small border town on the Bosnian side of the border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, on different occasions and for different reasons, I happened to visit some Central and Eastern European countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia. Some of these places - Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia- shared with Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BiH, or Bosnia) not only the same socialist past, but also having once been part of a country called Yugoslavia. What those others - the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania - had in common with BiH, was that presently they were all remembered as places that used
to be socialist and were now in the process of ‘transition’, even if their socialisms and the
so-called ‘transitions’ were very different. My very first and very general impression of the
places I visited was that there was a somewhat similar pattern repeating itself in each one
of them: older people, whose gaze was seemingly turned backwards, made nostalgic
remarks when talking about the lost era, the socialist era. However, young people, it
seemed to me, had their gazes turned forward, to the future, and there was some sense of
enthusiasm in this gaze.

In particular I remember a conversation I had with a man and a woman over a drink
in a bar in Prague. He was in his 60s. I clearly remember his kind face, with a somewhat
exhausted expression, while he was telling me how things used to be back then, before the
fall of socialism. I do not recall the exact content of that conversation; I just remember a
presence of melancholy and longing in his narrative, his voice and his eyes. She, his
employee, was in her early 20s. I recall how beautiful and lean she looked as she entered
the bar with her green coat. She had recently graduated and was enthusiastically telling me
about her future aspirations and about her new relationship. She was not quite sure what
she was going to do, perhaps another degree, perhaps another job, it did not really matter. I
sensed a great enthusiasm and anticipation in her talk; the sky seemed to be her only limit.
It was this sense of enthusiasm that I felt in her voice, and voices of some other young
people I encountered during my travels in many of these post-socialist places, that I could
not feel among young people in BiH. And it was my sense that young people in BiH lacked
enthusiasm that I wanted to explore when returning to BiH for my fieldwork in 2009.

The sense of enthusiasm I felt in conversations with young people from elsewhere
did not derive from things being great in those places since the fall of socialism, but rather
from a sense of the potential of things becoming great. And it was precisely the lack of this
potential of things ever possibly being great in Bosnia that was crucial in how the young
people living there experienced their daily routines and acted toward their futures. Of
course, this feeling I gained through my short visits to the places mentioned above was not,
and could not, be representative of them, nor of their youths. But that is not the point of
this story. What is important is the way that this sense I gained guided and informed my
interests and my curiosity; in many ways it played the defining role in deciding ‘the who’
(young people), ‘the what’ (future) and ‘the where’ (BiH) of my research. In a way then,
the very beginning of my story originated from my understanding of BiH’s relative
location in relation to those places with which it had a number of things in common (Green
2005). As I will show, I learnt that how young people in BiH understood their relative location, played a major role in how they engaged with their futures. The sense of where they were was defined by relations with somewhere else, but also, and crucially, the character of *where* they were heading was defined by these relations. This was already explicit in Husein Dervišević’s comment that hope should be left behind, at the border, when coming to Bosnia; hope seemed to be elsewhere, associated with those other places (see also Mains 2012; Vigh 2009).

And perhaps the idea was that only when BiH becomes more like elsewhere, like those other places, hope would find its way (again) across its borders. In that sense, hope was not just *elsewhere*, but also it was in another time: more specifically in the distant future. Daily lives of many young people in BiH were simultaneously saturated with too much predictability, which was both cherished and despised, and too much unpredictability. It was a combined sense that one was unable to know or to control what might happen next, with too much undesirable predictability, which made young people feel that there was nothing they could do to change the conditions within which their lives unfolded. This *feeling of impotency* made them feel stuck. A sense of ‘stuckedness’ (Hage 2009) resulted in various forms of *waiting*. This was how ‘Waiting is hoping’ entered this story, and in fact, has become its very title. It was because hope was in the distant future that waiting had become a normalized experience of everyday realities (see chapter 3). It is within this context, I argue, that one should understand all sorts of young people’s practices around and (dis)engagements with collective and individuals’ immediate, near and distant futures.

Many anthropologists have observed how situations in which young people cannot forge a sustainable present, let alone constructive futures, create spaces for all sorts of practices which generate particular engagements with and imaginings of the future. Many of these practices – such as the cocaine trade (Vigh 2012), warfare (Vigh 2006), violence and crime (Dalsgaard 2011; Dalsgaard & Frederiksen 2013), sexual economy, often linked to prostitution (Cole 2010), passing time in ways considered to be non-constructive, like watching films and smoking khat (Mains 2007; 2012) or standing on street corners (Jeffrey 2010) – marked young people negatively, thereby turning the very idea of being young into a problem. In many anthropological accounts, as in my own fieldwork, the negative image of young people was communicated in various circles, by older people, in the media, but also, importantly, by young people themselves. Here I challenge a widespread perception
that local young people in BiH were lethargic, apathetic and that they simply ‘did not care’ [nije ih briga]. Instead, I examine how, within a particular BiH context, they understood their ‘agentive capacity’ (Greenberg 2011) and what it allowed for.

The where: a note on the location

Ethnographic scene 2: Una

And there it finally was, in front of my eyes, the Una itself.

It is early summer 2009, morning, a beautiful day. My father and I just packed our luggage and we are about to make our way to Bihać, a small town located in north-western BiH where I plan to make my home for the following year. About 40,000 people reside there, perhaps 50,000, perhaps less or perhaps more, no one knows exactly. For various political reasons no official census was carried out in BiH since 1991, so numbers, as many other data, remain a mystery. We are in Croatia, in Gradac, a small coastal town, where we stayed with some family friends. After my father got advice from Toni about the best roads for travelling to Bihać, we said our goodbyes. The roads in BiH have not changed much since the war. In Croatia, however, a lot has changed. My father, who was familiar with the Yugoslav roads, at least with many of them, is left somewhat perplexed with all the recent changes.

I am excited about our journey. I have never been to Bihać before, and I know very little of it. More than anything else I am looking forward to meeting the Una, the river. Legend has it that the name derives from the Latin word for one, unum/una/unus (neuter/female/male). So, the Romans, on one of their many conquering journeys, were stunned by the river’s beauty, and they could not think of a more suitable name than Una, as in ‘the one and the only’. Anyway, this is what Nikola, one of the first young Bišćani [inhabitants of Bihać] I met, told me a couple of weeks ago during a youth summer camp in the Bijelašnica Mountains, near Sarajevo. Since I decided that my research would take place in Bihać, I have heard of the Una’s beauty and its uniqueness on various occasions from many different people. Perhaps that is why, now, I cannot wait to see what they all meant.

We are near Bihać now, I am driving. My father and I swapped about twenty minutes ago. I comment that this was badly planned on my behalf, as I have less opportunity to enjoy the deep canyon in which the Una flows. My father laughs, but does not comment. The canyon’s depth makes it somewhat difficult to see the river. But I don’t care, I should not care. I will

1 Every translation from Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrion/Serbian to English is my own.
2 I use pseudonyms to refer to people with whom I worked. I use real names only for public figures.
spend the next year here, there will be many opportunities. At least, that is what I tell myself.
Many wooden houses, some smaller some larger, one after another, keep on surfacing in front of our eyes. They all seem empty. They must be weekend houses [vikendice]. I imagine myself living in one of them. It could be. Just close to the Una. Maybe a bit too far from the city though. I am not sure. I am here to find accommodation, not yet to stay.

The second house I see is located in the central part of the town, next to the river. I do not seek to see others, I take it.

The Una, the emerald green river, or perhaps it is milky blue, or yet deep blue, probably a bit of all, I cannot tell. I will have plenty of time to discover.

The largest part of this story took place in a small border town, called Bihač. For some, Bihač was located in the north-western part of BiH, for others it was located in the region called Krajina, and others still would talk of it as being an integral part of the administrative unit called Una-Sana canton (hereafter USK). For some it was simply a town located on the banks of the Una river, other people in this account would talk of it as a place that was once in Yugoslavia, and many would relate to it as a place in Bosnia, or in the Balkans, or in Europe, or perhaps just outside of it. For most people I talked to, all of these locations applied, not necessarily in the same order and not necessarily in the same (important) ways. Although it took place in Bihač this story relates to other places too, which throughout history have helped shape Bihač and BiH, and how its inhabitants thought of it, in particular ways.

Ethnographic scene 3: This is Bosnia

It is late August 2010. I am walking down the main pedestrian street in Bihač. It is crowded.
At this time of the day, late evening, women and men of all ages enjoy the evening breeze while strolling down the corso, or alternatively, while socializing over a drink, or perhaps an ice cream in one of the many local cafés. I too, am on my way to meet some friends for a drink. At the edge of this not-so-long pedestrian street I bump into Amra. Amra is 19, she is of medium height, has light curly hair, bright eyes, a pretty face. She just finished high school and is trying to enrol on a university course. She has been coming to the film and photography workshops I organized. She always seemed very preoccupied and worried about the future: she wanted to study away from Bihač, but being away from Bihač also meant being away from everything and everyone she knew. For her, the uncertainty of her personal future was exciting and frightening at the same time. Accordingly her ideas about the course which she desired changed frequently: some courses could be studied in Bihač,
for others she had to apply elsewhere. At times she wanted to study architecture; at other times she thought that geodesy would suit her better; eventually at the university entry exam she applied for pharmaceutical sciences in Sarajevo, the capital of BiH. Already from a short distance I notice her eyes’ cynical expression.

Vanja: (somewhat worried) You ok? What’s up?
Amra: (unenthusiastically) I just got back from Sarajevo.
Vanja: (as if suddenly remembers) Ohhh, of course, you had the entry exam?
Amra: Yeah.
Vanja: Well?
Amra: (cynically) Well, you know, Bosnia! (then adding somewhat frustratingly) I just cannot be bothered explaining, I know that if I just say Bosnia everyone knows exactly what I mean, so no need to waste energy.

A brief meaning of ‘Bosnia’

During various conversations, on many occasions the school-leavers I spent time with referred to BiH as a unique place. In order to convey this uniqueness, they used the phrase ‘this is Bosnia’ or simply ‘Bosnia’. The use of this idiom also implied that everyone knew what it meant. And indeed, it seemed that everyone had an idea of what it represented. So did I. But then again, after this street conversation, just a month or so before I was to leave Bihać, I started thinking of this seemingly mundane expression as rather telling and I wanted to know more about what exactly young people meant by it, so I began to pay more attention to the instances in which it emerged. A few days after my chat with Amra, despite her suggestion that she needn’t explain it, I decided to ask her, and some of her peers, exactly what ‘Bosnia’ evoked in their eyes.

‘This is Bosnia’

Amra’s view: ... means a place in which absolutely everything is possible: corruption, employment of inadequate persons, ability to buy a degree... It is a place in which no one is surprised by absurd gossip that a baker has become Member of Parliament. It is a place in which we, young people, cannot, nor ever will be able to, express ourselves because daughters and sons of rich men [guzonjinih kćerki i sinova] hold the most important positions, those for which we are not good enough, no matter how hard we try. It is a place in which all ideas for change proposed by young
people are cut at the roots, and excuses are made why it is not possible. It is a place in which young peoples’ starting point is not encouraging, because from our positions we are already observing [već posmatramo] how our dreams and hopes are falling into the water... It is a place in which those of us who wish to do something good, maybe a particular voluntary activity, are being ridiculed not only by our peers, but also by our parents. And because of all this it is a place in which youth are totally losing motivation, in which we are afraid to try new things, in which it is easier to drink coffee, alcohol and smoke dope, because most of all we are afraid of disappointment. It is a place called Bosnia, simply ‘Bosnia’!

Each one of the following chapters will begin with one of the school-leavers’ views about what ‘this is Bosnia’ meant for them. Looking at these different views, looking at my notes, listening to the conversations I recorded, recalling various experiences, conversations I had, things and places I have been shown whilst in Bihać I realized that ‘this is Bosnia’ did not relate to one thing or another, rather it was used to communicate an array of complex experiences, practices, narratives, and understandings of possibilities within a particular location. It was the simplest form of explanation, without too many words, unnecessary details and redundant clarifications. In short, ‘this is Bosnia’, or plainly ‘Bosnia’, in the simplest possible way evoked the good and/or the bad embedded in one place. At times, it was supposed to suggest some ‘assurance of common sociality’, while also summarizing ‘a source of external embarrassment’ (Herzfeld 2005: 3). In that sense it was somewhat analogous to Herzfeld’s idea of cultural intimacy (chapter 2).

It revealed something of how people made sense of their presents and their futures, and sometimes of their pasts too. It explained their sense of place and how it related to other places (chapter 5). ‘Bosnia’ was supposed to explain various practices and social relations (chapter 4), while expressing dissatisfaction with the political powers and with all those in power (chapter 4 & 5). It also summed up and rationalized one’s own practices and actions (chapters 2, 3 & 4). It was used to blame the collective, or ‘the objective circumstances’, for what sometimes was a personal responsibility (chapter 3). At other times ‘Bosnia’ was a simple explanation that what could happen next was not entirely clear. At the same time it also suggested some sense of sameness and frustrating predictability. It suggested that people felt they had and did not have a clear place in this world. It disclosed why, despite all the negative things, one ‘could not live without it’ (chapter 2). In short, ‘Bosnia’ is the simplest way to sum up what this story is all about.
However, in order to understand the context in which this idiom originated, it is necessary to get some background on the socio-political context in present day BiH.

**Dayton and the political context; and how Krajina became (also) Una-Sana canton (USK)**

Between 1945-1992 Bihać was an integral part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ). The north-western region of BiH, in which Bihać is located, is called Krajina. According to some sources, after WWII, BiH in general and the Krajina region in particular, were among the ‘least developed’ (Mulaosmanović 2008: 210) in SFRJ. Soon after WWII industrialization reached Bihać (Mulaosmanović 2008: 210). According to Mulaosmanović, one of the factors that significantly contributed to the process of industrialization of Krajina and Bihać was the Una railway, which started operating fully in 1948 (see chapter 5). From the late 1940s to the beginning of the 1950s Krajina was being developed. One of the most significant establishments not only in terms of historical significance (see Mulaosmanović 2008), but also in terms of how it was narrated and remembered by my older co-conversationalists, was a textile factory Kombiteks. Kombiteks started operating in 1957 and would continue to be one of the major employers until the 1980s, when the newly built Agrokomerc, located in the northern part of the Krajina region, took over (Mulaosmanović 2008: 2010). With the breakup of Yugoslavia, confidence in the future - collective and personal - was shaken; BiH’s declaration of independence was followed by a four-year war during which thousands lost their lives and resulted in the forced movements of over 2,100,000 people (Bougarel et al 2007: 5; Stefansson 2004b: 57).

On 14 December 1995, the war ended with the Dayton Peace Agreement. This agreement officially divided BiH into two entities, the Serb Republic (RS) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), by drawing a demilitarized Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) (Bougarel et al 2007: 6; Bougarel 2004: 114-6). As the two entities shared a ‘minimal common institutional framework’ (Bougarel 2004: 114-6), this intra-state partition granted more governing powers to the entities than to the common state

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3 Prior to being given this name in 1963, SFRJ was called for a period of time first Demokratska Federativna Jugoslavija and then Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija.

4 About half of the pre-war BiH population.
(Markovitz 2007:44). Furthermore, not belonging to any of these two administrative units, the town of Brčko in north-east Bosnia enjoyed its own institutional framework. FBiH was further divided into 10 cantons which, although second level units, had relative political freedom including their own parliaments, educational and healthcare systems, etc. Today, the three main ethnic groups – Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats⁵ - have an equal constitutional status throughout the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite that, as a result of the war, populations were strongly concentrated along national lines, so that in RS the majority of the inhabitants are Bosnian Serbs and in FBiH the majority are Bosniaks or Bosnian Croats, depending on the canton. Five of these cantons had a Bosniak majority, three had a Bosnian Croat majority, and two were ‘ethnically mixed’. In the Una-Sana canton (USK), where I conducted my research, the majority of the population were Bosniaks.

This quite chaotic system served as a fruitful foundation for the production of rather cynical jokes. One joke that I heard on several different occasions, and which suggested the absurdity of the political structure, was the following: ‘If you walk down the main street of Sarajevo and you shout out loud ‘minister’ half of the city will turn around’. With the post-war, Dayton-based divisions, BiH ‘has thirteen different operating sets of laws, fourteen executive governments and nearly 160 ministries’ (Kurtović 2012: 5). However BiH is not unique in this. Switzerland has 26 cantons, each one having its own constitution, legislature, government and courts. While in Switzerland, in the eyes of my co-conversationalists, things seemed to be working well, in BiH nothing seemed to be working. Many Biščani perceived BiH to be characterized by ““stable instability”; that is, relatively continuous political crisis and conflict’ (Vigh 2012: 145).

In addition to the intra-state borders between the two entities within BiH, the fall of Yugoslavia led to the creation of two other kinds of borders: state borders with BiH's immediate neighbours (Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia), and the non-immediate, but nevertheless very influential, border with the EU. USK was located in-between these recently created borders: inter-state and intra-state borders. According to Bougarel et al, it

⁵ In Yugoslavia, individuals’ religious identity overlapped with national or ethnic identity (Bringa 1993: 2). While Bosniaks refers to Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Serbs usually refers to Bosnian Orthodoxs and Bosnian Croats to Bosnian Catholics.
was the territorial divisions, as well as institutional and political ones, which endorsed the results of war and ethnic cleansing, turning BiH into a place of political controversies between local and international forces ever since (2007: 6-11). As I show in this thesis, and as many studies on borders have already shown (e.g. Berdhal 1999; Brković 2012; Green 1998, 2005; Heyman 1994; Jansen 2006, 2008; Pelkmans 2006; Ron 2000), changes in borders meant changes in various spheres of life, especially for people living in the border regions.

The who: a note on people, and why them

This dissertation addresses how the creation of borders as either completely new frames of reference or already existing frames of reference but with new meanings, shaped peoples’ daily engagements and how it enabled or disabled possibilities. The story revolves around narratives, experiences, practices and aspirations of young people (between the ages of 17-25) who lived in Bihać. At the very initial stages, my attention was focused on school-leavers, that is young women and men who at the time of my research (2009-2010) were in the final stages of their high school studies and who were at a ‘vital conjuncture’ (Johnson-Hanks 2002) of deciding what their next step would be. However, I soon began spending time with slightly older young people, some of whom were students, and some of whom were employed, unemployed, or somewhere in-between.

What all these different young people had in common was that while not having much of a personal experience to look back upon, they could all reasonably expect to continue living for quite a while. In this sense, they were heading somewhere. Many were heading somewhere only in terms of passing time, knowing that they will not get anywhere that was very different from where they already were, while others imagined alternatives to their present. Some were heading somewhere through actual realizations of hopes and aspirations, some through engagements with immediate futures, with immediate gains, and yet others through investments in particular ‘dated hopes’ (Guyer 2007). So, this is a story about the future. Or rather, about how these young women and men talked about, engaged with, envisioned, anticipated and acted towards the future: their personal futures; and the future of the collective; the immediate, the near and the distant futures.

But it is also a story about the past. Or rather, about how some people, those who were coming of age in post-WWII Yugoslavia, remembered and narrated that past in relation to the Yugoslav future and to the BiH present. In that sense it is a narrative about the future of the past. In other words, although my main interest was with contemporary
youth and their engagement with futures, this story casts a comparative glance at the experiences and narratives as they were remembered and told by older people, who after WWII in some ways were and in others were not at a similar ‘vital conjuncture’ to those young people of my research period. Throughout various sections of this story, in the form of ethnographic scenes and characters, I construct a conversation between those who narrated the future of the past and between those who were engaging with futures that were still to come. In doing so, I hope to show how narratives of the past were not only commentaries on present experiences (Palmberger 2010), but also avenues to explore how different socio-cultural, economic and political conditions and processes created space(s) for different possibilities and aspirations, while at the same time enabling (or perhaps enforcing) numerous continuities too (see Cole 2010). The ‘conversation’ I create between young people within different temporal frames shows how one's location was defined by (different) relations with somewhere else (see Green 2005) and how this shaped the behaviours and aspirations of the respective young people.

Furthermore, as suggested by Cole, ‘cultural representations of the life course tell a person what he or she is supposed to be doing at a given point in life’. As such they are tied to ‘people’s efforts to achieve valued forms of personhood’ (2010: 15). So, understanding what being young meant in the post-WWII period might illuminate how and why being young in contemporary BiH was, in one way or another, a problem. So, this is also a story about how similar experiences and similar concepts meant something rather different under dissimilar temporal, social and political conditions. Various concepts (e.g. youth), experiences (e.g. waiting) and concrete realities (e.g. borders) this dissertation engages with, mattered in both Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav BiH spaces, but they mattered (or did not matter) in different ways, and it was how and whether they mattered, which significantly shaped how people talked about things, how they behaved, how they took on responsibilities (and for whom), and how they (dis)engaged with the future.

Erdei, for example, who examined what it meant to be a pioneer and how it changed over time, suggested that youth had a special place in the Yugoslav society as they were perceived as the ultimate establishers of the socialist ‘happy future’ (Erdei 2006: 210). They were viewed as essential perpetuators of socialist ideals (2006: 210-1), as an ‘objectification of a “future oriented” communist ideology’ (Erdei 2010: 125). The important place youth had for the Yugoslav future also came up in my ethnography in numerous narratives by older people, for instance through their participation in youth
labour actions \[radne akcije\] during which they voluntarily helped to build the country (see chapter 3). So, it seems that youth (and thereby being young) was a very important concept during Yugoslavia; not only did young people in the post-WWII period really build the future of and for the collective, but narratives of the older Bišćani also conveyed how they were perceived as an important component of the ‘Yugoslav society’. After all, Josip Broz Tito, the Yugoslav president, suggested turning his birthday celebrations into a national youth day \[Dan mladosti\]. Every 25\textsuperscript{th} May, youth (and hence being young) were celebrated all over Yugoslavia.

Young people in the post-WWII period seemed to have been proud to build the future for and of the collective. This very same collective was expected to take care of the people, and numerous narratives on the past suggested that, through securing jobs, through health care, education, proper holidays, and so on, it did so. Hence, there was a sense that if anything went wrong ‘the collective’ would step in and put everything back in order; that ‘the collective’ would take care of things. This comes across well in the following ethnographic scene in which Ana told me of her experiences as a pregnant woman under two different socio-political and economic contexts:

*Ethnographic scene 4: Ana’s pregnancies, then and now*

*It is late September 2010. The calendar announces autumn’s arrival, and yet the experience suggests otherwise. It is rather warm. I cherish the sun and day’s brightness. I am visiting Ivana\(^6\) and her family. Ivana is 19 years old and she recently finished high school. We are in the living room and Ivana’s grandmother tells me many interesting stories about her life in Yugoslavia, about her birthplace, Montenegro, and about how she got married and ended up here, in Bihać. After some time we are joined by Ana, Ivana’s mother. We talk about today’s youth and their behaviour.*

*Ana:* ...but their perspectives are different, I mean different to what we had. Things changed. The place where I came of age was very different. I will give you a good example to illustrate this. In 1990 I got pregnant with Ivana. I had a very difficult pregnancy and I needed to keep as still as possible for most of the pregnancy period. As a consequence I also needed to take a lot of medication. I was employed in a state firm and although I was on a sick leave for a very long period I had many benefits. For instance all my medical treatments were free and I regularly received an income.

*Vanja:* What, all of it?

*Ana:* Well 70\% of it. But that was very reasonable. Anyway, Ivana was born in May 1991

\(^6\) For more information on Ivana see page 156.
and everything was fine. In 1998, so after the war, I got pregnant again and also this time my pregnancy was not an easy one and I had to spend 7 months in bed. But, this time I had to pay for the medications myself. To me that was inconceivable. Furthermore, not only did I receive very little money for the period during which I was on a sick leave, but also that money was paid to me at a much later stage, there was a long period of uncertainty about whether that money was going to be paid at all. But you know, in 1998, like before, I was employed by the state...

Vanja: (interrupts) You work for the border agency, right?
Ana: Yes, and I know that my job is better than working for a private person [za privatnika], but still, also my job is in no way secure.

Vanja: In what sense?
Ana: Well our borders are all messed up, no one knows what is going to happen, one cannot know whether Republika Srpska (RS), or perhaps Herzegovina, will become separate states. Also, since the borders of Republika Srpska and the Federation (FBiH) came under control of the BiH state I can be sent to work at any border crossing in the whole of BiH.

Vanja: But you have a family, is that not taken into consideration?
Ana: No, it does not matter, if they want to transfer me they will do that and if I disagree they will say: well that is what we have for you and if you do not like it you can leave.

My conversation with Ana revealed how in the past ‘the collective’ provided for individuals (see also chapters 2, 3). As I will show, also in present day BiH young people had expectations to be taken care of and to be provided with different opportunities (jobs, more cultural and social events and possibilities to develop their personal interests, possibilities to study, etc). However their expectations were rarely realized. Instead, young people were increasingly expected to be self-reliant, able to operate within unpredictable circumstances, or to be a ‘flexible collection of assets’ adaptable to changes (Martin 2000: 514), even if they were not provided with means to do that. As a result they felt unable to do much to change their circumstances, they felt stuck between an idea conveyed through their parents’ and grandparents’ narratives (and the expectation these narratives created) that something greater than themselves (the state, society, the municipality, the person in power, the extended family, and so on) should care for them, and an idea that actually they should care for themselves (and also for that collective).

It is within this sense of ‘stuckedness’ that young people in BiH were coming of age. As we saw in Amra’s definition of ‘This is Bosnia’, unlike in the post-WWII period when voluntary participation in youth labour actions was valued and appreciated,
contemporary youth participation in any type of voluntary activity could be perceived as pointless and even ridiculous. Furthermore, the strategic plan proposed by the Bihać municipality\(^7\) for greater youth involvement in politics suggested that present day BiH did not have clearly defined strategies on the national level for political involvement of young people. It seemed to me that even when such plans existed (e.g. on the canton or municipal level) they failed to address the real issues. For instance, the same strategic plan (2008-2013) stated that ‘active participation by youth in decision making on the local and regional level is the most important element if we wish to build a democratic, all-inclusive [sveobuhvatno] and prosperous society’. However, as I show in chapter 4, young people did participate in politics, and they did so quite ‘actively’. Hence, I will suggest, an emphasis should not be on participation per se, but rather on how youth participated.

People I spent time among came from various socio-economic backgrounds. Their lives and their possibilities within different temporal contexts were shaped both by the respective local and global socio-political and economic conditions within which they were coming of age, and their personal stories. For instance, many young people in 2009-2010 BiH and post-WWII period were coming of age without one or both parents. However, what this meant in two different contexts, or for particular individuals within the same contexts, significantly varied. For example, Azra and Neno, both of whom were 18 year old school-leavers, lost their fathers during or straight after (as a consequence of) the war. A few years later, Azra also lost her mother. Their relation to the collective future and their understandings of their possibilities within it were very similar: in their eyes the distant future seemed unpredictable and there was nothing they could do about it. This resulted in a rather cynical and sceptical attitude towards that which awaited them. Furthermore, this shaped their present experiences, which were motivated by engagement in practices that focused on immediate gains (see chapter 4).

But there were also significant differences in how Azra and Neno lived their present and imagined their personal futures. Neno, for instance, spent a lot of time consuming alcohol and other drugs, and also, from time to time, got into trouble with the police. Furthermore, his future planning was somewhat unrealistic (see chapter 3). Azra occasionally, like most young people, consumed alcohol, and smoked, and sometimes

planned in an unrealistic manner, but she was also deeply engaged in actively trying to make some future for herself through, for instance, studying so that she could get accepted into a desired university course. My long term acquaintance with Azra and Neno suggested that similar socio-political conditions were experienced by them simultaneously similarly and differently, marked and shaped by more personal dynamics, such as the fact that Azra lost both of her parents and had a younger brother towards whom she felt responsible, whereas Neno felt that others (sometimes his mother, sometimes the city mayor) had responsibility towards him; or the fact that Azra was a woman and Neno was a man. In short, their relation to the collective future was similar, while their engagements with their personal futures were different.

Coming of age without one or both parents in the post-WWII context enabled different possibilities. Jelena,8 a 66 year old woman, and Ibro9 a 76 year old man, who were both pensioners in 2009, had both lost their mothers: Ibro during WWII and Jelena soon after it. Neither of them lived with their fathers. Ibro was looked after by his immediate kin, first his grandparents and then his aunts, while Jelena ended up first in a foster family and then in an orphanage. Their narratives suggested that Yugoslavia at the time gave both of them a sense that they could build their futures within it. This sense was encouraged by various economic, political and social processes (e.g. the creation of working possibilities) which generated a wider feeling of predictability, of ‘right proportion’ (see chapter 2), and a sense that they as a collective and as individuals were moving forward. But here too there were many differences in how Ibro and Jelena’s lives evolved which were shaped by personal factors. For instance, Jelena was a woman while Ibro a man; Jelena was born in a village while Ibro lived in a town which began a process of industrialization after WWII (see Mulaosmanović 2008); Ibro was looked after by his immediate kin, who encouraged him to invest in education, which resulted in him going to university, first in Beograd and then in Zagreb, whereas Jelena, who had no immediate kin to care for her, started working at a very early age. First she worked as a nanny and before she was even 17, she managed to get a job in the newly opened textile factory -Kombiteks- which secured employment for many women from rural areas (Mulaosmanović 2008: 215).

While it is possible to think of the two different groups of people this account is concerned with as belonging to different generations, in the sense that they were ‘born

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8 For more information on Jelena see page 60.
9 For more information on Ibro see page 159.
within a certain period and a shared socio-cultural context’, and that they were ‘influenced by certain political and social ideas and norms’ (Palmberger 2010: 31), within each group there were considerable differences that further shaped their experiences and engagements with the future; they were not all coming of age in the same way (Cole 2010: xiii). In other words, these different contexts created similar but also different conditions from which young men and women could aspire and engage with collective and personal futures in particular ways. It is in this sense that one could not make a clear cut between these two groups of people, by referring to them as different generations. For instance, Azra and Jelena’s experiences, both growing up without immediate kin in different but nevertheless post-war conditions, on many levels had more in common with each other than they had with their own peers. On many other levels though, their experiences were shaped by the broader conditions within which they came of age, and in that sense they had more in common with their respective peers.

That is why I am careful when using the term ‘life course’ or ‘life stage’ in my analysis. As Cole points out, ‘stage theories’ often suggest linear progression and ‘tend to homogenize variation within stages while downplaying continuities that exist between them’ (2010: 8). Similarly, Johnson-Hanks argued that the idea that there are chronological and natural life cycles or life stages relates more to institutional structures (2002: 865) than to personal experiences. In other words, life stages are constructions by social institutions. Hence their coherence should be an object of study rather than taken for granted (2002: 866). It is not my primary intention here to contribute to the anthropology of life course or life stages as such. However, this account does involve people who at the time of my research were positioned in different so-called ‘stages’, and people who were in a particular point in life from which they were heading somewhere. In order to overcome the numerous issues that idioms such as life stage or life cycle might imply, I follow Johnson-Hanks’ proposal and approach older and younger Biščani as people who were at a different ‘vital conjuncture’: ‘a unit of social analysis based in aspiration rather than event’, which suggests ‘a new way of aggregating life history experiences and thus working between the individual and the social, free from the stultifying assumption of étapes de vie’ (Johnson-Hanks 2002: 865-6).

According to Johnson-Hanks, the term ‘vital conjuncture’ recognizes that ‘transition’ from one stage to another is not only ‘processual’, but also ‘nonsynchronous’ (2002: 865), and that vital life events most often are not ‘clear in direction’ or coherent.
What I find particularly useful in Johnson-Hanks’ term is its dual character: vital conjunctures are at once ‘manifestations of recurring systematicness and contexts of unique possibility and future orientation’ (2002: 872). In that sense the focus is on institutions and aspirations: ‘although the conjunctures and their horizons are variable, actors’ orientations to them are often systematic; imagined futures may be idiosyncratic, but the forms of imagination belong to the social field’ (Johnson-Hanks 2002: 878). It is this dual focus that allows us to examine ‘how and why certain life events cohere in given social systems and what happens when they do not’ (Johnson-Hanks 2002: 878).

Vital conjunctures are temporary configurations of potential change and uncertainty, and while of course most social life could be thought about as vital conjunctures, for Johnson-Hanks it is important to stress that ‘vital conjunctures are particularly critical durations when more than usual is in play, when the futures at stake are significant’ (2002: 871). Accordingly, most young people I spent time with were definitely at ‘vital conjunctures’ as most of them were in the moment when what would happen next in their lives was unknown (university, job, unemployment, marriage, etc), and although based on their understanding of objective circumstances, some speculated about what could happen next, there was no guarantee, and futures were unpredictable even if at times they did not seem so.

**A note on methodology**

Different research methods generate different, often, complementary types of knowledge. Hence, researchers’ choice to use a particular set of methods matters (Mason 2002: 63; Silverman 2005:48). During my fieldwork, in addition to the standard ethnographic methods such as participant observation, various forms of formal and informal interviews and life (hi)stories, I used other methods too. These were mostly inspired by my own background in visual anthropology and provided me with an additional way of telling, knowing and researching. I organized arts and media workshops for school-leavers in which the participants used visual means, such as film, photography and drawings, to express themselves. In addition to this I asked some of my interlocutors to take me on personal experience-guided city tours. Below I elaborate on the contributions of these two methods.
Arts and media workshops

My initial idea to organize the workshops derived from a personal belief that not all people are equally verbally articulate. Inspired by Berger & Mohl (1995, 1999), I chose art as an alternative. In their books they showed how arts could be a useful, different and interesting means through which people might communicate their views and their experiences. The arts and media workshops were intended primarily for school-leavers, and indeed, apart from three, all the participants were school-leavers. Unlike my engagement with students, with whom despite age differences, our shared (student) status allowed us to bond without too much effort, I did not know how to access school-leavers, other than perhaps arranging more formal interviews (see also Markowitz 2000: 23). Doing something together, like workshops, allowed me to overcome this initial obstacle.

Through one of the local NGOs, whose premises happened to be located near my little house next to the Una river, I secured an empty, medium size, room that I could use every Tuesday evening. When I was still very new in Bihać, in early November 2009, a friend, Omar, who ran another NGO, invited me to join him on one of his regular tours where he visited various representatives of state and non state-run offices in the hope to secure future funding. At the end of this journey he asked me whether I wanted to go to the local boarding school\(^{10}\) [socijalno pedagoška životna zajednica] to see if school-leavers residing there would be interested in participating in my workshops. It was there that I met 18 year old Azra, the first person who seemed very excited about the idea of joining in. We bonded straight away. Then, a few days later, at a Human Rights Youth Film Festival, I met Neno and Adi, both 18 year old school-leavers, who also joined my workshops. The rest just happened informally and unofficially, and in late November 2009 the workshops began. Until this day I am not quite sure how intriguing the idea of learning about film and photography really was to Azra, Neno, Adi and most of their peers. Perhaps it had to do more with the fact that it was something different, a bit out of the ordinary, that they could do: sooner or later, they all expressed their disappointment with Bihać, a city they considered to be lacking opportunities for young people.

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\(^{10}\) The primary aim of boarding schools in BiH was to accommodate the needs of children without parental care. After fulfilling its main role, and in case there were available spaces, they provided homes for various other young people whose parental homes were far away from the schools they attended.
Eventually it did not really matter. In many respects the workshops proved to be an invaluable process through which I learnt about - and from - these young people, and through which, I hope I was able to give something, anything, in return. During the coming months, about 8 or 9 regular and about 7 non-regular participants, as well as myself bestowed the workshops with substance and essence, while engendering a variety of emotions, heated discussions, and some visual materials too. Some of these were eventually exhibited at a local gallery. In my eyes their greatest value lay in the fact that the workshops were in themselves a future-oriented project and a process which required some effort on behalf of all those partaking in them. In other words, workshops were not only a setting in which we could learn from each other and about each other, but because they required commitment and concrete involvement, they were not only about what those participating in them were saying, but also crucially, about what they were doing, and about how social processes and relations shaped young Biščani’s experiences, practices, tactics and understandings. Being immersed (or not) in the workshops, and how, creating or not creating a final project for the exhibition (and why), were all important processes, reasons, decisions which revealed something about young Biščani’s experiences, but which also reflected on the wider socio-political and economic context in which they played out.

City tours and maps of experience

During the workshops young men and women expressed themselves through artistic means that I suggested, like drawing maps. In order to comprehend their relation to a certain location, such as Bihać, BiH or Europe, I asked them to draw a map of that particular place. The instructions I gave were rather broad: for instance I asked them to draw a map of BiH as they related to it, experienced it and thought about it. Another similar method of map drawing, was experience-guided city tours, for which I also gave rather broad instructions: for instance, I asked my young interlocutors to take me on a tour through ‘their Bihać’, as they experienced it and lived it. Unlike in the case of the workshops, I was taken on experience-guided city tours not only by school-leavers, but by other young people too. I also attempted to organize some walks with older Biščani, but my request to take me on a walk through ‘their Bihać’ was either dismissed or they said that they would take me, but never quite seemed keen to do so, so I never really insisted. This in itself ended up being a rather productive addition to my ethnography and in chapter 6 and in the
conclusion I show how I turned what seemed to be an unfortunate fact into a productive piece of datum.

Again, both drawings and walks proved to be very powerful methods which vigorously brought up issues of relevance that I would not otherwise know to ask about. It was through walking tours, for example, that I was first exposed to how borders mattered in people’s lives and how strongly they came into existence in unexpected ways. Eventually I used the walking tours, and the maps young people created, to propose how ethnography could be valuable to contributing to recent inclinations in cartography which endeavour to create maps that are political and powerful in ways that differ from conventional maps (see chapter 6 and conclusion). Furthermore, as I will show, visualization of an ethnographic research through mapping could be a very productive and useful means through which scholars might contribute to the generation of different kinds of (anthropological) knowledge.

A note on representation

Perhaps, some might call my style of writing ‘creative nonfiction’ -‘the storytelling techniques of fiction to write about actual events’- (Narayan 2007: 130). Personally though, my intention in my choice of representation is not that of creativity in terms of writing. In fact, I know nothing about ‘fictional techniques’ of writing (2007: 131) and I do not think of myself as a creative writer with ambitions that would maybe accompany this role. Rather my inspiration was embedded in the experiential side of visual representation and it derived from my interest in ‘anthropological cinema’ (Ruby 2008). However, instead of a film, I produced a written text. So, in order to convey the experience of long-term fieldwork, as a site of ‘social intimacy’ (Herzfeld 2005: 3), in its thickest possible sense (Geertz 1973) I have made use of ‘characters’ and what I call ethnographic scenes throughout this account. In most of its ethnographic parts, I suggest this piece of work should be read as a film, or perhaps a theatre, script. Yet this only works to an extent. This is because film scripts not only include shooting directions (see Van Nostran 1996: 32), but also their main purpose is to address the visual and emotional aspects in the scene. A theatre script, on the other hand, most often mainly focuses on the dialogue (Trottier 2005: 4). In that sense some of my ethnographic scenes are more in line with film scripts as they hardly contain any dialogue, whereas others are more in tune with theatre scripts as it is the dialogue that is at their centre.
In order to avoid any possible confusion - clearly this is neither a film nor a theatre script - and in seeking to provide the reader with what I consider to be positive inspiration from both film and theatre scripts, that is substantial visual description and verbal content, I intersperse my text with *ethnographic scenes*. In other words, if ethnography evokes something about writing about people, and scenes evoke something visual, then *ethnographic scenes* are meant to engage the readers as much as possible with the ethnography, to make one briefly dwell within it, while at the same time to make ‘the visual’ available for the readers’ imagination through evocative descriptions. Furthermore, other than providing ‘evidence’, my use of *ethnographic scenes* and ‘characters’ in part derived from my aim to provide readers with other important contexts, relations and processes which I could not elaborate on (because of the scope of my thesis), but which nevertheless significantly shaped experiences and practices of Biščani. So sometimes they are rather long and informative, even if not all the information provided within them is discussed and analysed.

As anthropologists we encounter many characters during the fieldwork. As proposed by Narayan (2007: 133), ‘just as ethnographers must choose a persona to link our situations to stories, so too the people we work with cultivate personae in the personal stories that they offer us’. So the characters we encounter are their own just as much as they are our constructions. It is through the process of *editing* that a situation – ‘the site of fieldwork, personal circumstances, the historical social circumstances, and prevailing theories about the subject of research’ – is transformed into a story – ‘the kinds of transformations that an ethnographer experiences, witnesses in others, or comprehends intellectually’ (Narayan 2007: 132-3). It is important to note that all characters in the following pages should be seen as ‘always far more complex and have a life separate’ (Narayan 2007: 134) from this text. This was also the case with the *ethnographic scenes*: eventually I constructed them by choosing what to include and what to exclude from them. In reality the actual events were always much longer and more complex than I represented them here. As Green suggested, it is in the nature of all stories and accounts to be ‘partial and incomplete’ (2005: 79), and only thus should the following pages be read.

In the process of ethnographic writing we also establish ourselves as characters (Narayan 2007: 133). I have chosen to put myself as the first character that opens this story: after all, what I did and where I did it was informed first and foremost by my own intellectual and personal interests and motives. In this story, in addition to establishing
myself as a character, I wanted other characters, those whom I establish and represent throughout the thesis, to establish and represent me, as they saw me. So, although the first character is my own, it was not written by me. In 2013 I asked four young Biščani to describe me in the style of a film character that an actress is about to act. My instructions were simple: to keep it brief, informative, and address how they understood my role in Bihać and in their lives. Due to space limitation in what follows I present only one of these four descriptions, one which I thought most reflected the overall theme of this thesis. I did not ask any of the older persons to describe me as a character as I am not in touch with them via internet.

**Character 1: Vanja Ćelebičić**

Vivid nature and cheerful, on an everyday basis simple in approach, easy to communicate with, flexible when given tasks. Cautious and thorough when it comes to her work. Her stubbornness comes across as determination to have things done this way or another. Clearly, her behaviour is simple and intact, she is reacting fast and precisely. Very withdrawn with personal issues. Can be very impressed with other people’s qualities. Has an irresistible urge to be on the move. Explorer in heart and to the core. One may think that she is a foreigner. That is for sure the very first impression she leaves, sitting at a table in the local theatre. But then again, she has a distinctive accent of Sarajevo-born people, therefore she cannot be. Yet, she is a visitor from another place and with a purpose of a traveller and researcher. Hence her importance, for she interrupts the gray simplicity and day-to-day routine. Whereas to her, you are an interesting object and a future link to a past journey.

*Description by Ivana 23/07/13*

This exercise proved to be very telling and not only in a sense of what they thought of me as a person, as a friend, as a researcher, but because how they thought of me was reflexive both of the relationships I established with them and perhaps even more importantly, how these relationships were reflective of their own routines and their aspirations. So Ivana, for instance, concluded her description of my character by explaining my importance in their lives; to her I was someone who interrupted ‘the gray simplicity and day-to-day routine’ of their presents. My ability to do so, to suspend for a while ‘their’ grim lives, laid in the fact that I was ‘a visitor from another place and with the purpose of a traveller and researcher’. It was in that sense that in her eyes I added some spice to their routines. But I was not a
visitor just from anywhere, for Ivana associated me with the UK, and in Ivana’s case this
was significant.

Let me put this into context. When I returned to Manchester I had a Skype chat
with Ivana. After she gave me a brief update on her favourite actress, Helena Bonham
Carter, who apparently some days prior to our chat had received a BAFTA (British
Academy of Film and Television Arts) award, she commented: ‘Ahhh your lives (as if
pertaining to all those living in the UK) are so wonderful’. Puzzled, I replied that in fact
there was nothing so wonderful about my life: I was in my room, reading and desperately
trying to make sense of my field-notes. In that sense, I added, I was probably doing
something very similar to her, who recently started her first year at the University of Bihać.
Ivana answered: ‘Yes although we are doing something similar, you are doing it in
Manchester’. I replied: ‘and you in Bihać’. She concluded: ‘Precisely, and that is the whole
point’. For her, it did not matter what one did, but where one did it.

Ivana’s description of me in fact reflected on her own aspirations and
understandings of the place she inhabited. In the eyes of many young people life in Bihać
(and BiH), a place which, as suggested in the opening ethnographic scene by Husein
Dervišević, presently did not (or even could not) contain hope, meant that they felt stuck;
it meant that they felt they were heading nowhere in particular. However, they were not
simply alienated or disinterested in the future. Rather, while dealing with too much
unpredictability and somewhat undesirable predictability, a condition that both was and
was not of their own making, they were actively and ‘resourcefully’ (Jeffrey 2011: 245)
living their present routines and engaging with future/s. In what follows I show how young
Bišćani partially created, partially responded to and partially ignored Bihać and BiH as
places in space and time as they engaged with their surroundings.

‘This is Bosnia’

Adi’s view: ...means that this is not a normal place because a lot of things are bad here: politics,
politicians, nationalism, one’s success, in any field, is denied. It means that everyone goes forward
whereas we go one step forward and two steps backward. It is because we live in a tin [konzerva]...
but literally! But you know, despite all the bad things, it is an indescribable place, and one cannot
live without it: here I am particularly thinking about the people. Every day I go out to a café and I
see all the people I know, and I know exactly where everyone sits and what everyone drinks...


Chapter 2

Café routines within institutionalized unpredictability

Watch the video ‘Emir’s circle’ (enclosed)

Emir is running. It seems that he is running towards nowhere in particular. Yet this is a wrong impression. Through his run he attempts to bodily recreate his daily routine: one coffee, then another coffee, in the evening some alcohol, or yet another coffee, depending on how much money he has.

Emir runs past cafés he visits on a daily basis. He, as most youngsters in BiH, has a coffee, or two, or three every day. He also runs past a place called ‘beton’ (concrete), next to the Una river. It is there that many young people gather to socialize while drinking alcohol. Days go by.

And then he is an old man...

Walking down the main pedestrian street in Bihać, just before lunch time, or in the evening, one could encounter cafés on every corner. Many of them were full of young people (cf. Greenberg 2011: 94). On average, a young person would meet for a coffee with friends in the morning, then in the afternoon and then again in the evening. In tune with this, a video created by Emir was an enactment of his daily routine. Once Emir accomplished the circle the video faded briefly into black, eventually exposing a viewer to a quick glimpse of how he imagined his distant future: at the same place, only much older. Interestingly, the time between now and then was non-existent in Emir's video, and only evoked through his physical appearance. What happened to it, where did the time between the present and distant future disappear? This question is something this thesis aims to answer. In this chapter I explore the everyday practices around café routines in order to reveal something more general about young Bišćani’s experiences of time.

Unsurprisingly, while in Bihać, café routines shaped my own life and my daily practices as much as they shaped young Bišćani’s. Many of my ethnographic accounts took place in cafés. It was there that I learnt about what mattered socially for many young women and men; about the complexities of their experiences, which might seem straightforward to an outsider’s eye. I also learnt that café routines provided one with
shared knowledge of how things could and should be done, as it was through these practices that young people commented on, interpreted and even predicted their friends' behaviour. In cafés I learnt about how youth understood their place in this world; I learnt how and what they thought of the past of the place they inhabited, and about its present.

Through café practices I was exposed to their routines and had my own routines; there, I was exposed to their dreams, their fears, their hopeful imaginings of their futures, and then to either the realization of these imaginings or to the cruel insight that these were only hopeful imaginings. Cafés, perhaps more than any other physical space, stood for what I came to understand to be a paradox embedded in ‘This is Bosnia’. Bosnia was simultaneously a place one could not ‘live without’, as Adi suggested, referring especially to familiarity entailed in the café routines, and yet a place in which there was not much one could do to begin with (see also Vigh 2009: 97). In that sense it implied nothingness in their experience; it suggested that they were stuck, unable to achieve their aspirations.

This paradox was expressed well a couple of months into my research. On several different occasions, I had been asked by young people who knew why I had come to Bihać, when exactly was I planning to begin my research. Without a doubt, in their eyes, I was not doing much: I spent many hours of my week with them in cafés doing nothing in particular. Occasionally they teased me, suggesting that I came to Bihać for a year-long holiday at the expense of the British government. I understood these comments as very telling of their own experiences and actions. Perhaps, doing nothing was some sort of a good life, something I could have there in Bosnia, but not necessarily in Britain, or in many other places for that matter. For instance, Nikola, a 22 year old student, once told me that people in BiH could not be compared to many other people in Europe. He explained:

Look, we like to work hard, but after we finish a day of work we want to relax and socialize over a coffee, in that sense we are very different from many people in Western Europe. Perhaps only the Irish are similar to us, because they also have tight family and social relations, and they also like to finish their day of work socializing, maybe over a beer. Also, for us neighbourly relations are very important, there are no tight neighbourly relations as they are here. In the west they often don’t even know their neighbours.

But at the same time, doing nothing (while spending time in cafés) was a highly criticized practice by young and older Biščani. In conversations and in the media cafés emerged as a

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11 In reality my project was funded by the Leverhulme Trust and not by the British government.
manifestation of BiH’s overall ‘stuckedness’. Emir for instance, a 20 year old man who dropped out of university, told me that youth in BiH wanted change, but were not willing to do much to make that change to happen. Instead, he suggested, they ‘complained over coffee’. Ivana, one of Emir’s peers who was present during our conversation, agreed with him and eventually they concluded saying: ‘This is Bosnia!’. Also older Biščani often portrayed young people as those who would rather have (another) coffee than actively try to cause change. But their comments were contextualized differently; almost always in relation to their Yugoslav past. When older Biščani compared their pasts as young people in the Socialist Yugoslavia they would tell me that their free time was ‘filled with many extracurricular activities’, whereas today’s young people participated in ‘nothing but coffee drinking’.

I understood these remarks to be more of a commentary on today’s socio-political situation and limited possibilities for young people in today’s BiH, as expressions of a ‘nostalgic sense of loss’ (Green 2012: 113), rather than criticisms. In that sense, these remarks illuminated the importance of placing an emphasis on the context in which young people were coming of age. Young Biščani found themselves day after day in highly unpredictable social, political and economic circumstances. This is something I came to call institutionalized unpredictability: unpredictable ways in which small and big institutions functioned, which reproduced one’s inability to know what could possibly happen next, and which often, quite randomly, both established obstacles and opened up possibilities for one to reach desired futures. Here I look at how café practices were shaped by institutionalized unpredictability.

Institutionalized unpredictability enabled me to better grasp young Biščani’s reactions, frustrations and imaginings of their futures, but also their daily practices, occasional unreliability in terms of commitments, and their self image as individuals who ‘complained but were unwilling to make a change’. Looking at young Biščani’s behaviours, practices and routines through institutionalized unpredictability put an emphasis on processes, relations and particular contexts within which they were played out, rather than on particular characteristics of young people. In that sense, I identify the social conditions within which they were coming of age, and not the young people as such, as an issue that needs to be addressed (cf. Hage 2009: 9). Why would young people attempt to make a change when, regardless of one’s actions, they themselves did not believe that a change was possible?
To borrow from Ahmed et al (2003), although many young people in Bihać were fixed (due to the strict EU visa regulations for many this meant literally), because meaningful long-term future possibilities were scarce they felt ‘uprooted’. This feeling created a need to ‘reground’ (Ahmed et al 2003) themselves. So, institutionalized unpredictability also enforced personal (relatively) short term future oriented practices, through which young Biščani improvised for the sake of ‘regrounding’. Throughout this thesis I will show how these different ways of engaging with the future played out. Here I suggest that one way to re-ground themselves, or in Hage's words to make ‘themselves feel at home’ (Hage 1997: 99), was through socializing in cafés and/or in secluded public places where they could consume alcohol. As Rapport & Dawson argued, a routine set of practices might make people feel at home (1998: 27). For that reason they defined home as place ‘where one best –namely most - knows oneself” (Rapport & Dawson 1998: 9).

So Adi’s knowledge (statement opening this chapter) about who sat where and who drank what was also a knowledge about himself in a sense that through ‘a repetition of habitual social interactions’ (Rapport & Dawson 1998: 27), namely café routines, he (like others) in fact made himself feel at home. I will suggest that it was precisely because young Biščani’s lives were saturated with so much ‘inability to know’, that café routines became important practices, mainly because of a sense of predictability entrenched in them, predictability which, as I will show was simultaneously cherished and despised. I will propose that not all predictabilities were desirable.

Café routines versus coffee rituals

From coffee rituals...

In Bihać I would either receive an invitation or invite someone to go for a coffee, on a daily basis, frequently a few times a day. ‘Shall we go for a coffee?’ [Hoćemo li na kafu?] was often simply a call to socialize and converse, but most young people I spent time with, at least during the day, would socialize over coffee. Indeed, coffee drinking was an old and popular local tradition. Many people I talked to, older and younger, understood coffee as a beverage, and coffee drinking as ritual, to have cultural significance in Bosnia. This came across in what Nikola told me (above). He, like many others, linked coffee drinking with social relations. The importance of coffee drinking and social implications that went with it was in no sense unique to BiH. Since it was first introduced coffee has been seen by some as a powerful stimulant, while others saw it as a threat to society (see Hattox 1985: 5).
Furthermore, coffee seemed to have had the power to connect, or to divide. For instance, Anita Shapira, describing an early confrontation between Jews and Arabs in 19th century Palestine and the reconciliation that followed, cited El'azar Rokeach, a local Jewish leader, who wrote to his companions in 1886:

Everyone familiar with the character of the native of our land knows the power that rests in a flagon of coffee with which we shall honor the Arab who comes to our home, the power to win his affection for us. (1999: 60).

And indeed, coffee and rituals that went with it appear in all sorts of stories, be it academic, journalistic or creative. Roberts, for instance, showed how in a Finnish village the ‘coffee ceremony’ was an important event in which the locals portrayed ‘many of their major cultural preoccupations, conflicts, contradictions, and tensions’ (Roberts 1989: 21). It was through these coffee ceremonies that notions of personal autonomy/independence and egalitarianism were expressed and practised (Roberts 1989). Croegaert (2011) showed how women from BiH who migrated to the USA during the war used coffee and coffee drinking in order to manage their displacement. Cowan (1990: 64-88) working in Greece illustrated how practices around coffee drinking were deeply gendered: men socialized in kafenio (traditional version of cafés) and women in each others’ homes.

In BiH itself coffee drinking often appeared in assorted journalistic writings about war time (see Maass 1997; Neuffer 2002), as well as in various ethnographies (see Bringa 1995; Henig 2011; Helms 2010; Maček 2009; Sorabji 1989) as a mundane practice, one that was deeply embedded within BiH customs. In journalistic writings coffee drinking was addressed as a ritual that accompanied conversations among ‘friends’ as well as ‘enemies’. However when drunk with ‘the enemy’ (in this case Serb soldiers) it suddenly tasted ‘like silt’ (Neuffer 2002: xii), and when drank with friends it became as ‘powerful as a locomotive’ (Maass 1997: 144). Somewhat differently, Zlatko Dizdarević revealed how coffee drinking could allow for humanity even in the most inhuman situations when he wrote in his wartime diary column in Sarajevo of a man:

whose three-year-old daughter was shot by a sniper and who announced that he wanted to invite the killer for a coffee to ask him, human to human, why he had done it (see Sorabji 2007: 110, emphasis added)

Bringa, for instance, working in a rural community in BiH in the late 1980s noted that social exchange between ethnic groups was most visible and enacted through coffee visits
(Bringa 1995: 68). In her words, ‘coffee-visiting was not only the major social activity’, but also ‘critical in integrating’ different ethnic communities (Bringa 1995: 67). It was these coffee visits which ‘enhanced Bosnian identity by the act of sharing the cultural value of hospitality and using a shared cultural code’ (Bringa 1995: 67). Similarly, Sorabji, working in the neighbourhoods of Sarajevo, has remarked that offering coffee to a guest was a sign of hospitality and was considered to be ‘the essential aspect of any visit’ (Sorabji 1989: 78).

Unsurprisingly, as Helms has shown, on many occasions in the post-war period if one sought to re-establish and reproduce the pre-war neighbourly relations, one would do so first and foremost through coffee visits, as it was the coffee drinking that was ‘a marker of normal(ized) relationships’ (Helms 2010: 24). Such coffee visits, as well as the tendency, when a guest arrives, to first and foremost put a coffee on a stove [pristaviti kafu], I call coffee rituals. Coffee rituals were spatially and temporarily particular: a guest would normally visit a friend, a relative or a neighbour spontaneously, namely uninvited, in their home. I will return to this point. For the time being I illustrate the importance of coffee for many people in BiH in terms of hospitality as it came through in my own fieldwork through a short ethnographic scene.

**Ethnographic scene 5: without a coffee it is like we have not been here at all**

*It is a pleasant evening, end of September 2010, just a few days before I am off to the UK. Four middle aged women come to my place for an evening gathering [sijelo]. As is common in these situations, I prepare some meza\(^\text{13}\) to go along with alcohol, in this case wine and scotch. All the women arrive together. According to local customs, the first thing one would normally do to greet guests would be to serve coffee. It is never offered to guests, but simply served. However as it is quite late, about 8 p.m., I decide to ask my guests whether they would like a coffee:*

*Ana:* Yes, I would like a coffee.

\(^{12}\) For more on coffee rituals and the temporal and spatial dimensions involved in the actual practice of coffee making see Sorabji 1989: 78-9 and Croegaert 2011.

\(^{13}\) *Meza* - plates filled most often with simple but fairly fatty food, such as cheese and/or cold cuts to accompany alcohol and ease drinking. *Meza* is supposed to be eaten slowly while drinking and socializing: it is not a proper meal.
Zorica and Fikreta together: Yes, me too!

Mejra: Vanja, don't you know that you can make the most fabulous meal for us, but if you have not served us coffee, it is like we have not been at yours at all.

I smiled. I knew well what Mejra meant. As a little girl in Sarajevo I was exposed to this ritual of coffee drinking on a daily basis through various social relations my parents and my grandmother established. I remember loving the smell of my grandmother’s roasting coffee, but liking less her request to help her grind it; I enjoyed when my grandmother and I visited her female and male friends and neighbours for a coffee; equally, most of the time, I liked their daily visits to her as frequently it meant that I would get chocolate; occasionally though, since we often did not know of these visits in advance, I also disliked them, especially if it meant that our plan to go somewhere or do something I was awaiting was disrupted.

So at that time, coffee rituals seemed to be no more than ordinary practices that encouraged different acts, enhanced different senses, and at times also interrupted something one was anticipating or planning to do. And like many other ‘ordinary’ practices, or routines, which enabled a sense that life was ‘normal’ (Jansen 2013: 7), coffee rituals too, in some ways, were interrupted by the war. Considering the importance coffee rituals had in people’s lives, it was not surprising that many of my interlocutors when talking about the war period would mention coffee or sugar shortages. Often when they wanted to convey the absurdity of the war and costs of things they gave examples of the price of one kilo of coffee or sugar. On a slightly different note, when I asked him if he had any recollections from the war period, one of my young interlocutors, Ismet, a 22 year old student, recounted the following memory:

Look, I was very young then, but once, I remember my family sitting in the room and drinking coffee. It was hard to get coffee during the war, so if you managed to get some you would really appreciate it. So I clearly remember them saying to each other (slowing down the pace of his words) ‘Drink it slowly, smell it, just slowly, enjoy it’. (smiles) I was only a little boy then and at the time I did not really get what the big deal about coffee was.

... to café routines

It was probably because Ismet was only a little boy when this happened that this event was engraved in his memory. Coffee rituals continued to be crucial elements of social relations
in post-war BiH. However, in the new social, political and economic context they changed (see also Helms 2010), while creating a space for related but different practice, one I identify as ‘café routines’. So coffee kept being an important beverage in terms of social relations, but spatial and temporal particularities embedded in the coffee rituals has changed through café routines. This is not to say that cafés, as physical spaces, were not common before the war, but there were far fewer of them, and based on what I have been told, they seemed to have had a different meaning. At the same time, during my research it seemed to me that coffee rituals were becoming fewer, at least in comparison to my childhood memory. As I wanted to explore this issue I asked some of the older Biščani in mjesna zajednica [community centre] what they thought about my observation.

Ethnographic scene 6: practices around coffee

It is late August 2010. It is very warm. Lately I spend my mornings/noons in the Mjesna Zajednica Centar [local community centre]. As I enter, the ‘professor’ smiles at me.

Professor: What’s up, Vanja, my legend? I just asked Jasna what’s up with Vanja today, where is she?’

The Mjesna Zajednica Centar, located in the city centre, consists of a long corridor, formed so that it conveys the feeling of a space divided into two parts: the front and the back. Four rooms extend from the corridor each one designated to serve a different purpose. The last two, at the very end of the corridor, are offices. In there, the official role of mjesna zajednica is carried out: it serves as a state representative on a very local level. Its space is supposed to allow direct citizen participation in decision-making about local affairs. Each city or town, depending on its size, has several mjesna zajednica, occasionally a few in the same neighbourhood. However, my direct research interest is neither the state nor citizen participation in local affairs, thus these offices are of little interest to me. My interest focuses on the rooms at the very front of the corridor, as it is within the walls of these rooms that the second, unofficial role of mjesna zajednica is played out: it is a space where locals, mostly older men, socialize through playing chess and domino as well as drinking coffee, tea, beer and/or rakija [locally made brandy].

The two rooms, divided by a corridor, are located opposite each other. In the corridor ‘the professor’ sits next to a small table. He used to be a high school teacher before the war, hence the nick name. Today he spends his days sitting and drinking beer. He is fairly tall and very slim. He was badly injured some time ago so he uses crutches. He tells me that he prefers to sit in the space between the two rooms, as from there he can easily ignore what is
being said if it is of no interest to him. After I greet him, I have a short chat with him or I listen to him recite a poem by Aleksa Šantić \(^{14}\) or another poet. I know by now that he gets upset if disturbed in the middle, so I listen patiently, again. My ignorance in poetry and poets results in his wonder: ‘What do they teach you in schools these days’? When we finish our chat I enter the room where the drinks are being served.

I call it a coffee room. I entered the other, chess and domino room, only once during my first visit to the mjesna zajednica. That room is occupied by men who are somehow involved in the game, either by playing or watching while waiting for their turn to play. When I entered it that one time the unwelcoming, even suspicious, gazes made me feel uncomfortable: I felt there was no room inside for a non chess playing woman. The coffee room, on the other hand, is very inviting and pleasant, most likely due to Jasna’s presence. Jasna, a woman in her mid fifties, runs the coffee room; she serves the drinks and defines the rules. As the space is quite small it discourages private conversations. Thus, most of the time everyone participates, or can participate, in the discussions. On occasions, two small groups of people talk about separate things. In a day, many may pass through the coffee room. If they like what is being discussed they stay and have a drink. If they don’t, they have their drink in the chess room or simply leave.

Jasna knows I don’t drink coffee, nevertheless she never misses an opportunity to offer me one. Before I arrived in Bihać I did not drink coffee. These days, perhaps because I started spending more and more time among older persons, my habits are changing: instead of my herbal tea, almost on daily basis I have coffee, sometimes two, not necessarily because I want to, but more because I feel that I am expected to.

**Jasna:** (gives me the look of 'do me a favour') Come on, have a coffee with me, it is not going to kill you.

I wonder why it matters, what difference it makes if I have my herbal tea while Jasna has her coffee. Anyway, I have coffee with Jasna.

After a few minutes we are joined by Izo, Esmir and Huso. I am determined to explore whether and how coffee rituals changed.

**Vanja:** I remember that when I was a kid it was very common to go to people's homes for a coffee. I don’t remember people going out so much for a coffee. In fact, I don’t remember

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\(^{14}\) Aleksa Šantić (1868 – 1924) was a poet from Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
there were that many cafés either. Today every corner has a café, in the past there were much less of them. Am I right in this observation, or has my memory got it wrong?

**Jasna:** (Esmir and Izo seem to agree) No, no, you are right. It is a correct observation.

**Huso:** (laughs) Of course you are right, in the past there were all in all maybe ten birtija [more traditional version of café], not even that many. And you know, there was another difference, there were not full with young people as they are today, in fact young people would not dare even to peep into them. It was a place for older people and we had respect for that. It was not like today, all these cafés full with youth.

**Vanja:** Why do you think that is so? I mean why did it change?

**Esmir:** Well I think that the reason for this is that it is cheaper to take someone out for a coffee than to invite them home, or alternatively to go to their home. You know our customs: if you go somewhere you have to take something with you, or if someone visits you it never ends just with coffee, you always have to offer a cake or some sweets. It sometimes is just a bit too much.

**Jasna:** (and Izo agreeing) It is not because of that, it is just that people don’t trust each other as they used to. Today if someone visits you one thinks straight away that there is a reason behind it, that they want something. You know when Izo and I moved to live together, every day we had a coffee with people from a different household, in our neighbourhood, we either went to their place or they came to ours. Today it is less common. (pauses and then adds) But to be honest with you, I personally also do not want people to come by if they are uninvited, I don’t know, somehow everything is different today, times have changed, everything is done with such speed. Now if someone comes unexpectedly, I feel like one hour of my time is wasted: I could have done something useful in one hour. So I guess if you meet someone outside for a coffee then you also choose when you come and when you go, it is easier that way.

At first, with the context of the conversation I understood Jasna’s suggestion that ‘times have changed’ to mean that today people were busier and hence they did not have as much time for coffee rituals. I found this confusing and surprising, as clearly in the past unemployment rates were lower, and in fact, many people told me that they did not have time for cafés because they were working. However, over time, I have come to understand this ‘change in time’ in relation to predictability (or lack thereof): Jasna, it seemed to me, referred to spatial and temporal particularities of coffee rituals. As already suggested coffee rituals had not been planned before: one could simply turn up at one’s door. So,
there was a great element of unpredictability involved in this practice. Now, that ‘times have changed’, Jasna was less happy to have unexpected (or uninvited) guests.

Perhaps that was why contemporary café routines seemed a more attractive option. Similarly to coffee rituals, they too were spatially and temporarily particular: at least a couple (often more) of people would gather in one of their regular cafés, at least once or twice a day (often more), everyday. But in direct contrast to coffee rituals, café routines were all about predictability. They were one of the rare practices in contemporary BiH through which one could to an extent anticipate what could happen in the relatively immediate future. This, for instance, was explicit in Emir’s film. If in times of relatively high predictability, during Yugoslavia, coffee rituals were a relatively unpredictable practice, in post-war Dayton BiH, café routines were a relatively predictable practice. In the next ethnographic scene I show how some young Biščani related to cafés and the importance this routine had for them.

Ethnographic scene 7: cafés as one’s home

It is late April 2010, a pleasant evening. Finally one can sense spring in the air. Like many other Tuesdays we are having one of our film and photography workshops: this is one of the last meetings. We are talking about possible final projects with an aim to turn them into a collective exhibition in one of the galleries in Bihać. A few weeks ago I proposed a theme for the exhibition: ‘Home and Horizon’. The participants’ understandings of what it means varies, however most seem to understand home in a spatial and horizon in a temporal sense.

Fera and Emira, two school-leavers who have been coming regularly to the workshops, are supposed to leave Bihać in early September in order to go to Sarajevo for their studies. They are talking about their ideas for a project which is very much inspired by the unpredictability of what a transition to a new city means for them.

Fera: I want to make a photo showing Pivnica (local café/bar) as someone’s home, because that is where that person’s friends are, that is where she or he hangs out, that is where they are relaxed, familiar with how things are. And then I would want to make a few more photos in which I will try to portray the transition to a new place. These other photographs will be black and white, they will show a person sitting on the road and not moving. Eventually, he will slowly start to move, someone will give that person his hand. The fifth photo will be the adaptation to a new environment through a first coffee he has with new friends.

Emira: (seems quite enthusiastic) I want to suggest something. Since we both have these fears of the transition to a new city, at least I have, like every day when I think about it I
become nervous, and then I cannot function for two hours, because I think of me going away to Sarajevo, of me leaving my parents, my friends, leaving this city.

Fera: (nodding) I agree with you.

Emira: I have become fond of this city, and I love this boring Pivnica in which nothing is happening. I literally have feelings for this place. And I love when, in the quiet moments, the waiter just sits and lights a cigarette (short pause)... Just simple things like these, that’s what I am going to miss the most. I don’t know how am I going to leave my parents, my friends, how am I going to cook for myself. Now when I get home from school everything is prepared for me (imitates) ‘Emira, come and have some food’. Now I will have to do it all by myself: ironing, cooking, cleaning (all of a sudden as if remembers she had a point in all this) Anyhow, Fera, if I were you, I would take a photo of that person in Pivnica as being extra happy, so that would mean that he can never be as happy as he is here in Bihać, you get it? And later, in other photographs his facial expression would change, he would seem less happy.

Fera: Yeah I was thinking of something like that.

Emira: Today, over a coffee with a friend, we were sitting and talking, nothing special, but all of a sudden I see her and I start feeling nervous. I thought I was the only one who panicked, but then we both started wondering how we are going to move to Sarajevo. We won’t be able to have our daily coffee in Flash (local café/bar) anymore. And then I realized that my whole generation has not been functioning properly in the last 2-3 months.

Fera: (nodding) Aha

Vanja: Why is that? Do you think...

Emira: I think that people fear the most when they have a situation ahead of them that is unpredictable. At the bottom of all this is that I don’t know how it will be for me there at the end. Who knows if I am going to be able to make friends? Who knows if these will be good friends, like the friends I have here. To be honest, I am not even sure whether I will get accepted in Sarajevo University, let alone anything else... I just see myself in a room in Sarajevo.

Dado: Yeah, but all that is normal.

Emira: Of course it is, I just never knew it was going to affect me this much.
Graiouid, through the study of cafés in Morocco, showed that the space between the public and private was often blurred as café space was often turned into a family space to an extent that some of his informants referred to cafés as ‘second home’ (2007: 536-7). As suggested by Fera, this was often the case among young Biščani too. As places situated away from parents’ ‘nagging’ cafés seemed a popular locus among youth, where things that could not be done in the parents’ house – such as smoking, hanging out with a boyfriend or a girlfriend, or getting drunk – could be done in a still very friendly, comfortable and familiar environment, especially since most young people socialized in 2, or 3 cafés in which they were regulars. In that sense cafés seemed to be an extension of their house space: an additional room where the limits of what was allowed were pushed further. This seems to be somewhat similar to the khat houses in Jimma, Ethiopia, where young men gathered to chew khat and drink tea or coffee, as they ‘did not have access to a space of their own’ (Mains 2012: 48).

Through café routines people were defining and creating cafés as spaces; not only were these routines practised several times (almost) every day, but also in the same locations. Through them young people defined their relationships to Bihać and to other people within it. Café routines suggested a connection between an ability to structure time and the way people felt in relation to a place (belonging or not belonging to it; what it meant in terms of social relations, what control over their lives would they have in it, and so on). Emira and Fera’s fears of moving to Sarajevo were precisely about that connection. Fera’s photographs were to portray a shift that happens within an individual moving to a new place: the very first photograph was to portray a person as happy in Pivnica, which suggested familiarity and a sense of belonging. Latter photographs, in which that person was to be away from Bihać, friends and family, should be colourless (Fera suggested black and white photographs), presenting that person as alienated from environment and time. It was only through a first coffee, which is also the beginning of structured time, that adaptation to a new place would begin and a particular relation to that place could be established.

So café routines, which enabled relatively short term predictability, served as some sort of an anchor in times of high unpredictability. Clearly from what Emira and Fera were

\[35\text{These would often be an environment in which they felt most comfortable in terms of the music it played, in the way they dressed, in terms of people they hung out with, etc.}\]
saying, it was the structure, the routine itself, embedded in this practice which was a way
to establish some control over their lives. An attempt to gain control over one’s life under
highly unpredictable conditions was in no way unique to BiH. For instance, Dalsgaard who
worked among sterilized women in one of the poor neighbourhoods in northeast Brazil
showed how sterilisation was more than a means through which women solved a practical
problem (unwanted pregnancy). In her words sterilization ‘constitutes a hope for control in
one’s own life, a quest for a sense of competence and security in a lifeworld shaped by
violence and social exclusion’ (2005: 53). Sterilisation was a means through which women
could ‘counteract unpredictability’ (Dalsgaard 2005: 53). So although café routines and
sterilisation were very different practices, they both removed a sense of uncertainty from
the future (Dalsgaard 2005: 69) though in different ways. In the case of café routines a
sense of uncertainty was removed from the immediate future; in the case of sterilisation a
particular source of uncertainty was permanently removed. But these acts also provided
one with feelings of control, however small, in the present.

It might seem paradoxical that young people, despite the bad economic situation,
spent so much time in cafés. But some scholars suggested that practices similar to those I
identified as café routines seemed to be particularly flourishing in unstable places, with
high levels of economic uncertainty, which often left young people with too much free
time. Graiouid, for instance, writing about the café culture in Morocco, stated that ‘with the
high rate of unemployment and the sluggish economy, Moroccan café culture still has a
small Albanian town among (mostly) unemployed young and old men who played cards
and board games while sipping their coffees. He remarked that these men perceived their
activities of passing time in cafés as an attempt to ‘kill it’.

Similarly, Mains showed how impoverished and unemployed young men in
Ethiopia spent time smoking khat and watching films as an escape from too much
unstructured time (2012: 47-61). But also, and importantly, these practices were ways
through which these young men ‘imagined other possibilities and worlds’ (2012: 54), and
through which they constructed hope. Jeffrey (2010: 92-101), working among young male
students in Meerut, India, argued that although the ‘cultures of timepass’ were an attempt
to pass too much free time, which originated in high unemployment rates and which
caused feelings of loss, to ‘hang out’ on street corners or tea stalls also entailed all sorts of
benefits. Not only did it offer a ‘feeling of fun, social worth and lower middle-class
masculine distinction’ (Jeffrey 2010: 101), but these young men also argued that through hanging out they could obtain information that could be useful in the future (for instance about job opportunities). In that sense, both Mains and Jeffrey showed how ‘unstructured time’ could be a manifestation of a sense of loss and ‘stuckedness’ (Hage 2009), but also a means through which young people made sense of their presents and futures.

Many of these ethnographies situated the experiences of too much free time in relation to new economic situations which created high rates of unemployment, especially among young people. In BiH too, the economic situation was grim and the unemployment rates were estimated to be very high.16 Yet while research17 among young people (14-30) on activism suggested that many of them considered the high unemployment rates to be the major problem they were facing, I suggest that unemployment as such was not an immediate issue that concerned many of those I spent time with, and in that sense was insufficient in itself as an explanation for café routines. In other words, although many young people considered unemployment to be that which awaited them in the future, in the present most of them were not actively searching for jobs. This was because at the time of my research, most of them were engrossed in high school or university activities. In that sense, their official status, if there were a census, would not be ‘unemployed’, but rather ‘high school pupil’ or ‘student’.

This also meant that many of these young people actually did not have, or at least were not supposed to have, so much ‘free time’, as the young unemployed men in the ethnographic studies above. Despite this though, as I illustrate below in ethnographic scene 8, students at the University of Bihać often complained about the quality of their university, suggesting that the functioning of this university created a lot of free,

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16 Since 1991, due to political disagreements, no official census has been conducted in BiH. Thus, percentages of unemployment, like many other statistical data, remained in the realm of estimation only. One of these estimations suggested that unemployment rates among youth in BiH were as high as 50 percent (see http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/bih-evropski-prvak-po-nezaposlenosti-mladih, last accessed 10/07/2013), others suggested that they were 27,6 percent (see:


17 http://www.google.co.uk/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.omladinabih.net%2Fdownload%2FRezultatiistrazivanjaNas.doc&sa=s&ei=jQLoUbLSNk4H4QTCu4G4Ag&usg=AFQjCNF1yuya50n8U5yV3TwNhTFHQ&sig2=6xZWdcQRaz5ia12-mnsHFA&bvm=bv.49478099.d.bGE (last accessed 18/07/2013).
unstructured and unpredictable time (see also Jeffrey 2010: chapter 3). School leavers, on the other hand, who attended schools on a daily basis, did not have to deal with those uncertainties yet (but they knew those uncertainties awaited them). So instead of looking at high unemployment rates in order to understand café routines, I propose looking at institutionalized unpredictability, which permeated all aspects of Biščani’s daily lives.

The meaning of institutionalized unpredictability

During my fieldwork institutionalized unpredictability was manifested in Ana’s (a worker in a corner shop) inability to know, on the 30th of April 2010, whether she would have to show up for work on the 1st of May (the still very much celebrated workers’ holiday); in Faruk’s (a truck driver) inability to schedule an interview with me one day in advance as he could not know whether he would be called up for work; in Darmin’s (a 20 year old student) inability to know whether tomorrow’s exam would take place, as it depended on whether a professor would ‘decide to show up’; in Jelena’s (a pensioner in her mid 60s) inability to know whether her pension would be paid out on its due date; in Emira’s (an 18 year old school-leaver) inability to know whether she could enrol on a desired university course in Sarajevo as her father’s job was not stable; in Erna’s (a yoga teacher) inability to know in mid March whether a yoga workshop would take place at the end of March as she was still waiting for the outcome of a funding application to the municipality; and in the numerous other, very short term, inabilities to know that will surface throughout this thesis.

Institutionalized unpredictability occurs to a certain degree in all social contexts, within any political circumstance; however, it seems to be intensified under some, incoherent, conditions in which there are high levels of ‘random distribution of information and services’ (Brković 2012: 62) within institutions, and in which people come to feel ‘dependence on the goodwill and mood’ (Brković 2012: 62) of various individuals within those institutions. In BiH institutionalized unpredictability was an important dimension of everyday life and it formed people’s practices in very significant ways while rendering individuals’ decision making difficult. By institutionalized unpredictability I mean that in BiH small institutions (e.g. privately owned shop or even a family) and big institutions (e.g. a university or a hospital) functioned in a variety of unpredictable and chaotic ways, often shaping each other’s procedures and mechanisms, but also relations within them. In this regard, institutionalized unpredictability was collective unpredictability, which concerned
society as a whole, but which shaped individuals’ practices and experiences in a very personal and embodied sense.

Institutionalized unpredictability suggests that there was institutionalization, or standardization, of unpredictability. This might seem like an impossible contradiction as both standardization and institutionalization in fact suggest predictability. Of course my use of this term plays on this contradiction and suggests inconsistencies between how things were supposed to be (predictable) and how they were (unpredictable). In other words, many institutions could in principle increase predictability (how things were supposed to be), but ironically most often they created a sense of somewhat disorientating unpredictability (how things were). Institutionalized unpredictability was temporally particular: it was imbued with the capacity of those in power to keep those less powerful in suspension about what could or would happen, often until the very last moment, and by doing so it created a gap between them.

Inevitably, institutionalized unpredictability shaped and organized relationships between individuals and between individuals and institutions (e.g. principals – or the education system- and teachers, politicians– or political parties– and common people, between parents and their children, and various other interpersonal relationships). In that sense, one’s ‘inability to know’ produced other ‘inabilities to know’, namely, how some institutions functioned unavoidably influenced other institutions and relations within them. For instance, Emira, a school-leaver who wanted to study in Sarajevo (see ethnographic scene 7) never actually went to Sarajevo. One of the main reasons for this revolved around the uncertainty of her father’s job. Emira’s parents encouraged her to start her degree in Bihać and perhaps at a later stage, if they could both keep their jobs, she would be able to transfer to the University of Sarajevo.

I have been in touch with Emira during the following year and I know that despite her aspirations she did not manage to move to Sarajevo. To put this in relation to what I said earlier: unpredictability within one institution (Emira’s father’s firm) shaped unpredictability within other institutions and relations within them (Emira’s family) and her position with regard to other institutions (universities). In fact, Emira was deeply frustrated with her parents’ inability to provide her with what she considered their responsibility and her right: a degree in a course she desired. This caused many arguments between them. In this sense, institutionalized unpredictability organized relations and actions through the
hindrance of some - most often long term oriented - practices and the enablement of other - most often short term oriented- practices, with an immediate outcome (see chapter 4). The following scene serves as a good illustration of how institutionalized unpredictability worked within the university context.

Ethnographic scene 8: The University of Bihać

It is late January 2010. Snow has covered the streets of Bihać. It is cold. Gloominess mystifies the time of the day: is it morning, or evening, or perhaps midday? My watch suggests it is a few minutes past eleven.

I am in Pivnica with Nikola, Emina, Šejla and Darmin. As usual, I have a mint tea, they have coffee. Nikola is a student at the University of Mostar, but most of his days he spends in Bihać as this is where his girlfriend, Emina, lives. Emina, Šejla and Darmin are all students at the University of Bihać. I already know from some other friends that this university has a somewhat problematic reputation. Once I heard a conversation between Almaida, Elma and Edna in which they expressed their worry about their future possibility to find work. This worry was related not only to the very high unemployment rates in BiH, but also to their university’s reputation. It was this reputation, they argued, which would further limit their possibilities. Partially, this reputation derived from this university’s relative novelty: it was an institution that was established in the post-war period, hence was considered to be still in the making; and partially, it was due to all sorts of informal practices which not only contributed to this university’s negative image, but also reproduced student’s inability to know exactly how things worked. I know it is the exam period, so I ask Darmin whether he has any exams.

Darmin: No, I have no exams. Do you know why? (without waiting for an answer, he continues) It is because we did not have any lectures (short pause). Our lecturers never show up for the lectures. And when they do show up, they ask us to sign a few times as if they lectured more than once.18 This is how they make money. Most of our lecturers are external: they come to teach from RS, or from Sarajevo or Zagreb. It is a long distance for them, so they often just don’t show up.

( short pause, and then continues)

18 During every lecture the students had to write their names on a register, which served as proof for their and the professors’ attendance. According to my co-conversationalists, this piece of paper was used by administrators as a confirmation of professors’ work for which they could then pay their salaries.
**Darmin:** But I don’t care too much, I mean for me that’s not a big problem, I live here. But we have students who come from outside of Bihać and they have to take a bus, pay for it, waste time on a journey just to find out that a lecturer (emphasizes) again did not show up!

**Vanja:** That must be very frustrating (short pause). But maybe you should care, I mean how will you ever finish your degree this way.

**Darmin:** (smiles) I will finish like everyone else finishes.

Darmin does not give a clear answer to my question, leaving it unresolved. I am interested in how things work in university circles and Darmin continues to give more similar examples. In the later stages of the conversation I hear also about the experiences of the others.

**Emina:** But that’s not all. Look I am in my final year now, and I cannot say that I have learnt much. I am still not quite sure what economics is really about. Some professors expect us to buy and read only their books and they examine us on those premises. Also, sometimes the marks they give us are pure chance.

**Vanja:** What do you mean?

**Emina:** (smiling as if she remembered something) There is this one professor to whom we write all sorts of things in an exam. He is known for not reading the exams.

**Vanja:** So how does he mark?

**Emina:** Well I don’t know, I guess it depends on his mood, (short silence) and our luck. I mean there is no connection between what one writes in an exam and what mark one gets. Once I really prepared for the exam, but I did not pass, and a friend who wrote silly things passed. So we are not stupid, you know, once we get an idea of how things work we stop making an effort. I mean in any case we are not judged by our knowledge, so what’s the point? So we write all sorts of things: poems, food recipes (laughter).

**Vanja:** (laughs) so I hope you gave him your kljukuša recipe.

**Emina:** (laughs, but does not comment on what I said) Anyhow, he always fails a large number of students.

**Vanja:** (continues more seriously) Occasionally there are also all sorts of stories about sexual harassment in the papers. Does that happen often?

**Emina:** It happens, it did not happen to me personally...

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19 Emina was studying economics.
Šejla (very timidly, compliments Emina’s sentence): It happened to me (adding quickly) but I was only in my first year (embarrassed)... what could I do? I really did not understand much. I mean nothing serious happened, but there was this professor who tried to kiss me.

Vanja: How? I mean what happened?

Šejla (still embarrassed): Well there was this subject I kept on failing. And once I went for an exam\(^{20}\) and this professor first told me that he was really interested in photography and asked whether he could take a photo of me. I said ok, (quickly adding embarrassingly) I was only in my first year, I really did not know how to react. And after he took my photos he got closer to me, as if to show me the photos, and then he tried to kiss me. But I resisted, I moved my head. And then he started telling me about his life and how he was unhappy in his marriage. And then he started telling me that I made a mistake, that I should not have studied English, that I was too beautiful and should have been an actress, so that went on for a while and then I asked him: ‘Professor, did I pass?’; and he was like: ‘Oh yes, you did’ and then he was about to write the mark in my index and then he looked at me and said: ‘Remind me what subject was this for?’\(^{21}\) (laughs)

Emina: Idiot!

Vanja: Crazy! So basically he did not even have a clue what subject he was ‘examining’ you on!

Emina and her peers thus adjusted their practices to those of a professor. As she said, what was the point of studying properly when the allocated marks were not given on the premise of knowledge? Darmin did not care too much that his lecturers did not show up for their lectures. What would be the point of caring? He did not personally spend money or waste time in order to come for a lecture, and besides, there was nothing he could do about it. The practices of professors’ and students’ alike also formed students’ understandings of their future chances; Emina was concerned about whether she could really be an economist as she did not feel she learnt much at the University of Bihać; and in an earlier conversation, Elma and Almaida were worried also before they graduated about their possibilities to find work. Clearly, and unsurprisingly, institutionalized unpredictability encouraged students, and young people in general, to develop various practices that were often interpreted and

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\(^{20}\) This was an oral exam, as most of the exams were at the University of Bihać. There are many exam periods and if one fails once, one may endeavour to pass it until s/he manages. Each one of these attempt (to pass an exam) costs money. For full time undergraduate students it costs 1 KM (about 50 Euro cents), for part time students more (up to 10 KM).

\(^{21}\) The same professor was teaching two different subjects.
understood (by older and younger Biščani, by politicians and non politicians, and even by foreigners who spend some time in BiH) to mean a general lack of motivation and lack of interest in causing real change in their lives. However, I argue that their practices must be understood within the wider framework of this institutionalized unpredictability which allowed some the sensation of omnipotence and left others with feelings of impotence or paralysis.

Institutionalized unpredictability encouraged all sorts of as if behaviours, which although often being exploitative also contained a possibility (see also Vigh 2012: 151). For instance, as clear from ethnographic scene 8, sometimes students did attend the exams as if they were studying and being really examined, and sometimes professors acted as if they were marking. So occasionally things were done simply for the sake of procedure. Although on some occasions everyone - professors and students - knew they were not there in order to really exhibit their knowledge, or to convey knowledge, they nevertheless all acted as if they were there to do so. In order to obtain a university degree, students had to follow formal routes and procedures even if in practice they did not learn much this way. As if practices were in no way unique to BiH. Wedeen (1999) for example, has conducted an interesting study on all sorts of as if behaviours in Syria, which allowed al-Asad’s regime to employ an efficient form of power. While in Syria, as if practices were occurring under the authoritarian ‘state’, in BiH, as Jansen (2013: 19-20) suggested, the general sense was that to begin with there was not enough of a ‘state’, which even 15 years after the end of the war, made people feel that they were ‘still unable to lead ‘normal lives” (Jansen 2013: 19-20).

Although present day BiH and 1990s Syria were rather different context there were some similarities in the effectiveness of the as if behaviour. In Syria, Wedeen argued, the cult of personality strengthened Asad's power by demonstrating that his ‘regime can compel people to say the ridiculous and to avow the absurd’ (1999: 12). For all of those citizens who did not believe in what Asad stood for, and yet acted as if they did believe, the cult served as a powerful ‘mechanism of social control’. Through the story of ‘M’ Wedeen showed that the more sceptical one was, the more the cult oppressed him. That was how it drew it power. In that sense, argued Wedeen, Asad’s cult was a ‘strategy of domination based on compliance rather than legitimacy’ (1999: 6). And although the politics of as if might seem ‘irrational or even foolish at first glance’ (Wedeen 1999: 6), in fact was ‘politically effective’ (Wedeen 1999: 6). In some ways, also in BiH as if
behaviour was effective. Not only for those in the positions of power (e.g. professors) - for
it maintained the power relations and kept them in their convenient positions - but also for
those who were powerless (e.g. students). This was because *as if* behaviour, as a practice
deeply embedded within institutionalized unpredictability, closed off or opened up certain
hopes: hopes which *could not* and *would not* exist without it. In that sense, and similarly to
the Syrian case, *as if* behaviour was both ‘self-defeating and self-serving’ (Wedeen 1999: 31).

A variety of inconsistent and unpredictable possible outcomes of encounters
between students and professors triggered among students of Bihać a sense of negligence
and frustration, and shaped their expectations and how they understood their possibilities.
It was in that sense that they felt stuck (there was nothing that could be done about it), and
thus ‘uprooted’ (Ahmed et al 2003). The above ethnographic scene also illustrated how the
University of Bihać, as an institution, simultaneously and often randomly closed off and
opened up hopes. Accordingly, one could study really hard and for various -often
unknown- reasons not pass the exam (possibly because the student did not use the
professor’s book; or simply because the professor did not care; etc) or alternatively, one
could not study at all and for various -again often unknown- reasons pass the exam. In
theory, according to the formal rules, the students who studied were supposed to pass the
exams and those who did not study were not supposed to pass the exams. In practice,
though, the way things worked, as recounted by Darmin, Emina, Šejla and others, was
often very different. Rules being *sometimes* followed and *sometimes* not followed meant
that one could never be quite sure what could happen next.

Many of my interlocutors understood participation in some practices as worse than
others, depending on their understandings of who the ‘victim’ was (see also Jeffrey 2010: 158).
Accordingly, it was worse to be a professor who profits from the situation created by
institutionalized unpredictability than to be a student who benefits from it. This was
because it was always deemed worse to be in a position of power than to be an ‘ordinary’
person, or a ‘victim’. So, depending on one’s understanding of one’s position within a
hierarchical space, at times being involved in practices created through institutionalized
unpredictability was considered to be an essential element of life in Bosnia (‘that is the only
way to make it here’), and at other times, it was understood as greediness and accumulation
of wealth at the expense of ‘ordinary’ people (see also Ries 2002: 294; Haller & Shore
So, and especially in relation to short term private future, institutionalized unpredictability encouraged hope; practices that emerged from it were considered as the only way in which one could get certain things done promptly (this, however, did not mean that many people managed to get things done through these practices). At the same time, it discouraged hope and people’s understanding of their chances and possibilities for the long term private and collective future. Thus, those who studied hard (because perhaps they wanted to achieve something in the long run) were often considered to be ‘fools’. As Emina said ‘We are not stupid, you know, once we get an idea of how things work we stop making an effort’.

When everything had the ‘right proportion’
Ultimately, and unsurprisingly, institutionalized unpredictability created space for all sorts of informal practices and various ‘public secrets’ while perpetuating existing power relations. But in the Yugoslav past too all sorts of informal ways of doing things were rather common. During my visits to the mjesna zajednica older Biščani’s would tell me stories in which they did not romanticize the past nor did they perceive it as somehow ‘clean’ or corruption-less. For instance, they told stories about their gift/money giving during visits to doctors and about the role of social networks in order to find work. In that sense, as illustrated in the scene below, there was much continuity in how older Biščani experienced their pasts and presents.

Ethnographic scene 9: treating doctors
Early September, mid morning. The sun is shining. Recently most days I come to mjesna zajednica around 10:00. Some days seem to be quieter than others. On those days I find Jasna sipping coffee and reading one of her magazines on homemade remedies. Alternatively, she makes lunch. On other days it is quite busy, and while Jasna makes sure everyone is treated properly, others talk to her, or between themselves about politics, about personal experiences, about health, justice, occasional gossip, in short about things concerning their lives. Jasna says that whether it is busy or not depends on the time of the month: the start of each month is busier than its ends. It is usually at the beginning of each month that pensioners receive their retirement allowances. I say usually as one can never be sure due to delays. However, when they are on time it is the most profitable period for Jasna as many come to socialize while treating their friends to a drink. By the end of the month most of those coming to mjesna zajednica wait for the next month’s payment. In that sense pensions and their delays significantly shape people’s daily activities while organizing their
time. Today, the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, quite a few older Biščani are present. Some are regulars and I often see them. Others I meet today for the first time. As I walk in I hear that the conversation revolves around a popular theme among older people: the healthcare system and doctors’ corruption. After settling in I am able to join in their conversation.

**Vlado:** (sighs) Ahhh, today everything is ... (does not finish the sentence, but makes a desperate bodily gesture).

**Vanja:** You know I always hear people talking about money or gifts they give to doctors, but I am always somehow puzzled about how it really works, I mean practically. It is one of those things you know should not be happening, but yet everyone takes part in it. How people do it and do they always give money or gifts?

**Safet:** (raises his hand as if to get our attention) A few days ago I went to see a doctor and in the waiting room people talked about how much money each one of them prepared for the doctor. And then they were wondering whether that was too much or too little (pause, opening his arms and asks) who knows how much is too little and how much is too much?

**Vanja:** But it was a common practice also in Yugoslav times, no? (without waiting for an answer I continue to make my point stronger) I mean I always feel that when people talk about it, it sounds as if it was part of today’s system, one of today’s many difficulties, but it is not a new thing, right?! So what’s different now?

**Jasna:** New? (laughs) Let me tell you a story. I used to have a bad back-pain, but the doctors here did not know what it was so they sent me to Zagreb.

**Vanja:** So that was before the war?

**Jasna:** Yes, during Yugoslavia. Once a month I went to Zagreb to see the doctors, and every time I hoped that they would decide what to do with me. But each time they kept telling me you will have to come again next month, we have no available treatments at the moment. That lasted for three years (pause, looking at my reaction, continues emphasizing) three years I had to wait. But then one time I decided to take some nice gifts for the doctor and the nurse. So I got there and I thought to myself ‘Oh what shall I do now? How shall I give them the gifts’, you know I was really embarrassed by it, how to do it. But then I approached the nurse,(talks quietly) you know, quite timidly, and I told her very quietly so that others would not hear ‘I need to ask you something, I brought something small for you and for the doctor and I was wondering, how could I give you that?’ (Changes her voice intonation, talks louder again) She told me straight away, without making any fuss about it, ‘Oh you can give it to me now’. For her that was not an issue. So I gave it to her and that day I was treated
very nicely and the doctor made a few phone calls and arranged for me to be seen by another specialist who suggested that instead of a surgery I should do some spa treatments. And I managed to go twice for spa treatments in Topusko (today’s Croatia) every time for three weeks. And then the war started.

**Vanja:** And that was all free, right? I mean the treatments?

**Jasna:** Yes. So you see? It is not a new thing.

**Vanja:** So what’s different today? How has it changed?

**Vlado:** Ahhhh, it is different, everything is different.

No one gives an answer to this question. Some shrug their shoulders, others suggest that it is different, but no one says how.

A few minutes later.

**Vlado:** The good thing then was that if you were ill they could send you to Zagreb, or to Beograd, or to Ljubljana...You could see really good doctors.

**Jasna:** Yes, that’s true, what are our options today? They can only send you to Sarajevo or to Tuzla.

**Ibro:** Yes, then we had more options.

Although people’s narratives of the past clearly suggested that they acknowledged continuities entailed in informal practices, they dwelled more on differences, often insisting that everything changed. A major difference was that the things they could get done had been reduced in all sorts of ways. This was clear from the above scene in which pensioners discussed the variety of healthcare possibilities Yugoslav citizens enjoyed, as opposed to fewer healthcare possibilities BiH citizens had during my fieldwork period. The creation of new frames of reference, intra-state and inter-state borders, has significantly shaped peoples’ daily engagements in all spheres of life as it created different possibilities and allocated new meanings to already familiar practices (see also Brković 2012; Jansen 2008). In other words, the change in borders meant changes in the healthcare, education, in the judicial system, employment possibilities, in politics, and so on. It meant that individuals' eligibility for free medical treatments in terms of variety shrank; it meant that education opportunities were rearranged; it meant fewer job opportunities, obtained in different ways. In short, it meant that during Yugoslavia one potentially had more and
different choices, and a wider and different scope of possibilities. This was not only because these choices and possibilities were spread over a larger geographical area, but also because, as I suggest in the next chapter, Yugoslav ideology invested great efforts into the concrete making of, and hence engagement with, the collective short and long term future. In that sense, it also endorsed predictability.

Older Biščani’s narratives revealed that even with corruption and informal practices, the previous situation was tolerable because everything seemed to be done in a proportion that seemed reasonable and hence acceptable. On one occasion, Safet, a pensioner in his early 80s, told me about this proportion. After WWII he was trained to become a teacher. As a teacher his salary was 3,200 dinars. The salary of the school’s principal was 4,200 dinars. The difference in their incomes, Safet explained, was of the right proportion: it was only fair and reasonable that a principal - due to his status and greater responsibilities - earned more than a teacher did. However, his earnings were not much higher than those of people in lower ranks. Safet concluded: ‘Everything had a proportion back then’. On another occasion, during one of many conversations in mjesna zajednica someone explained how things worked in the post 1992-95 war context in which earnings of those in power (politicians, managers, etc), had come to be considered completely out of proportion, even irrational: in one month a politician could earn what a pensioner received in 6-7 years. This, they suggested, did not make any sense.

I understood the ‘right proportion in everything’ of the Yugoslav times, as opposed to the ‘lack of proportion in everything’ of the post-war BiH times, to have meanings beyond financial (im)balances. The ‘right proportion’ suggested relative predictability: a sense of order, stability and a relative knowledge of what to expect. Likewise, a ‘lack of proportion’ suggested unpredictability: a sense that there was no order and that one could not know what to expect. This is not to say that in the past there was no unpredictability. However, unpredictability was not institutionalized, which also meant that it was not collective, but rather individual. What caused these individual unpredictabilities was not an overall sense of ‘stuckedness’, lack of collective ‘existential mobility’ (Hage 2009), lack of collective progress (see also Mains 2007) but other things, such as social and family relations (e.g. in the case of coffee rituals). The general feeling was that while not everything was predictable, the overall proportion of things was predictable.

I will demonstrate this through an example of coffee rituals. Although coffee rituals entailed a sense of unpredictability, they were enfolding within a relative sense of predictability and ‘right proportion’. Let me explain. While in the past one could not be
sure if and which visitor would come for a coffee, if a visitor came there were particular expectations, from both a guest and a host, which gave a sense of a relative sense of proportion and order. Bringa, for example, noted that in the small village where she conducted her research, women went on coffee visits only after they finished their morning tasks (e.g. cleaning and baking), and if they stayed for too long they would acquire a reputation of being lazy (1995: 87-8). So while the exact time of their visit was unknown (hence unpredictability), the relative stage of the day and how long they should stay was known (hence the predictability of the proportion). This past sense of right proportion extended into all spheres of life. Narratives on the past suggested that one could, for example, count on getting a job, even if it was not necessarily clear what type of job one would get, or how one would get it (namely through connections or not, and through which connection). This was in sharp contrast to the current situation.

**Finding some proportion within disproportion: café routines**

In present day BiH there was a sense that small scale unpredictabilities were overshadowed by large scale unpredictability, namely institutionalized unpredictability. Even if this was not necessarily the case, it enhanced an overall feeling of disproportion. Thus, individual unpredictabilities were shaped, maintained and magnified by the objective social conditions which seemed to be limiting one’s sense of ‘agentive capacity’ (Greenberg 2011), and which thereby produced a feeling that one was stuck. This helped to sustain an overall sense of lack of direction, of ‘indefinite suspensions’ (Kurtović 2012: 12), of mysteriousness of how things worked (Brković 2012: 47). Perhaps in that sense, Jasna, like many other people I got to know, did not feel like having unexpected guests over for a coffee anymore. After all, her house was supposed to be a corner of sanity where she hoped to be able to know what to expect. One young man once told me that if he heard his door bell when he was not expecting anyone he often simply ignored it.

Instability, uncertainty and unpredictability brought by post-socialism, post-war and the market economy were the main characteristics of the daily realities of people in BiH to an extent that I often felt that the words ‘future’ and ‘uncertainty’ came to mean one and the same thing. This was expressed on a daily basis in the media and in numerous conversations I had with Biščani. Once I stumbled upon an article in the weekly political magazine *Dani [Days]* in which a local journalist, Ozren Kebo, framed this well by asking ‘whether any (form of) Bosnia and Herzegovina is going to exist then (in 25 years time),
since only dark options, full of uncertainty, face this space’. The uncertainty and the inability to anticipate what could possibly happen next (cf. Green 2012) were probably among the most crucial changes in Biščani’s lives.

Matters of the past, which in post-war narratives appeared as something that could be ‘taken for granted’ (e.g. finding a job, or having a day off on the 1st of May), became struggles of everyday lives. People in BiH were tired of politics and politicians, of the ways in which the post-war, post-socialist state, with its awkward borders, did not work. They did not trust the state and they lost any hope in its ability to make any meaningful changes (see also Dalsgaard et al 2011: 47; Frederiksen 2012). The combination of deep cynicism and tiredness with politics made people less interested in topics concerning the future of the collective (see also Ledeneva 1998: 192). Instead, everyone withdrew into her/his own business, making the idiom ‘svako svoju politiku vodi’ [everyone leads his own politics] a rather common manifestation of the lack of care - or perhaps inability to care - for the collective. Thus, and similarly to their peers in neighbouring Serbia, many young people in BiH conceptualized ‘their personal future as being separate from a common future, the future of the community, and realized that in order to provide a safer future for themselves and their families they are obliged to find personal solutions for what they see as systematic failures of society’ (Erdei 2010: 123).

Kurtović referred to the scepticism regarding the transformative capacity of the social and political life in BiH as ‘gridlock’ (2012: 2). She suggested that it was the Dayton Accords which had ‘created a political deadlock at the same time as it established the national future as an urgent political problem’ (2012: 3). The Dayton Peace Agreement itself was oriented toward the short term future: in their attempt to put an immediate end to an already long lasting conflict, its creators overlooked the long term implications and conditions of their creation. The Dayton Agreement served as an undercurrent for conditions in which individual and short term oriented practices flourished at the expense of long term collective goals. The latter, within the ‘politics of impasse’ (Kurtović 2012) could only be perceived as unrealistic (see chapter 3).

I argue that precisely because young Biščani’s lives were imbued with so much ‘inability to know’, café routines became important practices. After all, as Ehn & Löfgren have shown, it is not unusual for people to establish routines to ‘protect themselves from uncertainty’ (2010: 86). In BiH they did so through café routines and not only because
coffee drinking was a means through which social relations were created and maintained, and if necessary remade and re-established (Helms 2010: 24-25), but also because café routines suggested that some aspects of their lives were still somehow normal. And this was because of the relative predictability embedded in these practices: as both Jansen (2013) and Greenberg (2011) have argued, in the post-Yugoslav context notions of ‘normal life’ converge around predictability (see also Remtilla 2012: chapter 6). Unsurprisingly then, since many aspects of Biščani’s daily lives were not predictable, they were often discussed as being not ‘normal’. This was well expressed in the opening of this chapter in Adi’s explanation of what ‘this is Bosnia’ meant to him. Adi suggested that Bosnia was both normal and not normal: its ‘normalcy’ was expressed through café routines and predictability embedded in his knowledge of who sat where and who drank what; and its abnormality, amongst other things, with his reference to BiH always being two steps behind.

But café routines, as any routine, constituted ‘a cultural field full of tension’ (Ehn & Löfgren 2010: 81). In The Secret World of Doing Nothing Ehn & Löfgren remarked that routines are often seen as examples of ‘dull and predictable existence’ (2010: 80), however they argued, routines are filled with tensions ‘between their potential to be either a supportive corset of security, helping one along during the day, or a cultural straitjacket, trapping one in monotonous activities’ (Ehn & Löfgren 2010: 80). Through various examples from the world of fiction (literature and films) and non-fiction (ethnographies) they show how this tension is played out and how at times routines are tools ‘for organizing the flow of time’ (2010: 81) and at other times signifiers of ‘mechanical habit’ which suggest ‘lack of initiative and flexibility (2010: 81).

I came across this tension in my own fieldwork. Café routines were simultaneously perceived to be a source of ‘assurance of common sociality’ (Herzfeld 2005: 3), normality (Greenberg 2011; Jansen 2013) or the positive ‘ways we do things here’ (Ehn & Löfgren 2010: 85). As Nikola somewhat proudly suggested this practice was not to be found in many places. Yet these routines were also seen as manifestation of their ‘stuckedness’, lack of progress, lack of opportunities, boredom, and in that sense ‘a source of external embarrassment’ (Herzfeld 2005: 3). Café routines, whether viewed positively or negatively, suggested predictability.
For instance, Emina, 22 year old student, once told me: ‘How much time can one spend in the same cafés with the same people, it is just getting a bit too much and a bit too boring, a bit pointless really, all this retelling [perpričavanje] of the same accounts. (pause) I mean how many times can one (re)tell and (re)hear the same story?’ On the other hand, as Adi, Nikola, Emira and others suggested, cafés provided one with sense of familiarity and security. When Emina complained about the boredom of the café routines, and in that sense also about the lack of possibility, she was actually complaining about the sameness that was reproduced through these daily engagements (even if, in this instance, this sameness to begin with was a product of an overall sense of institutionalized unpredictability).

When young people, such as Adi, Nero or Emira, talked favourably about cafés, they also did that because of the sameness and familiarly represented through cafés routines. And it was this familiarity with how things were done and with whom and where, this knowledge what to expect and at what moment, this sameness of practices, which suggested something obvious, something ordinary, at times dull, it was this constancy embedded in café routines that was simultaneously cherished and despised by many young Biščani. Clearly, café routines were signifiers of the ambiguous relation of young Biščani toward predictability. While it was clear that within the context of institutionalized unpredictability youth wanted more stability and certainty, it would be wrong to assume that they considered all predictabilities desirable.

**Conclusion**

**Character 2: Jelena** is a lovely, easy going 66 year old woman. She is a widow and she lives alone. Jelena was born in a small village in Krajina. Her mother’s premature death was the first crucial indicator of her future: her life was marked by ‘the lack of motherly love’, her father had become a despised figure in her life, responsible for the feelings of estrangement she would come to have for her 5 sisters, as after mother’s death they ‘never lived together again, never shared an apple, laughter, they never played together’. Three sisters stayed with the father who remarried, two others were sent to their two uncles near Novi Sad (today’s Serbia), and she, Jelena, at first was fostered by a family who lived near the village where she was born and later she moved to an orphanage. After finishing the eighth grade, she moved in with the family of the president of the local municipality: she looked after the children. They had a good relationship and when the textile factory, Kombiteks, opened in Bihać he helped her to obtain a job there. At the time she was not yet eighteen. In order to attain the right skills for work at the factory she was sent to Zadar (today’s...
Croatia) for six months training. After that she moved to Bihać where she still lives. She worked for the same company until her retirement. Very soon after her move she met a man who would become her husband and father of her daughter. Eight days after their first meeting they got married. At the age of eighteen she gave birth to her first and only child. At the age of thirty five she divorced her husband due to his drinking habits. Despite this, she never stopped caring for him. He died in 1985. She still visits his grave. She spent the war years in Bihać with her daughter. She continued working at Kombiteks, but because of the war was not getting much pay. The disintegration of Yugoslavia meant that Jelena and two of her sisters in Serbia did not live in the same country anymore. The war in BiH and its eventual peace agreement meant that Jelena and her three other sisters, who now live in RS, lived in separate entities and were entitled to different health and social benefits. After the war Jelena continued to work for the same firm and her boss employed her daughter too. But the firm was not doing well, so although they both had a job neither got a salary. One day she asked her boss whether they would overcome the crisis. His honest reaction suggested that he did not know, but he thought that at least for two years to come they wouldn’t. So she decided to check whether she met terms for early retirement. At the job centre she learnt that she was eligible, but that her pension would be only 84 marks. Thinking that it was ‘better to have 84 marks than nothing’ she became a pensioner; like many of her peers, very early. But it was impossible to live off 84 marks, so she and her daughter had to find alternative ways to manage: they did all sorts of infrequent jobs. Today her daughter is married and has one son. Jelena spends a lot of her time with her grandson. Her pension is now the minimal pension of FBiH: 300 KM. This makes daily lives very calculated, with no option to plan far ahead. But in a way, Jelena, like many other Biščani of a similar age, thinks that the real victims of today’s situation are young people: ‘what future awaits them with all the privatization?’ She thinks that today one has no choice but to work informally without job security and with no possibility to know whether one will get paid at the end of the month. Jelena thinks that the only option young people have these days is to hope that they will get paid and that they will keep their jobs.

Jelena’s character suggested that informal practices at the time of Yugoslavia occurred within a context of relative social predictability, which meant that there was a sense that in one way or another, people could count on getting things done, even if particularities were unknown. Today, people would tell me, even with connections one could not know what would happen, as all connections had the potential to bring to an unpredictable outcome (see chapter 3). I suggest that the main effect of institutionalized unpredictability for everyday lives and experiences derived from the ability of those in power to keep one in suspense until the very last moment. As such, café routines should be understood as
practices embedded within social conditions that allocated particular hopes and possibilities and which in a very meaningful and concrete sense, shaped young peoples’ actions and reactions. That is why café routines, despite their ambiguous character, were not only a way to pass time (or waste time), but also means through which young people regained a sense of control over time (their relative immediate futures), because of the sameness that was reproduced through this practice. In the next chapter, ‘Waiting is hoping’, I show how in the past waiting was permeated with knowledge that things would get done, whereas now, as Jelena’s character already suggested, waiting was imbued only with hope that things would get done, hence the ability to know was reduced to ability to hope only.
‘This is Bosnia’

*Emir’s view:* ...means that it is a place in which everybody wants a change, but nobody is willing to work towards a change.

Chapter 3

‘Waiting is hoping’

*Image 1: photography project made by Azra*

*Ethnographic scene 10: Azra on her project*

*Early September 2010, 2 p.m. The sun is shining on Bihać, another lovely day. Azra and I are walking towards my little house on the Una. She just finished taking some images for her final project which will be exhibited on 15th of September in the local gallery. As we walk I record what Azra has to say about her project. By recording it, I want to capture Azra’s words in the hope they will be useful at one point in time, in the near future. She says:*
I am situated in BiH and the place where I decided to do the project stands for BiH (pause) anyway, the way I experience it. BiH is a mess. Originally građa [built] 22 was supposed to be an old age home, but today it serves as a place where young people do drugs, drink alcohol and have sex. Just like in građa, nothing is defined in BiH: there are no rules here. The question mark represents everyone’s unpredictable future. Each individual here asks a simple question: what next? how next? and when next? Older people, who have nothing to eat, wonder whether tomorrow they will have food on their tables, and young people, who finished school, but have no jobs, wonder when and whether they will have one. Also, the question mark denotes the situation in the whole country, whether geographically, politically, or whatever, there is a constant feeling of uncertainty. The messed up colours on the floor are the colours of our flag. I just poured them; I did not want to define them as we are not defined. We have borders that supposedly define our country, but within the country we have more borders. We are not defined in terms of who and what we are, as people, as a society, as citizens. Nothing is clear.

Character 3: Azra in an 18 year old school leaver. She was born just before the war. Soon after, during the war, her father died. She does not have any memories of him. Her mother died a few years after the war due to an illness. She has two brothers: an older one, who spends a lot of time drinking and because of that Azra has somewhat problematic relationship with him; and a younger one for whom Azra cares in a motherly way. Her parents’ untimely death meant that sometimes she had to take on responsibilities that many of her peers did not have. This leads her to present herself as ‘having had to grow up too fast’.

During the week she is in Bihač, in a boarding school. Weekends and holidays she spends in Cazin, the town of her birth, where both of her brothers live. Her maternal grandmother also lives in Cazin. Her paternal grandparents live in the Netherlands. Some of her uncles and aunts live in Cazin while others live elsewhere in Europe. Azra has a good relationship with some of them, with others less so. None of them takes care of Azra and her brothers. After her mother’s death, her older brother officially adopted his younger siblings so that they could remain together. They get by on state benefits. Occasionally, some of their relatives help them out financially.

At our first meeting, in the boarding school, she assesses my appearance. She seems to approve of it: very excitedly she tells me that she loves my trousers and that my top is ‘cool’, before concluding that these clothes could not possibly be from ‘here’, as ‘here’ nothing is ‘cool’, everything is dull. Azra likes to talk and to discuss things, she has a lot to say. We become close

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22 Građa, which literally means built, is what the young people called the place where Azra decided to do her project.
very quickly and occasionally, instead of going back to Cazin, she spends a weekend with me, in Bihać. Her photography project illustrates that she is not very optimistic when it comes to BiH’s future. Occasionally she reveals that she fears there might be another war soon. In that case she has a plan: she would take her ‘brothers and go straight across Una, across the border, as it is only a few kilometers away from Cazin’. In case this plan does not work, she would ‘remove her womb, so the consequences could be nothing but physiological’.

Like many of her peers, Azra is distrustful with regards to what people say or promise. This characteristic manifests itself in her frequent and often unnecessary panicking and negative attitude towards any potential interaction or social activity. Accordingly, she often gives speeches in which everything seems to be bad: the state, the cantons, prevailing nationalism, Srebrenica, and RS, Europe’s attempt to isolate BiH, adults’ conservatism, and even her relationship with her boyfriend. Her boyfriend is originally also from Cazin, but currently lives and studies medicine in Banja Luka, the largest city in RS. Azra occasionally goes to visit him, but she does not always feel ‘comfortable’ being in RS.

Her dream is to study special education and rehabilitation in Tuzla. While occasionally she expresses some other interests, she seems quite confident in her decision. However, she is also realistic that this may not happen. She says that it is not easy to enrol on this course. So, she has an alternative plan: perhaps she could stay in Bihać and go to medical college. This seems to be easier to enrol on. Or maybe she should go abroad and work. She has nothing that ties her to this place in the long run: her younger brother ‘is clever and he will manage’, and her maternal grandmother is ‘old and she won’t live too long’.

Azra’s project helped me to understand Emir’s video (chapter 2) better: it suggested that Emir’s experience of his daily routine through the absence of a near future was not really surprising considering the unpredictability of the collective future, which inevitably shaped one’s experiences and actions. As I show below, it was this unpredictability that stood as ‘an objective obstacle to rationalization' (Bourdieu 1979: 55), turning youth into actors whose aspirations did not seem in tune with their objective chances. This was manifest in how young people thought about the future that awaited them as a collective. Young people believed that nothing was going to change in BiH, but at the same time, they hoped that things would not stay the same. Being caught in-between these two contradicting possible future paths they found themselves in the position of ‘stuckedness’ (Hage 2009),
which produced various forms of waiting and various inconsistent and unrealistic ways in which individuals planned for the future.

Some scholars argue that ‘waiting has become central to subaltern experience’ (Jeffrey 2008: 954; see also Bayart 2007: 269-277; Hage 2009). In fact, according to Hage, waiting is ‘almost synonymous to social being’ (Hage 2009: 1). In this chapter I engage with the relation between waiting and hope in order to better comprehend school-leavers’ engagement with the future. In order to do this I suggest that ‘Waiting is hoping’. Let me explain. It was on a sunny day in Bihać, after we talked about my research interests and the idea of waiting, when Almada, a young female student, said to me ‘You know, you should write in your thesis that in BiH waiting is hoping [čekanje je nadanje]’. I was intrigued: not only was I keen to explore the idea of waiting but also I wanted to contribute to the emerging anthropology of hope. This simple sentence, spoken by a so called ‘informant’, not only seemed to include my main research topics but it also sounded good: ‘Waiting is hoping’! ‘Of course’, I thought ‘I must include this in my thesis’. But how was I to do so? And more importantly, what did Almada mean when she said: ‘Waiting is hoping’?

In order to better understand what ‘Waiting is hoping’ meant in the BiH context, I turn to Guyer’s suggestion that in current times (the 21st century) the near future seemed ‘evacuated’ (2007: 410). Analysing developments in economics and in Christianity, but also based on her personal experience, Guyer felt that there had been a shift in temporal framing since the post-WWII period. According to her, unlike in the post-WWII period, contemporary discourse in the US involved a focus on the very near and the very distant futures, making everything that fell between them, appear ‘evacuated’ (Guyer 2007: 410). She recalled that after WWII, ‘struggles and plans projected the future onto near horizons (...) under an expansively inclusive concept of reasoning’ (Guyer 2007: 409). In the contemporary world, however, she sensed a ‘strange evacuation of the temporal frame of the ‘near future’ (Guyer 2007: 409), resulting in a combination of ‘fantasy futurism and enforced presentism’ (Guyer 2007: 410). This resonated with my findings amongst young Biščani.

In what follows, I explore why and how the near future for youth in BiH seemed evacuated. To do so, I analyse the engagement with the future of the young people living within different temporal conditions – after WWII and after the 1992-5 war. These were people of supposedly the same culture, of the same geographical location, yet of a
different place. My interest in analysing narratives of post-WWII youth experiences derived from my ethnographic data. When I asked contemporary youth directly about young people’s (lack of) ‘care’ for the collective future, they often replied something along the lines: ‘well we are ‘a war generation’ (they were born during or just before the recent BiH war), young people’s reactions are only normal’. In their eyes this is how things were in post-war places! This made me wonder: was this really the case?

Since my fieldwork also entailed much interaction with pensioners, who at a particular time (post-WWII) had also been ‘a war generation’, I decided to turn my attention to their narratives, in pursuit for meanings of young Biščani’s behaviours, beliefs and aspirations. I understood older Biščani’s narratives as a commentary on today, as much as on ‘those days’. In what follows, I show how hope was articulated within these different places and how it significantly shaped ‘collective aspirations’ (Appadurai 2004: 61), and thus also the experience of waiting and how people waited. Eventually, this allowed me to explore ‘how different temporal philosophies are ideologically marked and made culturally plausible and available’ (Guyer 2007: 411).

Hope after WWII and the meaning of ORA

Ethnographic scene 11: ORA (Omladinska radna akcija – Youth labour action)

It is September 2010, mid week, morning. The sun is not shining on Bihać. The clouds suggest that it may rain. As I enter the mjesna zajednica, the ‘professor’ smiles at me. After we greet each other I enter the coffee room.

I greet everyone and hug Jasna. It has been just over a month since I started coming here, and by now most regulars are used to me. Some seem to like my presence, others less so. Ramiz, a pensioner in his seventies, who has been volunteering for Merhamet23 for the past few years, is sitting in the place where I usually sit. Despite my objections, he gets up so I can sit in ‘my’ place. He continues his conversation with another pensioner, whom I have not met before. In addition to Jasna, Ramiz and his companion, who shortly leaves, Huso (a man in his fifties), Marko (a pensioner in his sixties) and Esmir (a pensioner in his seventies) are having their usual drinks. I try to initiate a conversation about how things were back then, after WWII. They tell me about Omladinske radne akcije [Youth labour actions – ORA].

23 Merhamet is a Muslim charity organization.
Esmir: You know, after WWII massive construction was going on: people were building and building. I participated in five radne akcije, and I am proud to say that I received an udarnička značka\textsuperscript{24} every time, (short pause) and that was given only to the best and hardest working ones.

Huso: (laughs, it seems that what Esmir said reminded him of something) I went twice to radne akcije, and the first time I worked really hard because I wanted to get an udarnička značka, but I did not get it. I was very disappointed. One year later I decided to try again, and then I got it. I was very pleased. For me that was a very important thing. I was willing to work hard in order to get an udarnička značka.

Esmir: We worked voluntarily, without money (pause), and you know it was very difficult, physical work. We had to maintain discipline otherwise they could send us back home, (raises his hand accompanied by the sound uffffff), and that would be very embarrassing.

Vanja: When did you go for the first time?

Esmir: My first time was when I was 16, in 1952. It was the Konjic – Jablanica railway that we were supposed to build.

Huso: Mine were in the 1970s in Kikinda (today’s Serbia) and in Sutjeska (BiH).

Vanja: What songs did you sing?

Esmir and Huso: (trying to remember) Hmm...let me think (then Esmir, rhythmically moving his arms, begins to sing) Kramp i lopata, pijuk i kolica to je oružje svakog omladinca\textsuperscript{25} (laughter).

Huso: (shouts towards the professor) Professor, sing a song for us from the labour actions [profesore, de zapjevaj jednu udarničku] ...

(From the corridor we can hear the professor mumbles, but he does not respond directly. By now, the atmosphere is lively and exhilarating; there is clearly an element of enjoyment in recounting these particular memories)

\textsuperscript{24} Udarnička značka is a badge of honour.

\textsuperscript{25} A pick and a shovel, a hack and a cart, these are the weapons of each and every youth.
**Huso:** We had a lot of slogans, one person would shout: ‘For who?’ The rest would answer ‘For Tito!’, then again ‘For who?’, ‘For the party!’ [Za koga? Za Tita! Za koga? Za partiju!].

**Esmir:** Every evening there was an announcement of the best brigade for that day, and we all waited with excitement to hear the outcomes.

**Huso:** That would give people the will to go on, to work harder so their brigade would be the best the next day.

**Vanja:** I watched this film about radne akcije and in it the best brigade was announced at the end, I thought...

**Huso:** (interrupts to explain) Well that too, but that was at the end (Esmir agrees), so there were two different things: who did best for the day and who did best for the whole period. I mean that was everyone’s aim: to eventually be udarnik within the best brigade.

**Esmir:** Later in the evening we would sing partisan songs. (short pause, slight change in his voice-tone) And upon our return, ahhhh you should have seen that, there was a great celebration, hundreds of people were waiting for us, already at the train station, and we were received perfectly!

(longer pause)

**Esmir:** (sighs) Ohhh, my Vanja, at that time Yugoslavia was built and built [Jugoslavija se gradila i gradila]. Today it is all so different: youth today are not happy to work even when it is paid. You have all these people who are looking for a job, but pray to god not to find one.

As implied by Esmir, after WWII one of the main goals of the Yugoslav communist regime was the reconstruction of a largely destroyed country and the revitalization of its economy (Velagić 2008: 21). Already towards the end of 1945, 75% of the ruined bridges were reconstructed, 60% of the industrial enterprises were renewed, 633 schools, 17 health institutions and 32,686 residential buildings were repaired (Velagić 2008: 25). ORA had a major role in the process of this reconstruction (Velagić 2008: 31). The ORA were organized on local, republic and federal levels by the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia. Through labour actions they attempted to encourage young people from all over Yugoslavia to work voluntarily towards ‘the common good’. Over time more than two million young people participated in ORA building highways, railways, factories and
The communist Yugoslav party wished to achieve many goals through the ORA. Firstly, it hoped to instil within youth a collective spirit, a desire to create a ‘new man’, who would be an active part of the ‘brotherhood and unity’ vision. Secondly, ORA were a method of erasing social differences between young people – in terms of wealth, ethnicity/religion, regions they came from, and so on. Thirdly, during ORA, young people were trained in a variety of courses that increased their chances of finding jobs (Popović 2010: 281). After WWII, there was a high demand for qualified, semi-qualified and unqualified workers, hence this initiative was a necessary one (Velagić 2008: 47). In a speech in January 1947, Josip Broz Tito\(^\text{26}\) described ORA as the best school for youth in which they could learn how to appreciate work (Popović 2010: 282). However, he encouraged them not only to rebuild the country, but also to treat education seriously. According to Tito, the building of the country should be done in their ‘spare time’, which should not be wasted, but rather organized in the ‘right’ way (Popović 2010: 281). The ‘right way’ to organize their spare time was to build ‘the country in self-sacrifice for the common cause’ (Popović 2010: 282).

Through concrete building of the country the collective future was also in its making. Hope was distributed and invested in the foreseeable potentials, such as bridges, railways, roads, accommodation blocks, work opportunities, and so on. The future was built via a connection to a clearly defined and carefully selected past based on communist values. For instance, ORA were organized at sites where significant WWII battles took place. Or, partisan slogans such as ‘Our struggle calls on us to sing when we die’ [Naša borba zahtjeva kad se gine da se pjeva], were replicated in ORA slogans ‘Our struggle calls on us to sing when we work’ [Naša borba zahtjeva kad se radi da se pjeva] (Popović 2010: 284). In an attempt to create a sense of motivation experienced by the partisans, there was a strong emphasis on ‘self-sacrifice’ and individual worth (Popović 2010: 282). Other, non-communist, pasts were either suppressed or presented in a negative light.

\(^{26}\) Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980) was Partisan leader in WWII and later president of SFR Yugoslavia.
Recognition of outstanding performance at work through *udarnička značka* [worker’s badge] was another way to make a direct link between the brigadiers and the wartime partisans. Those who became *udarnici* were the ‘heroes of renewal’ (Popović 2010: 284). Hence it was no surprise that most of my interlocutors, as expressed in *ethnographic scene 11*, recounted how important it was for them to become *udarnik*, or for their brigade to be *udarnička brigada*. As indicated by both Huso and Esmir, a lot of personal satisfaction derived from the idea of personal worth and ‘self-sacrifice’ behind the post-WWII youth’s willingness to volunteer in ORA. Nevertheless, the way this was promoted by the communist party and received among the wider Yugoslav population corresponded directly with the common good. So it was the combination of the two: personal satisfaction - often based on mobilized partisan values - and the common good, which pushed forward young Yugoslavs to build and engage with the near future by taking responsibility for the collective.

The very first labour action was organized already during WWII, and the very last took place just before the fall of Yugoslavia. Over this period of time its character changed. As already suggested, until the mid 1960s the main focus of ORA was to build the country whilst promoting the communist ideals of ‘brotherhood and unity’ among younger generations. According to Popović, in the mid 1960s, and particularly throughout the 1970s and the 1980s the Yugoslav youth lost interest in taking part in ORA’s ideologically driven events (Popović 2010: 287). Labour actions were transformed and adjusted to the needs of the day. While still rooted in communist ideology, the emphasis was more on the leisure aspect of ORA. For many young people this was an opportunity to meet their peers from various parts of the country as well as to have a free holiday at the seaside, in the mountains, or elsewhere (Popović 2010: 288). On one occasion Zajić, a 51 year old man, conveyed this well when he compared his ORA experiences to that of his father: ‘These early ORA were all about building the country through very hard physical work. In the later period it was about work, but also about socializing and making friends’.

Despite the fond memories of ORA and the will to rebuild the country, Huso, Esmir and others in *mjesna zajednica* did not romanticise the post-WWII Yugoslav period and their stories were not only happy ones. For example, I also heard accounts on food shortages, or on the famous Cazin peasants’ uprising in 1950 against the communist regime, which clearly manifested people’s disapproval of the new rule (see also Drapac 2010: 203). Occasionally people also narrated personal experiences regarding the
authoritarian character of the communist regime. Moreover, the fact that most of my interlocutors knew at least one person who worked in the west in the 1960s - most commonly in western Germany - pointed to high unemployment rates in Yugoslavia at that time (see also Drapac 2010: 224).

Clearly, things were not perfect. But despite this, the construction and the building of the country they lived in was a very tangible proof that the future was in the making. And it was them, young Yugoslavs, who took an active part in building the future. This also meant that the socialist regime relied on and invested in youth. The future seemed very concrete, real, material, physical, touchable, seen. It was obvious and everywhere around them. The idea of the socialist future based on the common good and personal satisfaction allowed for the availability, the circulation, and the exchange (Hage 2003: 9) of a collective hope. In that sense, as I elaborate later, it also shaped the experience of waiting in very particular ways.

**Hope after 1992-5 war: access to the EU?**

However, with Tito’s death the ‘common language of civic identity that could be drawn upon’ (Drapac 2010: 236) stopped serving as means through which it was possible to build the near and distant futures. A ‘forced transition’ in the 1990s - namely, the Yugoslav economic and political system radically changing from socialist-workers’ self-management, via the war-economy, to some sort of neoliberal capitalism (Jansen 2006: 190) - had fundamental effects on the politics, economics and society in BiH. This affected not only men and women’s relationship to a place, but also their engagement with time, making people feel not only displaced, but also ‘distimed’ (Jansen 2009a: 55; see also Kurtović 2012: 4).

This sense of ‘displacement’ and ‘distimement’ also came across in Azra’s project. This is how it shaped up: on the one hand youth - encouraged by the ongoing debates in the media as well as by what was happening on the ground - did not believe that the local political elites were willing and/or were able to make change. On the other hand - again supported by the discourse in the media and various public statements by politicians - they associated the BiH horizon with two interrelated issues which allowed hope, but only for the distant future. These were, firstly, a transformation of BiH into a functioning democratic state and, secondly, EU membership. This was promoted as - and indeed
widely believed to be - the only possible future path for BiH citizens to follow. Have a look at the next scene:

Ethnographic scene 12: On being excluded

September 2010, a few weeks before the general elections. I am in Smalls (café/bar) with Ismet, a medical student in Sarajevo. He is home for a break. It is 5 p.m. He has coffee, I have sparkling water. It is hot. We are sitting outside at a tall table with tall chairs. Like most cafés at this time of the day, Smalls is not yet that busy. I use this as an opportunity to have a chat about many issues. As the general elections are soon to take place, we also discuss that.

Ismet: You know I feel like I am losing faith in democratic choice. From time to time elections are becoming more tiring, but eventually everything remains just the same (pause). Once I talked to my ex-girlfriend who is from Sweden, well originally from here but really from Sweden, about EU membership. I asked her whether she was for or against the EU, and whether she was happy that Sweden was in the EU. She said ‘I am for an option to have a choice’ [ja sam za mogućnost da biram]. And then it hit me, then I realized that we are not in a position to choose, and that all we aim for is the EU. To us, the EU is presented as the only possible step forward. So in reality, when you think about it, what this really means is that at the moment we are excluded [trenutno smo isključeni].

While the choice to be for or against the accession into the EU formally existed, the way in which this choice was formulated was rather limiting:27 one could be either for EU membership, namely for having good life, for going ‘forward’, etc; or, one could be against EU membership, namely, for keeping on living the present misery, or worse, as some youth such as Azra feared, recommence the war. While the first option encouraged at least some distant future-oriented hope, the latter totally discouraged any hope. So the ‘choice’ BiH citizens had seemed rather false, with the answer inevitable: most Biščani saw the path to the EU as the only possible route. This is not to suggest that they all necessarily also desired this path, but rather that they felt that there were no alternatives. Imagining the BiH future through a single directive principle - that of EU membership - also suggested something of how local and international politicians, but also ‘ordinary’ people, thought of

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27 This of course was not the case only in BiH, but in many other places that were about to access the EU, such as Croatia, but also in places that are already in the EU, as explicit in the last (2012) general election in Greece.
space. This kind of thinking had its political and social implications (Massey 2005). Massey argues that thinking of ‘space as time’ (2005: 5), instead of space as something that ‘has its times’ (Massey 2003: 2), suggests that all countries follow one trajectory led by the capitalist West: some are simply more ahead than others, and those others should catch up (see also Jansen 2009). According to Massey thinking about space in this way does not leave room for coexistence of a variety of possible pasts, nor a variety of possible futures, it does not leave room for the multiplicity of space (Massey 2003: 2; 2005).

Within this kind of thinking some places always seem more advanced, and hence also more desirable. In BiH the problem was not only that a single trajectory was presented to its citizens, but also that the proposed path was not easily accessed. Hence, as Ismet pointed out, until the only option for BiH’s future is realized, its citizens would be excluded, left with no more but an option to wait for the EU to open its gates. In other words, this kind of thinking of space as a single trajectory may create a tension between particular expectations and visions of the future and ‘long-term exclusion from possibilities for real mobility’ (Jeffrey 2008: 954). According to Jeffrey, this tension may encourage what he called ‘chronic waiting’ - ‘the growing number of situations in which people wait for years or whole lifetimes’ (2008: 954). So the question remained: how to materialize this single trajectory? Some suggestions were presented at the Human Rights Youth Film Festival I attended in 2009.

Ethnographic scene 13: Human Rights Youth Film Festival

November 2009, grey skies. I attend a youth film festival on human rights organized by a local NGO, Novi Put [New Path]. Schools from all over BiH (FBiH, RS, and the Brčko district) will present films made by their pupils. The opening ceremony of the festival takes place in kulturni centar [cultural centre]. It is a rather large building with a great hall that takes in many people. And it is rather full. The majority of the audience are pupils. We are all waiting for the ceremony to begin. The first speaker, unsurprisingly, is the initiator of the festival, Iskra Tabaković. She situates Bihać, its responsibility, and its people on the wider BiH and Europe map.

Iskra Tabaković: ...Bihać is a gate of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the neighbouring countries and Europe... (after some time) A lot of people here speak German, as we are oriented towards the German-speaking countries in Europe...
She is followed by several local and international speakers. The first one is her assistant Darmin Hadžić, who is in his third year in law studies, and who seems to be speaking in the name of young Biščani.

**Darmin Hadžić**: ...The aim of this festival is to allow young people to discuss issues of human rights, their rights. This is because young people are excluded from political happenings. We, young people, should take responsibility for the future...

One after another, speakers come out. They all point out that the only possible future path for BiH is to access the EU, through democracy. They discuss the responsibility of young people in realizing the proposed future. One of the speakers is a Bosnian politician, Senad Šepić, who first stresses the importance of this festival and the theme of human rights and then adds:

**Senad Šepić**: ... (very assertively) Without human rights, there is no European and democratic BiH for which we all strive.

A little later he attempts to encourage young people to take the future into their hands by telling them an anecdote:

**Senad Šepić**: Our famous historian Hamdija Kreševljaković is known for becoming successful in a very early stage of his life. Once someone asked him: ‘How come you are so young and yet doing so well’? He answered: ‘Well I work one hour every day’. His co-conversationalist was surprised: ‘Only one hour’? Hamdija answered: ‘The point is not in one hour, but in every day’. So what do I want to say with this story? Continuity is very important, things will not happen over night...

After Šepić finishes his very self-confident speech, another speaker, Srđan Dizdarević, president of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also emphasizes that:

**Srđan Dizdarević**: ...We are not better nor worse than an average European, and yet we don’t live as well as an average European (pause, looking at the audience). Not even close! We should aim to become normal Europeans who embrace human rights, as that is exactly what is done by other democratic countries...

The third speaker, Jan Braathu, the Norwegian ambassador in BiH, points out that:

**Jan Braathu**: ... We can help the citizens of BiH, but we cannot do your job. It depends on youth in BiH, in whose hands the future lies, how fast BiH will access the EU. It is very important for the young people to engage with human rights...
All the speakers emphasize that although the implementation of human rights is a difficult task, it is nevertheless a crucial step that will lead the citizens of BiH to the gates of the EU and democracy. At the end there was time for questions. A few questions were very similar in their character:

**Male pupil x:** (addressing Senad Šepić) ...We need to move on: when will you let us go out of this ghetto we are living in?  

**Male pupil x:** When will we, youth, be able to travel to Europe? That’s the only way to change things here: if we go and travel around the world and see how to do things differently.

The opening of the festival is followed by the screening of films made by high school pupils on the theme of human rights, with discussions led by youth who volunteer for the NGO Novi Put. The whole discussion revolves around the idea that human rights are something that BiH is lacking, but also necessary for progress. I wonder what human rights and democracy mean to those present. It is not as straightforward as one may think. Soon enough it becomes clear that human rights for many of the participants appear as very abstract, untouchable, unseen, never fully explained. This is well manifested in one young man’s question:

**Male pupil 1 from Bihać:** But what are human rights anyway?

This question reveals something about the elusive character of this term, rather than this person’s ignorance. Unsurprisingly then, soon enough, due to their vagueness, and despite the efforts of the moderators, the focus of the discussion drifts away from concepts of democracy and human rights. A few dominant young men, who regularly express their cynical views, talk about yet another unclear concept: ‘disturbed values’ [poremećene vrijednosti]. They repeatedly draw the attention to prevailing corruption and all sorts of awkward practices which I understand as a manifestation of their dissatisfaction, sense of being neglected, lack of trust.

**Male pupil 2 from East Sarajevo (RS):** ...We live in a place of disturbed values. Everyone is corrupt here, politicians and simple people; you cannot trust anyone, not even your own friends.

The discussion leader attempts, unsuccessfully, to return to the main theme of the festival.

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28 At this point in time those citizens who held only BiH passports could not travel to most countries without visas.
Male pupil 1 from Bihać: (raises his hand) He is right, we all know that if you are a criminal you can make it. I mean if a criminal is caught he maybe spends a few days in prison and that’s it. There are no values today: (concluding) the only way to make it is through illegal business...

Male pupil 3 from Brčko: (raises his hand in order to respond to these cynical comments) But you cannot think that way. You have to take responsibility in order to make a change. In our school, we tried to help a young pupil whose father was violent through referring his case to the social workers...

Male pupil 1 from Bihać: (interrupts, ignoring what has been said): We are not safe. You cannot walk the streets safely. I feel that I need to carry a gun with me as if someone attacks me the police will not help me, they help only those who pay.

2 Male Pupils from East Sarajevo (RS): (very supportively) But he is right, that’s true...

Discussion leader: (interrupts them in the hope to redirect the discussion) But that would only produce more violence. (attempts to change the topic) Let’s see, to whom could you turn for help if something like what was presented in the film happened?

Female Pupil x: (low voice, insecurely) Maybe a social worker.

Discussion leader: (writing on the board) Good, social workers, who else?

A few pupils together: Teacher.

Male pupil 4 from Bihać: The only way to deal with violence is through violence. I am telling you, your talks are pointless: social worker, teachers, policemen, they can’t help you. You have to help yourself, because no one else will.

I see this festival as an opportunity to recruit some school leavers for my film and photography workshops which I hope to begin soon. After the final discussion I have a chat with the ‘cynical’ pupil from Bihać. I learn that his name is Neno. I ask him to come next Tuesday to the workshop. He seems interested. Later, I also ask why he is so negative.

Neno: I am not negative: it is how things are here! Nothing can be done about it.

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29 The film showed a 10 year old boy helping his family selling popcorn instead of going to school. The film was inspired by a true story. Its aim was to show violation of children’s rights to education.
It is evening. I am tired. I learnt a lot about young people’s opinions. With Neno’s final remarks of pessimism I return to my little house on the banks of Una.

The elusiveness of ‘disturbed values’ and ‘human rights’

In order to access the EU, a place like BiH had to follow a defined directionality; there was a clear ‘Road Map’\(^{30}\), which elaborated how BiH was to do so. In contrast to this, while I was sitting at the Human Rights Festival in 2009, I could not help thinking about the ‘directionless’ of the conversation. NGOs and politicians’ calls for human rights and for a ‘Road to EU’, seamlessly descended into youths’ repetitive reference to ‘disturbed values’. To me what was going on at the festival suggested not only that in the eyes of the local and political actors BiH’s future was imagined through a single directive principle, but it also revealed how this idea of a single trajectory could not work in practice. Consequently, I felt that the leaders and pupils participated in (at least) two different conversations, within, nevertheless, same geographical location and time.

The concept of ‘disturbed values’ derived from different temporal conditions of the same culture – from the Yugoslav past to the BiH present. By ‘disturbed values’ youth referred to the loss of something they thought or imagined existed somehow differently in the past, prior to its loss (see also Green 2012: 213), not fully knowing what that something was.\(^{31}\) In this context, the concept of human rights, proposed by local and international actors, was supposed to provide BiH youth with the collective values (something they were clearly lacking) they should follow presently, in order to reach a ‘desired’ collective future. Unlike ‘disturbed values’, the idea of human rights derived its meaning from the same temporal conditions of different cultures - from the Western present to the BiH present.

However, in an attempt to make human rights universal (or to point to the need of them being so), by being presented as followed by all ‘normal Europeans’, it became impossible to define what human rights actually were: they seemed no more than (another) elusive concept, which relied on some sense of emptiness. This left a gap between the


\(^{31}\)These very young people, with a clear lack of personal knowledge of the past they referred to, discussed issues that one would normally associate with old people: both by referring to values in the first place, and by referring back to a past when such values presumably existed. This frequent reference to past values, I presume, is something they heard from their older kin.
proposed solution for BiH’s collective future - EU membership - and the actual means to accomplish this goal. By the end of the film festival, despite an effort to better introduce the concept of human rights, it remained as elusive as it was before. So, not only that human rights seemed crucial elements in the construction of collective future possibilities, but also it was totally unclear what one needed to do in practical terms in order to live in a country in which human rights were respected. In order to understand this point better, let me put it into a ‘conversation’ with the past.

Presumably after WWII, the main concepts of the Yugoslav regime - socialism, brotherhood and unity, equality, and so on - were equally elusive. However, how to reach their goals was clear; as suggested in the ethnographic scene on ORA, the way one was supposed to reach the conceptual aim (socialism, equality and so on) was through very practical engagements (digging, building, reconstructing, etc). In sharp contrast to this, during my research both the specific content and the specific action to take to reach the conceptual aim (EU, democracy, etc) were vague. Instead of picks and shovels, there were (vague ideas about) human rights; instead of railways and bridges, there was EU membership. The constant use of unclear ‘western-imported’ terminology, combined with a lack of materiality and bodily experience of hope (which post-WWII young people clearly experienced), shaped how ‘societal hope’ (Hage 2003: 15) was articulated and distributed. But it also determined how individuals hoped, and could have hoped to begin with. Because in the eyes of many Biščani these distant future-oriented goals appeared as the only option the collective had, the impression was that hope was presently located outside of BiH’s borders (see chapter 1). Hence, Almāida’s suggestion: ‘Waiting is hoping’.

The meaning of ‘Waiting is hoping’

For the exhibition which presented the projects made by young Biščani, Ivana, one of the school leavers I spent time with and who had a brilliant way with words, was expected by all other participants to write a passage that would introduce the exhibition to the visitors. In her beautifully written text, she suggested that hope was a ‘symbol of impotency and faith’ [simbol nemoći i vjere]. Hope as impotency could perhaps be understood as implying ‘an affective practice, something that one does’ (Hage 2003: 10) or, in this case, does not do; hope as faith could be approached as an ‘affect, something that one has’ (Hage 2003: 10). It is the ambivalent link between feelings of impotency, namely of powerlessness, and
faith, that may explain Almada’s proposal that ‘Waiting is hoping’. Waiting may also relate to (social) hope’s greatest enemy: entrapment, a feeling of having nowhere to go (Hage 2003: 20). To put it bluntly, while the ‘society’ did not necessarily ‘breathe in hope’ (Hage 2003: 18) for the immediate and near future, there was a sense of ‘fantasy futurism’ (Guyer 2007: 409) associated with the distant future (EU membership). This is what made possible the paradox of the belief that things would not change and the hope that they would not stay the same.

In his inspiring text Waiting out the crisis: on stuckedness and governmentality, Hage suggests that ‘viable life presupposes a form of imaginary mobility, a sense that one is ‘going somewhere’’. This sense he calls ‘imaginary existential mobility’ (Hage 2009: 1; cf. Mains 2007: 665 on progress). The direct opposite of this sense is ‘imagined existential immobility’, or what Hage called ‘stuckedness’ (Hage 2009: 1). Based on his work with two distinct groups of people, racists and migrants living in Australia, he argues that they both seek to optimize the first and to avoid the latter. However, the present conditions within which we live, suggests Hage, are characterized by ‘permanent crisis’, so the ‘sense of stuckedness’ is intensified, and (perhaps thereby) also normalized. So, Hage argues,

Rather than being perceived as something one needs to get out of at any cost, it is now also experienced, ambivalently, as an inevitable pathological state which has to be endured (Hage 2009: 1).

In other words, ‘stuckedness being normalized’ means that any desire to find a solution for the condition of crisis, simultaneously and ambivalently coexists with feelings of the endurance of crisis. This endurance is more of a way to confront the crisis (Hage 2009: 1) but not, as perhaps one would expect, through revolution or through rethinking of a social order, but rather through a specific form of waiting: ‘waiting out’ (Hage 2009: 1). According to Hage, ‘waiting out’ does not suggest waiting for something specific, but rather for unwanted or undesirable conditions to end (2009: 6). For him, ‘waiting out’ is ambivalently passive ‘for it involves both a subjection to the elements or to certain social conditions and at the same time a braving of these conditions’ (2009: 6). This ambivalence allows ‘waiting out’ to take ‘heroic forms’, and it ‘makes it a governmental tool that encourages a mode of restraint, self-control and self-government in times of crisis’ (2009: 6).
Almaida’s proposal that ‘Waiting is hoping’ and Ivana’s definition of hope as something that stands simultaneously for ‘impotency and faith’, directly relate to such ‘waiting out’. Subjection to social conditions suggests impotency (Ivana) and waiting (Almaida), whereas ‘braving these conditions’ (Hage 2009: 6) suggests faith (Ivana) and hope (Almaida). According to Hage, what is considered heroic about one’s ability to face bad conditions derives from an ability to endure them by not being a mere victim or an object of circumstances. But in the case of young Biščani, this endurance involved also some sense of expectation which came in the shape of faith (Ivana) or hope (Almaida). In this sense, ‘waiting out’ among Biščani was not aimed only at waiting for something bad to end, but also for something else to come. And the accent was on else rather than on something, for although, as we saw, there was a clear singular trajectory that was presented to them (EU membership), for various individuals, such as Ismet, this trajectory did not necessarily coincide with their imaginings of the BiH’s collective future.

**Suspended and procrastinated time: Neno’s story**

So, according to Hage it is permanent crisis which leads to an intensified sense of ‘stuckedness’, and due to the intensity of this condition, which becomes normalized, the result is a specific form of waiting, ‘waiting out’. In what follows I suggest two alternative modes of temporal experience that were an outcome of individuals’ sense of (limited) ‘agentive capacity’ (Greenberg 2011) within the conditions of BiH’s ‘stuckedness’: suspended time and procrastinated time. Both of these temporal experiences resulted in waiting; however the feeling that they engendered was different. While suspended time generated a feeling of suspension, procrastinated time generated a feeling of convenience. I work with and think through these experiences of waiting through Neno’s character. However, they are in no sense relevant only for Neno.

**Character 4: Neno** is 18 year old school leaver. He lives alone with his mother. He has an older brother who lives with his wife. His father died after the war. His untimely death was related to his war experiences. The first impression Neno leaves is that of a cynic who does not refrain from expressing his opinions.

He attends my film and photography workshops. He seems to enjoy it: this is where he can voice his thoughts and recount his experiences without being openly judged. That’s the deal at these workshops: no judging!
Neno often gets into trouble with the police. On 6th of Dec 2009 he was involved in a shooting incident. One of his neighbours, a 15 year old male, brought out his father's gun. Neno was playing with it and the bullet was fired injuring his 15 year acquaintance. This experience has affected his future planning; since the incident Neno has been waiting for a trial, not quite knowing what would happen to him and whether he would have to go to prison. Since the shooting event Neno has been monitored by the police. As a consequence, he decides to stop smoking marihuana.

Soon enough he begins to speculate what will happen: he thinks that he will probably have to spend six months in prison, but on good behaviour he will stay there only three months. The trial, he believes, will be in June or July 2010, and with all his calculations he shall spend the winter time in jail. This suits him well, as by the end of February 2011 he should be free again. He does not fear the possibility of prison; his father, who used to be an economist, was good friends with the prison guards. Neno himself has good relations with one of the prisoners, and he believes that he 'will look after' him.

As time passes by, the approximate date of the trial and the question of whether Neno will go to prison at all, frequently change. This knowledge is affected by a variety of factors: information Neno receives from a lawyer, his personal belief, and diverse mysterious ways of how things are done within the juridical system. Frequently changing information of what will happen to him shapes how Neno thinks about his future and his possibilities, but it also shapes his practices. As the inability to predict what will happen next gets further away from him, Neno resumes smoking marihuana, and he stops being concerned about the police.

He also begins to plan his official ‘after high-school plan’. As of May 2010 his plan is to enrol on a psychology course in one of the universities in BiH. In order to do so, he needs good grades. However, he does not take his high school studies seriously. In fact, he fails many of the final exams.

In September 2010, he still has no news about the trial and he never attempts to enrol on the psychology course. However, there was no relation between the two, namely the reason he decides not to even try to enrol on the university course is not related to trial uncertainty. Rather, Neno thinks that he stands no chance, and because of that he won’t even bother. He believes that in order to get into psychology one needs ‘štele’ [connections], and he does not have any.

Neno's official ‘after high school plan’ changes as often as we get together for a coffee: very often! Once he expresses a wish to study civil engineering, only to eventually omit this idea for the sake of music. His official plan in late September 2010 is to save up some money and buy some music equipment which would allow him to play, make and record music.
Suspended time: Neno’s trial

For a very long period when and if the trial would take place and what its outcome would be was unknown. Accordingly, Neno adjusted his behaviour to the frequently changing information he obtained from his lawyer. At first he stopped smoking marihuana and kept a low profile for a while, but after some time, since nothing seemed to be happening, he resumed smoking marihuana and behaved in a way which potentially risked his already precarious position. For instance, a few times he was involved in night club fights and in some drug dealing. Presumably, there was nothing Neno could do regarding the trial; the whole procedure seemed to be beyond his reach and was largely dependent on how the BiH juridical system worked. I say presumably, because he, or the teenager involved in the incident, could potentially have had ‘connections’ [štele] that could have shaped the events that followed the shooting episode very differently. Potential effects of the connections one had, and interrelated ambiguous ways of how things worked were part of a larger institutionalized unpredictability.

In any case, there was very little Neno alone could do concerning the timing of the trial or its outcome. Instead (and if at all) these -the timing and the outcome- could have been affected through štele. It is very possible that this was exactly what happened. During my visit to Bihać in 2011 I learnt that Neno was never actually put on trial; I never heard any details about how this happened. Alternatively, various other ways that the juridical system operated could have shaped the outcome of this incident. Either way, on this occasion, Neno’s ‘agentive capacity’ to translate ‘wish into reality’ (Greenberg 2011: 93) and to shape the future was not his alone, it was limited, and in order to achieve any significant result a chain of people had to act. In short, many people had the power to shape Neno’s personal future (see also Brković 2012).

This reality shaped Neno's experience of time. Because a sense of waiting was created through a pending process (the trial), which was influenced by acts of many individuals (police officers, lawyers, judges, Neno, his mother, the family of the injured teenager, and probably others), Neno was made to wait. Thus, it was the objective circumstances (the trial, people involved in it, etc) that informed Neno’s sense of ‘agentive capacity’, and hence also his experience of time: waiting for the future involved a feeling of suspension. Neno’s waiting for the trial was similar to the waiting of BiH citizens for EU membership, or for the visa abolition; it postponed some individual actions until the
awaited object (trial, or perhaps the EU) arrived. That was, presumably, when life could resume. It was also very similar to what Jeffrey identified as a *heightened suspense* form of waiting (see 2008: 955): when the object of longing (or waiting) comes to dominate individuals' thoughts and actions (see also Jeffrey 2010), but also it had many parallels to Hage’s ‘waiting out’ form of waiting.

*Procrastinated time: Neno’s after high school plan*

In order for Neno to enrol for psychology, the bare minimum he had to do was to attend the university entry exam. In addition, in order to obtain better grades in the final exams he should have studied harder. It was his responsibility (and his alone) to do so. Of course in this instance too, Neno could have used štele and in that case more people could be involved in Neno’s attempt to turn his aspiration into reality. Nonetheless, without him playing his minimal part - attending the exam or studying harder - it would all be in vain. Neno knew this and that is why I understood what he told me to be an unrealistic aspiration; Neno, it seemed to me, never really planned to enrol for psychology, he merely talked about it as if he did.

Interestingly, in our conversations Neno never suggested that his personal circumstances (bad grades, unfinished exams) were a possible reason for his eventual decision not even to try to enrol on this supposedly desired course. Instead he referred to objective conditions, to everything being bad in BiH, to him not having any connections, to local nepotism and corruption (see also Vigh 2009: 104), to justify his (in)action. It was through *his understanding* of objective circumstances, where there were seemingly not many other positions available, that Neno created a ‘legitimate’ waiting position. What this involved in reality was an abdication of responsibility; Neno could keep on doing things he liked (having fun) and not to be too concerned with those he did not like doing (studying). So clearly, it was not just the objective circumstances that shaped Neno’s feeling of (limited) ‘agentive capacity’, but also his understanding and interpretation of these circumstances.

The idea that one could not succeed without štele was similar to what Cole has called ‘synoptic illusion’: a condition that condensed ‘a great deal of actual heterogeneity, making a subset practices stand in for a more complex whole’ (Cole 2010: 15). Let me explain. While it was possible that without štele, no matter one's grades, one could not enrol on a psychology course, it was also possible that with hard work one could achieve
the desired goal. Namely it was not *all* and *always* about štele. Denying this would not only mean ignoring variety and undervaluing all of those young people who did well in their own right, but it would also mean that it was not institutionalized unpredictability that shaped how people acted. If everything was always already about štele then getting things done would be more predictable. Despite this, during my research period, a majority talked of štele as the only way to get things done. This was also what Neno did. Even those who managed to get by without štele thought about themselves as *only* being lucky.

Thereby, not having štele, or in Bourdieu’s words someone to ‘pull the strings’ (Bourdieu 1979: 60, see also Dalsgaard 2005: 58), constituted a ‘synoptic illusion’ that significantly shaped how people acted and how they understood their possibilities within their objective circumstances (see also Cole 2010: 16). Neno, not having any štele (at least not in the university field), decided that it would be a lost cause even to try to enrol to the university. This ‘synoptic illusion’ revealed something about the general sense that one was going nowhere (Hage 2009: 1). So, having štele or not made certain paths easier to imagine than others, while influencing one’s efforts to achieve their goals (Cole 2010: 16). It was within this context, that young Biščani understood values (of the past) to be somehow disturbed and absent.

This reality also shaped Neno’s experience of time: it resulted in waiting that generated a feeling that was convenient for Neno. It was Neno who procrastinated, not doing things *because* of how he understood the objective circumstances to be. In other words, it was Neno’s *choice* not to act *because* the situation was unenviable. A ‘convenient’ element generated in this form of waiting was Neno’s conviction that he *could not* do anything in order to change things, and thereby any idea that he *should* do anything was misplaced. Procrastinated time was one of the products of suspended time, which was itself a product of conditions of ‘stuckedness’. So, it seems that some forms of waiting could both produce and provide a context to other forms of waiting.

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32 For instance, once a friend told me that when her 18 year old cousin did very well at the university exams everyone asked him what his connections were, suggesting that personal virtues meant nothing.

33 Once I understood the importance of štele I asked a friend whether he got his job through connections, to which he replied: ‘no, but I was only lucky, it does not happen often’. 
To conclude, Neno’s story suggested that in BiH waiting involved multiple and ‘overlapping effects, affects and modalities’ (Hage 2009: 1-2), shaped by objective circumstances, or young people’s understandings of them, and youths’ consequential sense of agentive (in)capacity. We saw how different temporal experiences may result in different, though deeply intertwined, forms of waiting for the future (see also Jeffrey 2008: 955-6), some of which allow more agency than others. Because *everyone* was made to wait, in some instances (when ‘agentive capacity’ was broader than one might have thought), for some people (like Neno), waiting also became a convenient and active choice. This suggested that there was a lot of agency in waiting (see also Jeffrey 2010) and that different forms of waiting were performative: they *created* the very realities about which they spoke (rather than actually *being* those realities). In other words they created a feeling that Neno’s ‘agentive capacity’ was limited, even if in reality, as we saw, this was not always the case.

**Inconsistencies and unrealistic aspirations while waiting**

Azra’s opening project integrated well a few of the issues discussed so far: the ambivalence within Ivana’s concept of hope being a ‘symbol of impotency and faith’, and one’s sense of ‘agentive capacity’ within BiH. The collage she made out of newspaper headings that conveyed a general feeling of BiH’s ‘stuckedness’ could be divided into two arrays: one revealed something about how Azra understood the objective circumstances within which her life unfolded, and the other, considering these conditions, about her sense of ‘agentive capacity’. How Azra understood the objective circumstances she conveyed through captions such as, ‘Where are we?’ [gdje smo to mi?]; ‘Everything you want to know authorities are hiding’ [sve što želite znati … vlasti skrivaju]; ‘The unemployed…’ [nezaposlene …]; ‘Is there an end?’ [ima li kraja?]; ‘The truths of BiH future’ [istine budućnosti BiH] and so on. Azra conveyed her sense of ‘agentive capacity’ through ideas such as ‘Eventually, I will think about it tomorrow’ [konačno mislit ću o tome sutra]; ‘I want to show my attitude [position]’ [želim pokaziti stav]; ‘Bosnia with different ambitions’ [Bosna s drugačijim ambicijama]; protests [protesti]; ‘What did we learn and will we be smarter?’ [što smo naučili i hoćemo li biti pametniji?] and so on.

Some of the collaged combinations suggested the ambivalence that was a product of how Azra understood her ‘agentive capacity’ within BiH conditions. For instance, *vrijeme je…* [it is time...] could be read as prelude to *dolazimo* [we are coming]. In that
case it would read ‘it is time: we are coming!’ suggesting Azra’s personal sense that change was not only necessary, but also possible. Alternatively, it could be read as prelude to velike rizike [of high risks], in which case it would read ‘it is a time of high risks’ and would come to relate to BiH conditions within which one’s ‘agentive capacity’ was restricted. There are numerous other ways in which one could piece together the newspaper texts. They would all reveal the complexity embedded in how Azra felt able or unable to cause a change within the overall conditions of ‘stuckedness’. The ambivalence conveyed through Azra’s project in relation to how young people felt they were able or not to do anything yet again showed how within conditions of unpredictability, when time was experienced as ‘enforced presentism’ (waiting) and ‘fantasy futurism’ (hoping), aspiring in inconsistent and unrealistic ways was sometimes the only option.

In BiH young people’s present expectations, behaviours and commitments often ‘directly contradicted any serious commitment to the imagined future’ (Dalsgaard 2006: 19). Neno’s unrealistic plan to study psychology, for instance, allowed him to defer any coherent engagement with the immediate, but also near future. As such it contributed to the very making of unpredictability. Let me explain. According to Guyer, in the contemporary US, the near future has come to take the form of a punctuated time (Guyer 2007: 416). Namely, dates -such as fateful moments- have come to be experienced as ‘qualitatively different rather than quantitatively cumulative’ (Guyer 2007: 416). Dates, though, Guyer suggests, were always important, perhaps that is why the very familiarity of dates as unique ‘treacherously conceals the importance of its expended circulation’ (2007: 416). It is within a context of dates-as-events that peoples’ actions and imaginations revolve around ‘compliance and delay, synchrony and avoidance, and the multiple possibilities for forward looking and backdating’ (Guyer 2007: 416). Punctuated time, and not the process, has come to fill the gap ‘between an instantaneous present and an altogether different distant future’ (2007: 417).

In BiH one could take an entry university exam only two times a year. This meant that the period in which Neno could talk about and plan his enrolling on psychology course was limited and linked to a particular date. Having a particular date as a stop (entry exam) towards a final goal (enrolling on the desired course) allowed Neno to defer all other plans until he reached that stop. Once the stop was reached (the date of the exam) and nothing happened, Neno had to come up with an alternative plan. Perhaps waiting for another stop (another exam), or altogether coming up with another goal (which had other ‘dated’ stops).
To put this in Guyer’s terms: considering the objective circumstances in BiH and Neno’s understanding of them, it was not the process (2007: 416), namely the four-year performance in high school, which shaped how Neno engaged with his personal immediate and near future, but rather the date itself. Neno’s unrealistic future planning, which inevitably resulted in him postponing the materialization of his actual plan, further enforced unpredictability of the distant future. At the same time though, it allowed for a sense that the immediate and near futures were somewhat predictable: knowing the exam date and waiting for it gave a sense of direction and hence also that things were predictable, at least until that actual date.

In *Algeria 1960*, Bourdieu shows how subjective hopes are attuned to personal circumstances and to objective reality. More specifically, Bourdieu argues that an individual’s subjective expectations are always attuned to her or his class (1979: 53). Because it is material conditions as well as social status that affect ‘the degree of accessibility of the future’ that an individual aims at (1979: 51), the sub-proletarian (the one without regular income and/or permanent employment), for instance, can only see the ‘indefinite future of his daydreams’ (1979: 50), hence, s/he is ‘locked in the present’ (1979: 50) without ‘reasonable expectations’ (1979: 52). According to Bourdieu, lack of employment stability and ‘the lack of assurances concerning even the immediate future’ condemn the sub-proletarians to despair (1979: 52): they are agents who are denied hope of rising in society (1979: 52). The possibility of satisfying the sub-proletarian’s aspirations increases as they move up in the social hierarchy (1979: 51, 54): the regular wage earners’ awareness of future limits and possibilities is more realistic in comparison to that of sub-proletarians’ (1979: 53). In other words, low and unsteady incomes are ‘objective obstacles to rationalization’ (1979: 55).

Similarly, Appadurai, working among ‘the poor’ in India, argues that the better off one is, the more likely they are ‘to be conscious of the links between the more and less immediate objects of aspiration’, as they have more ‘opportunities to link material goods and immediate opportunities to more general and generic possibilities and options’ (2004: 68). Appadurai argues that people function within certain ‘cultural regimes’, which affect their ‘capacity to aspire’: their aspirations are never individual and are always shaped in relation to the social surroundings (Appadurai 2004: 67). Thus, the ‘capacity to aspire’, according to Appadurai, is a cultural capacity (2004: 67). However, according to Appadurai, this ‘capacity to aspire’ is not evenly distributed within society: the privileged
in any society have better ‘navigational skills’ through which they can navigate more easily
between cultural norms and specific wants and wishes. This also means that they can
‘explore the future more frequently and more realistically’ (2004: 69).

For Bourdieu it was class that served as an objective reality within which
individuals functioned, whereas for Appadurai the objective reality was their own culture.
They both focused on material conditions as those which affected people’s ‘capacity to
aspire’ (Appadurai 2004) and shaped their awareness of future possibilities (Bourdieu
1979). My ethnography showed that other factors too may have great impact on people’s
engagements with future. Looking at post-socialist and post-war BiH highlighted the way in
which the relative (un)predictability of the immediate, near and distant future on the
collective scale, functioned as the ‘objective’ factor to which people attuned their planning,
expectations, and aspirations. This also meant that how people aspired and planned in BiH
did not necessarily relate to one’s personal circumstances (e.g. the amount of money one
had) or one’s ‘culture’. Rather what shaped how they engaged with the future was a wider
temporal orientation. A feeling that they were going somewhere (EU) which at the moment
was not accessible to them, made people feel as if they were actually going nowhere; they
were stuck. In BiH everyone waited. In this sense, the waiting experience was particular
and different from the waiting experience of post-WWII youth. This is something I discuss
next.

Waiting within two different temporal frames of reference

The new, post-WWII federal Yugoslavia was not supposed to have a leading nation within:
the lesson learnt from recent history was that what caused the crisis during the Kingdom of
Yugoslavia (1918-1943) was national inequality. Hence what was emphasized was the
equality of all nationals as expressed in the ideals of ‘brotherhood and unity’ (Drapac
2010: 198, 212). It was workers, not nations, that were ‘paramount in the new state’ and
this enabled the emergence of ‘an all-embracing Yugoslav identity’ (Drapac 2010: 215; see
also Godina 1998). Tito knew that the path to socialism was long and filled with
difficulties, but it was considered the ‘correct’ path and hence one worth taking (Drapac
2010: 205).

In addition to making it clear what path the Yugoslavs should follow, by singling
out the enemy it was also made explicit what path not to follow. Of course, first and
foremost ‘the greatest evil of the century’ – and not only for Yugoslavs - was fascism
(Drapac 2010: 197). In addition, in the early 1950s, it was Yugoslav’s stance against the Soviets that helped Yugoslavia’s unity (Drapac 2010: 209), but it also gave Yugoslav ideology a new direction (Drapac 2010: 212): ‘The principles of Titoism were self-management, federalism and non-alignment’, its features included an emphasis on ‘decentralization, some degree of workers’ autonomy in decision-making in local enterprises and accommodations with elements of the market economy’ (Drapac 2010: 212).

Within this particular post-WWII Huso, Esmir and their peers engaged with the collective future. As we saw, the communist party tried to create a symbolic bridge ‘between the present and the recent heroic partisan past’ (Popović 2010: 282, 284), for the sake of the near future. Hope after WWII was projected onto the near future. This not only made the mobilisation of youth for ORA possible, but it also facilitated youths’ collective action for the ‘common good’. As Esmir said in ethnographic scene 11: ‘Yugoslavia was built and built’ [Yugoslavia se gradila i gradila]. Older Biščani’s narratives suggested that they were very proud to participate in ORA, even more so if they received udarnička značka. For Huso, the disappointment of not receiving udarnička značka during his first participation in radne akcije only served as an encouragement to wait for the next opportunity to try, through harder work, to achieve this goal. For Esmir, already receiving udarnička značka during his first radne akcije, only increased his desire to work hard so he could maintain a self image of an udarnik. As he said: he was udarnik five times.

Both of these narratives -receiving and not receiving udarnička značka- were presented as a win-win situation, because their outcomes were similar: individuals’ waiting for the next opportunity for self satisfaction, or self realisation, which was manifest through hard work for the common good. So, waiting in post-WWII Yugoslavia revolved around the foreseeable future: there was a clear sense of ‘existential mobility’ (Hage 2009), there was a sense of direction, and hence also of ‘right proportion’ (see chapter 2). And while this near future was also punctuated, namely particular dates were important (the date of going or returning from ORA, the date of receiving or not receiving udarnička značka, of finishing work on a particular construction, etc), the emphasis was more on dates as ‘quantitatively cumulative’ (every step was seen as a step forward in a process: every finished bridge or railway) rather than ‘qualitatively different’ (at that time all ORAs were about hard work, about building and building) (Guyer 2007: 416). In Guyer’s terms it was
the process (various and multiple ORAs) that filled the gap between now and the distant future. In other words, the *near future* in itself was a *process*.

Narratives from *mjesna zajednica* and experiences of the post 1992-95 war young people suggested that waiting was sometimes individual (e.g. Neno’s waiting for an exam or trail, or Huso’s waiting for the next year’s *radna akcija*) and at other times collective (e.g. such as waiting for the EU to open its gates for all BiH citizens\(^{34}\), or waiting -through bodily engagement, manifested for instance in building- for another railway line or a new road to be finished). However, in the recollections of Huso and Esmir, the *relative emphasis* was more on individuals’ waiting (for instance to be *udarnik*). This is what made the waiting experience on the collective level to pass unnoticed: namely, in no sense could one define the post-WWII Yugoslav ‘society’ as a ‘waiting society’. So, based on the narratives from *mjesna zajednica* the accent was more on the individuals’ waiting, and less on the unpredictability of the collective future. Consequently, one’s sense of ‘agentive capacity’ in relation to the collective future was relatively high. Furthermore, there was a reasonable balance between individual aspirations and collective conceptual aims, which allowed for a sense that everything was in the ‘right proportion’.

In the post 1992-95 war period, the accent was placed on collective waiting rather than on individual waiting. Namely the reasons for waiting (e.g. sense of stuckedness) did not relate much to one’s social position (class, age, gender, etc). Rather, everyone waited: the rich and the poor, men and women, old and young, different ethnic groups, those who managed in exams and those who did not, those who had *štele* and those who did not, and so on. This is what made the waiting experience in contemporary BiH so central. Accordingly, one’s sense of ‘agentive capacity’ in relation to the collective future was relatively low. In this case, there was no balance between individual aspirations and a collective conceptual aim. Instead, the general feeling was that everything was in the ‘wrong’ proportion.

It is thus important to contextualize the experience of waiting. Clearly there is nothing new about it; everywhere and always people wait, and have waited, for the future. The difference is that people wait for the future under very different conditions, which

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\(^{34}\) Some BiH citizens had a double citizenship out of which often one was more ‘worthy’ (Jansen 2009).
means that they do not always wait for the same futures, nor in the ‘same tempo’ (Hage 2009: 1). As we saw, not only did post-WWII and post 1992-95 youth wait differently, but also the way waiting was ‘present systematically in society’ (Hage 2009: 2) was significantly different. I would therefore suggest that it is the relevance, more than the actual answer, of the questions ‘who waited, for what and how?’ (Hage 2009: 2), which defines and symbolises the relative significance of waiting within a particular society. In other words, it is only when these questions arise at all, that waiting becomes a noticeable process.

This is true for other themes appearing in this thesis, such as borders (see chapter 5). It does not mean, of course, that they are not present, but rather that they are well camouflaged within many other more important social, economic and political processes in a particular time. I would suggest that waiting in the post-WWII period was more in tune with Bourdieu’s notion of doxa - an undisputed idea one relied upon without ever noticing or questioning it (1977: 168). It was with the ‘crisis’ that came with the fall of Yugoslavia, that this doxa was put into question and waiting itself became noticeable, discussed, and meaningful in various ways.

At the time of my research, BiH’s political scene was, and still is, in chaos. While some political parties disliked the idea of BiH as a state, of its very existence, others disliked its constitutional order and wanted, for example, to see the significance of its internal entity borders diminished. While they all hoped that the current situation would change, their inability to agree on BiH’s present and future made things seem eternal. The main political actors attempted to build the future based on the reference to the past, prior to WWII Yugoslavia. In fact, the period of post-WWII Yugoslavia and its attempt to promote the idea of ‘brotherhood and unity’, which attempted to diminish the differences between different nationalities, was often seen as an unnatural disturbance in the historical development of events. In contemporary BiH, to use the words of a local intellectual, a sense was that citizens lacked ‘identical interpretation of the shared past, constructive interpretation of the present, creative vision of a shared future’. 35

It was within this context that accession to the EU was presented as the only possible future option people in BiH had. But the actual question of how to achieve this only future option was ambiguous: how to be ‘normal citizens’ who respected human rights (and what and whose human rights?) in the ‘right’ kind of democracy, was unclear. These conditions helped to produce a sense of existential immobility, of ‘stuckedness’. Waiting came to be not only central, but to also mean hope. Hope itself was undefined, so it acquired an ambivalent meaning located somewhere on the interface between feelings of impotency and faith. So in post-socialist, post-war BiH, many of my co-conversationalists overwhelmingly felt that the only way one could, if at all, have any hope, was through waiting. And while waiting for the unpredictable (or perhaps for EU membership), various inconsistent and unrealistic aspirations among young Biščani flourished.

**Conclusion**

Jeffrey argues that the situations in which a whole nation is in a position of waiting happen when people have their minds set on particular futures, on particular hopes, but for whom these futures and hopes are so vague, that there is no possibility for them to be realised (Jeffrey 2008: 954). What one hopes for at a given time is directly linked to both culturally specific and broader global contexts (Hage 2002; Ferguson 2006) and is dependent on the accessibility of the ‘capacity’ to hope for something (Hage 2002: 154-5). Waiting among youth in BiH was a consequence of limited ‘agentive capacity’ within a place in which nothing had seemed quite right for a long period of time already (see chapter 5). In this context, waiting was about how people were in it: it was about the ‘quality of waiting as such’ (Schweizer 2008: 11). In direct contrast to this, in the post-WWII context, the emphasis was more on ‘passing through waiting’ (Schweizer 2008: 11): waiting was not a central part of human experience; it was more of a doxic idea (Bourdieu 1977). As such, it was only a process that no one probably noticed as such.

I have shown in this chapter that how people waited, directly related to how it was made possible for them to engage with the future; Bihać and BiH distributed very different hopes under two different contexts. I argued that post-WWII and post 1992-95 war youth, who were in a similar ‘vital conjuncture’ (Johnson-Hanks 2002) in terms of making decisions about the next vital steps that would have lasting effects for their near futures, had very different aspirations because they were coming of age within very different social and political conditions. While post-WWII youth bodily engaged with the collective near
future, for post 1992-95 war youth, that same future seemed ‘evacuated’. In the next chapter I show how the ‘evacuation’ of the near future enforced engagement with immediate ones, which was shaped by an individual’s estimation of how quick an outcome to one’s action would be.

‘This is Bosnia’:

Neno’s view: ...means that this is a place in which the authorities have everything and a normal [simple] citizen nothing. It is a place in which youth have to manoeuvre in order to make living, in which they have to take things into their own hands, turn to illegal business; otherwise it is very hard to make living. All this is ‘Bosnia’ (pause) the only thing known about us in the world (laughter) is that we are a little jungle, full with Indians [Native American Indians] hoping for a better tomorrow.

Chapter 4
Intimate and non intimate engagement with politics

Ethnographic scene 14: Pre-electoral campaign

Mid-September 2010. It is a lovely evening. In the last couple of weeks almost every evening another political meeting, followed by a concert of a famous singer or a band, has been taking place in the city centre. Soon there will be general elections. Despite everyone’s cynical comments and their strong conviction that nothing would change, I cannot help feeling a sensation of hope associated with the Election day. Perhaps my impression derives from the fact that there is so much going on, and quite suddenly. Many people are on the streets: some actively participate in the campaigns, others just attend the events. On this particular evening in the central pedestrian street in Bihać posters made by young people are displayed. This exhibition is part of the campaign Mladi & Izbori 2010 [Youth & Elections 2010]. It was organized by a Sarajevo based NGO in association with NGOs from all over BiH. So far, the exhibition has been presented in various cities. This campaign tries to mobilize young people to create posters and videos in which they attempt to convince their peers to vote. The best poster or video would receive a cash prize. Most of the produced posters rotated around the idea that one should get out and vote. For instance, poster number 1 was created by Alden from Sarajevo (FBiH) and it states: ‘get out and vote: your
vote can remove BiH from the ‘life-support machine’. VOTE 03.10.2010’. Poster number 2 was made by Dejan from Doboj (RS) and it asks ‘what’s your excuse (for not voting)? It proposes a few rather common ‘excuses’ among young BiH citizens, such as ‘I cannot be bothered’, ‘I have nothing to do with elections’ or ‘my voice does not change a thing’. Similarly to his peer from Sarajevo, he also concludes: VOTE and make a change!. Poster number 3 was created by Sabina from Tuzla (FBiH). By replicating the well known image of the three wise monkeys -who ignore what is happening around them- she suggests that in fact what one does not see in BiH is progress, what one does not hear in BiH is something nice, and that one does not talk in BiH, but endures through suffering. She concludes by saying ‘that’s why I am going to vote!’

I found these and other presented posters36 interesting for two main reasons. Firstly, they served as a general commentary on how people from all over BiH, regardless of their ethnicity, perceived their milieus. In this sense, they paralleled my fieldwork notes about how young Biščani talked and behaved in relation to the elections. The very same ‘excuses’ presented in Dejan’s poster were also very common among young Biščani when asked why they did not plan to vote. For instance, when I enquired about whether Ivana, one of the school leavers, intended to vote, her facial expression filled with horror, soon followed by verbal, and even bodily, repulsion: ‘Oh, no, no, no, (pause), not for me thank you, I don’t want to have anything with it, politics does not interest me’. Or, in conversations I had with young Biščani they often suggested that in BiH one did not have a choice but to ‘shut up and endure’ [ma nema ti ovdje druge, nego šuti i trpi]. This was

36 See http://www.biraj.mladi.info (last accessed 20/05/2013)
similar to Sabina’s suggestion that in pre-election day BiH one did not talk, but endured through suffering. This idea of endurance was inspired by a famous song called Šuti i trpi\textsuperscript{37} [literally, shut up and endure through suffering] by Sarajevo based band Dubioza Kolektiv. The second reason I found these posters interesting had to do with an overall aim of the campaign Mladi & Izbori 2010: most of the posters emphasized the importance of getting young people out to vote, failing to address what voting itself entailed. In this chapter my main concern is with the latter, namely, I do not look at how many young people voted, or why, according to some, so few voted,\textsuperscript{38} but rather I look at how those who voted, did so. In that sense I do not look at how much young people cared (Hage 2003: 2), but how they cared.

The Youth & Elections 2010 campaign was not specific to BiH (see Kimberlee 2002: 85; Kovačeva 2000), nor was it unusual. A few months before the general elections in October 2010, popular narratives in the media and among politicians, as well as everyday conversations suggested how important young citizens’ votes were for the future of BiH. Unsurprisingly, whilst the pre-electoral political campaigns focused their efforts on promoting their manifestoes, they also addressed youth, encouraging them to vote. At the same time, the national and the local media were busy speculating about the possible numbers of young voters, and NGO campaigns were actively trying to persuade the youth ‘to get out’ (and vote).\textsuperscript{39} I learnt about the campaign Mladi & Izbori 2010 from my 22 year old student friend, Emina.

Emina has been volunteering for the past 5-6 years for a local NGO that aimed to encourage greater youth participation. As part of her voluntary activity she spent about two months before the general elections helping out with the Youth & Elections 2010 campaign. Recently, in addition to their work on the exhibition presented in the city centre, Emina and other NGO volunteers distributed small leaflets and stickers in cafés and other places where young people spent time (cf. Coles 2007: 22). There was an element of criticism in these notes: they all suggested that voting, unlike everyday drinking, took very little time, but nevertheless could have a crucial impact on the future. Despite this, the

\textsuperscript{37} The song portrayed the profound inequality between those in power and ‘ordinary’ citizens and suggested some sense of paralysis entailed in the everyday experiences of ‘ordinary’ citizens. ‘To shut up and suffer’ in a way was a reaction to the existing feeling of ‘stuckedness’ (Hage 2009), while at the same time it also reproduced this feeling.

\textsuperscript{38} Young people’s lack of interest in politics and/or elections has been of great interest for social scientists. For analysis on political (non) participation see the works of Henn et al 2005 or Kimberlee 2010 focusing on young people in Great Britain; Melville 2005 looking at youth in Australia; Kovačeva 2000 on young people in Eastern Europe; Greenberg on youth in Serbia.

\textsuperscript{39} For similar accounts from previous BiH elections see Coles (2007: 21).
campaign suggested, youth found time for drinking and not for voting. In doing so, they chose to disengage from the collective future, instead focusing on their daily routines. The following are sticker samples:

**Saturday evening without a drink is like the general elections without you!**

**Tonight I choose a drink, but tomorrow the future!**

**I drink to forget, but I vote to change!**

**4 years: 4,380 beers and one elections! Tomorrow!**

Image 3: stickers encouraging youth to get out and vote

The impression that young people actively disengaged from politics involved many complex reactions among the wider community (such as young Biščani’s parents, grandparents, various politicians, NGO organizations, media, but also young people themselves. Hope for change was associated with younger generations. Through voting they were expected to take responsibility and to make futures for themselves and for the collective. At the same time though, as these stickers suggested, youth were also perceived as unwilling to bring about any meaningful change. Their behaviour was condemned, and their critics suggested that they were either delinquent and/or that they did not care.
pensioner implied that *because* young people did not vote the situation could not change. In his words: ‘We are not the problem, but young people: they are those who do not vote’.

In contrast to the general impression that young people were passive or simply disinterested in participating in elections, I argue that young people’s (lack of) political involvement could not be understood simply in terms of passivity or disinterest. In such narratives, a young person could be either passive (and hence irresponsible) or an active (and hence responsible) citizen. Instead, my ethnography, in examining how those who voted did so, revealed how young Biščani ‘expressed agency...through their own resourcefulness’ (Jeffrey 2011: 245; Jeffrey 2010). Going beyond a simplistic view of responsible or irresponsible citizens, I show how one could be both, and simultaneously: responsible towards a friend, a parent or a relative, but irresponsible towards ‘the collective’. Hence, my ethnography also illuminated the importance interpersonal relations had for the experiences of young Biščani’s time and space by encouraging certain practices and discouraging others. As I show below, the experiences of time and space were inextricable from social relations (Mains 2007: 659).

As we saw in chapter 2, institutionalized unpredictability shaped Biščani’s ability to anticipate what would come next, while helping to make the gap between ‘ordinary’ citizens and ‘those above’ seem wider. This pushed many young people to believe that their actions could not have any significant outcome for the collective present and future(s). Unsurprisingly, many of them voted with an expectation of an *immediate result* as a consequence of their action. Thus, as I will show, many of them engaged with politics in particular ways: *intimate* and *non-intimate*. Here I propose that these types of engagement with politics, which kept everyday life going, were further informed by what I call *dated hope* – hope invested in and associated with a particular date. Coles argued that through the electoral propaganda, elections themselves were offered as a solution to all sorts of social, political and economic problems BiH was facing (2007: 21). The idea that elections (as a dated event) were a solution, revealed how engagement with the near future was brought into play, both by political elites (local and international) and ‘ordinary’ citizens, in the form of punctuated time (Guyer 2007: 416).

The coexistence of *intimate* and *non-intimate* engagement with politics, informed by *dated hope*, was shaped by and shaped spatiotemporal experiences in particular ways: it helped to generate private hopes while discouraging societal hope; it enforced engagement with the immediate future and, occasionally, it made the predictability of immediate/near
future possible; it ignored the long term future and engendered long term unpredictability; and very often it included mediations through short, as opposed to long, chains of people. In the following ethnographic scene, Emina’s character illustrates how the coexistence of two types of political engagement played out, as well as how dated hope was brought into play.

Character 5: Emina is a 22 year old student. She lives in Bihać with her parents in a small modest house. She is an only child. Her mother works as a bookkeeper and her father does all sorts of unregistered jobs: he prepares wood for winter, he does various maintenance works for individuals who can afford to pay, occasionally he drives people who do not possess a car to other cities, etc.

Every day Emina receives 1 KM (less than 0.50 GBP) pocket money from her father; enough for one coffee. On weekends, holidays, or anytime there is work available, Emina earns about 2-3 KM an hour, working in a supermarket as a product promoter.

She is enrolled in her final year at the University of Bihać, studying economics. She does not like the course and does not feel that she is really learning much. Her boyfriend, Nikola, despite living in Bihać, studies in Mostar. Next year they both plan to move to Mostar, he to continue his studies and Emina to commence an MA course. Emina is excited about this idea as she finds Bihać too monotonous, and her daily café routine boring.

The fulfilment of her dream depends on two issues, which have recently been creating some tension between Emina and her parents. Firstly, it is uncertain whether her parents will be able to support her financially. The MA course she is interested in costs about 7,500 KM (approximately 3,300 GBP). Although Emina has been saving money for some time, she has not managed to save anything like the required sum. But she also needs to think of living expenses, as moving away from Bihać means moving away from her parents’ home, which means paying rent and all other expenses that go with it, paying for her own food, etc. All she wants from her parents is to pay the course fees. With living expenses she thinks she can manage. Although her parents would need to take a loan for the fees, that in itself is not their main concern. According to Emina, their main worry is that they do not think that she will really manage to pay her living expenses by herself.

Secondly, she wants to rent an apartment with her boyfriend. This is something her parents are not very happy about, mostly, so Emina thinks, because they are worried about what people in Bihać would say. A young couple living together before marriage is viewed unfavourably by some people. All of this frustrates Emina, not only because she wants to continue with higher education in a university she considers to be better than the university in Bihać, but also because she thinks that her parents waste too much money on things she considers to be luxuries. She commented once: ‘Why do we have to eat meat everyday and why do we have to have so many fruits and juices and chocolates. If we planned differently in terms of what we eat, maybe there would be more money
for my education (pause) I just wished my parents realized that one day they will depend on me. My father has no pension, and my mother’s pension will be very small, they won’t be able to live on that’.

Ethnographic scene 15: At Emina’s grandmother place.

Midday Saturday, 2\textsuperscript{nd} of October 2010, one day before the general elections in BiH. Two days before I am to leave Bihać and return to Manchester. I am with Emina at her grandmother’s place. Her grandmother is called Mejra. It is not my first time here. Every Saturday Mejra’s four daughters, occasionally with their families, pay her a visit and I have joined them a few times. We normally chat and laugh while eating delicious food prepared by Mejra. This time, I am here to say good-bye to everyone. The dining room in which we are sitting and the kitchen occupy the same space. We are eating masnica [layers of pastry] and chicken, made in the oven, heated on woods. It is a rather warm day. Sitting in the kitchen near the oven makes it extremely hot. We are talking about tomorrow’s elections.

\textbf{Emina}: (talking to her aunts) I need someone to vote instead of me, who is going to vote? (then she turns to her grandmother) Majka [grandma’], I will write instructions for you how to vote, it looks a bit complicated, but I will write down for you everything, just follow what it says, ok?.

Some time ago Emina promised her best friend that she would vote for ‘ZABiH’\textsuperscript{40}, a party which secured a job for her best friend’s father. The future of his position depends on how well this party does tomorrow at the elections. However, in the meantime something changed: a possibility to vote for money. Another of Emina’s friends, Djidji, said that ZABOLJITAK\textsuperscript{41}, another party, gives 100KM (approximately 45 GBP) to anyone who would vote for them. Emina does not know much about what ZABOLJITAK stands for, but she does not really care. She is planning to move with her boyfriend to Mostar in order to pursue an MA in economics, and she needs the money at the moment. And although 100 KM is not a lot, every little helps. She does not feel good about breaking a promise to her best friend though. Also, she wants to help her friend’s father. Hence, she tries to fulfil her promise through securing an additional vote, that of her grandmother. This is not unusual. Many young people are willing to vote if the outcome of their vote has an immediate effect. But Emina? I am somewhat surprised. This is because she often tells young people how important it is to vote. For instance, a few weeks ago, I was having a coffee with two friends when Emina rang. Within a few minutes she joined us. We talked about the elections. Emina

\textsuperscript{40} Short for Stranka za BiH (Party for BiH).

\textsuperscript{41} Short for Narodna stranka radom za boljitak (People’s Party Work for Betterment). Djidji and many of his peers, like Emina, often referred to this party not by its name, but rather by the location of its origin, which was Herzegovina. So they would often call it simply ’stranka iz Hercegovine’ (the party from Herzegovina).
asked us if we had an idea how to make a short film which would convince as many young people as possible to vote. One of the two friends, Omer, reacted by saying ‘I can help you think of an idea, but I will be the first one not to vote’. To this Emina responded ‘It is not alright not to vote, everyone complains all the time but they do nothing to change things’. Emina did this as part of her voluntary activity for the Youth & Elections 2010 campaign. Hence, when we sat at her grandma’s place, I was surprised at her enquiry. 

After some time Emina and I leave. We are heading to the city centre to meet up with some friends. In the car I share my surprise with her.

**Vanja:** Why are you doing this? I mean why vote for money or as a favour to a friend?

**Emina:** Well I know that nothing is going to change anyway, so why not help someone if I can.

**Vanja:** Ok, if that is what you think then why do you volunteer?

**Emina:** You know, to start with I did it for Omar, I knew he needed someone to help him and I was the only one available at the time. But then I went with him to this seminar and I really liked it, I got interested in the topic and I felt like I learnt a lot. But my decision to vote for ‘ZABiH’ derives from my wish to help someone in the short run. Although I think that they are quite terrible, thanks to them Džana’s dad has a job. And what is he supposed to do, to act as a moral person among all those lacking morality? Besides, you know I need money for Mostar. If I lived elsewhere, in a better place, I would not do it, I would vote properly [kako treba].

**Beyond to vote or not to vote**

After my initial surprise, I began to understand that despite her voluntary activity there was nothing unusual in what Emina did. All she was encouraged to do through her voluntary position was to get out and vote and to persuade her peers to do the same: and she did exactly that! I suggested above that it was not necessarily the percentage of youth that voted which kept the situation as it was, but how they voted. As proposed by Kurtović, ‘high rates of association with political parties challenge the view that Bosnian political problems stem from civic nonparticipation in politics’ (2012: 56). In fact, looking at the numbers of the young voters reveals that in the general elections of 2010, 48% of the young persons in BiH voted. In the general elections of 2010 in the UK, 44% of youth voted.

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42 Omar was a founder of the NGO Emina volunteered for.
43 This information was provided by the OIA (Omladinski informativni centar).
The picture in BiH was thus not very different from a place in which far less energy was invested in encouraging young people to get out and vote.\footnote{45}{Perhaps this was possible because in the UK - in the eyes of many school-leavers in BiH - things did not appear to be so ‘wrong’; to use Emina’s words, the UK was seen as being a ‘better place’ where things were done ‘properly’. One possible explanation could be that the UK, unlike BiH, was not in the process of democratization, but already a democracy - whatever this may mean (see Coles 2007). And it was in ‘emerging democracies’, that policy-makers and scholars invested extensive efforts in an attempt to get citizens to participate (Greenberg 2010: 50).}

Greenberg argued that since the 1980s some NGOs and ‘powerful aid institutions’ focused their efforts on democratic participation, making a direct link between participation and democratic citizens, and between democratic participation, stability and economic development (Greenberg 2010: 50). These new participatory approaches, which included ‘notions of individual agency and choice’, derived from the economic liberalization embedded within the policies of the U.S. and some European states (Greenberg 2010: 50). Working among young people in Serbia, Greenberg looked at their nonparticipation. Rejecting the ideas of active/passive approaches to participation she asked ‘how apathy is a productive aspect of how people experience and understand democracy’ (Greenberg 2010: 46). She suggested that ‘nonparticipation or self-exclusion from politics and political agency is a way people in Serbia can manage and displace what they perceive as a judging western eye. It is also a way for Serbian citizens to try to position themselves against Serbia’s recent violent history and to move beyond that history’ (Greenberg 2010: 44).

The international community was deeply involved in post war transformations within a variety of social, political and economic spheres throughout BiH, and has subsequently played a very powerful and influential role in the process of democratization there. They used elections (and democratisation) as a means through which certain ideas (such as progress, agency, choice) were naturalized and normalized (Coles 2007: 22). The transformations they imposed worked along the lines of liberalism and neoliberalism.

\footnote{See \url{http://www.oiabih.info/index.php?type=1&a=znate_li_arhiva} (last accessed 29/08/2012).}

\footnote{44\% refers to the youth between ages 18-24; see \url{http://www.ukpolitical.info/Turnout10.htm} (last accessed 29/08/2012).}

\footnote{45}{For a brief discussion on voters’ turnout in previous BiH elections see Coles (2007: 22).}
The international community expected major changes in how things worked in BiH, and demanded that BiH took responsibility for them (Coles 2007: 11-12). The vast involvement of the international forces within BiH led some scholars to argue that ‘Bosnians and Bosnian institutions, despite the rhetoric of self-government and international withdrawal, had little space to make or implement policy’ (Coles 2007: 13).

In an attempt to encourage citizens to get out and vote, great emphasis was placed on a link between progress and agency (Coles 2007: 21). The ‘technical event’ (elections) itself, was subsequently promoted as being transformative and progressive (Coles 2007: 21) without taking into consideration the many political, social and economic processes, which shaped this ‘technical event’. The link between progress and agency implied that progress could be achieved through mere participation in the elections, ignoring the importance of what that participation involved. In other words, the focus was on quantity (how many voted) and not on quality (how those who voted did so).

However, quality matters. As the ethnographic scene 15 suggested, many young people were willing to take financial incentives for their vote, or to vote for a party which promised them (or their relatives) a job, even if this party did not stand for what they believed in. This was because in their eyes, parties were unable, or rather unwilling, to make meaningful, collective change in BiH. Similarly to their peers in neighbouring Serbia, young Biščani thought that their ‘political choices were neither ‘real’ nor worthwhile in the current system’ (Greenberg 2010: 56). ‘Proper’ political participation was conceived as a matter that could only be done elsewhere, in a ‘better place’, a place where hope resided. In the context of BiH, ‘voting properly’ [glasati kako treba], to use Emina’s words, was perceived as unproductive, having no significant effect on the collective future. Hence the question would be, ‘why even bother?’.

Many young people did not seem to see a link between their actions and the collective present and future. Furthermore, anything to do with politics was considered dirty and many young Biščani did not want to be associated with it (cf. Engelsen Ruud 2001: 116). Nevertheless, numerous complaints and criticisms of how politics were done (corruption, nepotism, etc) suggested not only that this was the main reason for BiH’s ‘stuckedness’, but also that they expected that same collective (or perhaps ‘the society’ or ‘the state’) to provide them with what they considered as their daily needs: jobs, more (cultural/sport) opportunities for younger people, ability to travel without visas, and general future perspectives. On this level, the way young Biščani engaged with politics was very impersonal. I call this approach non-intimate engagement with politics.
Despite this view - that politics did not have any important effect on the overall BiH conditions - Emina’s story suggested how, in reality, politics and political parties made a difference in personal lives and how accordingly people acted. In other words, politics were also viewed as omnipresent and all-encompassing, deeply affecting youths’ choices and their everyday realities. On this level, the way young Biščani engaged with politics was much more individualised. I call this approach intimate engagement with politics. In this engagement it was interpersonal relationships that were considered to be most effective in making certain things happen. As such, individuals’ actions were not motivated by a long term personal or collective good, or by the parties’ agendas. Rather, they were driven by actions that resulted in short term outcomes, from which they quickly knew what to expect. An estimation of how immediate the effect of their action would be, encouraged whether youth engaged with politics in an intimate or non-intimate manner.

Immediacy of the effect

Young people's behaviour, how they voted for instance, was therefore premised on an estimation of the outcome of their actions. An instant and tangible result was meaningful: under conditions of institutionalized unpredictability knowing what would happen next, almost immediately, became crucial. Although in this chapter my focus is on how young people acted in the context of 2010 general elections, I argue that the estimation of the immediacy of effect of one’s actions both shaped, and was shaped by, many other practices, relations, and engagements with the future. Not seeing a link between their decisions to act upon practical concerns with an immediate outcome and the effects these decisions had for the collective present and future, only helped to reinforce the dominant nationalistic ideology. In that sense, young people took on very particular responsibilities while refusing others; for instance, Emina’s decision to help her friend’s father.

The estimation of how fast the effect following one’s action would be also shaped the experience of waiting. In his book Waiting (1985), Crapanzano focused on the daily lives of the ‘Whites’ in Apartheid-era South Africa. He argued that the image of a problematic and limited future had affected the way people in South Africa viewed themselves and their country’s present (1985: 307). Waiting, according to Crapanzano, was formed through people’s engagement with time: it meant being oriented always more toward the future. Namely, the present lost its focus on the now, and the world in its immediacy was ‘derealized’. It was directed toward the arrival (or non-arrival) of the object.
of waiting. Therefore, waiting was ‘marked by contingency’, which was often accompanied by anxiety (Crapanzano 1985: 44). Waiting for the future was often paralyzing in a sense that time present was ‘somehow sacrificed to time past in order to avoid the terrifying contingency of time future’ (1985: 306). This could occur in situations whereby individuals and/or groups were ‘caught up’ in their hope, so that they did nothing to reach the object they hoped for: they were entrapped in the structure of waiting (Crapanzano 2004: 114-5). Based on Crapanzano’s findings, white people in South Africa saw the apartheid days as numbered. This structured their model of the world: waiting was encompassed by fear of what would follow.

My ethnography shows that also among young Biščani waiting, at times, resulted in some form of paralysis. This was the case especially when the distant collective future was in question. Partly this was because, as I argue in chapter 3, the long term goals presented to them were not tangible. But I find Crapanzano’s notion of waiting quite limiting for understanding agency entailed in the experience of waiting, because waiting, as we also saw in chapter 3, was not only paralysing, nor passive (see also Jeffrey 2010). Crapanzano represents the lived present as empty, devoid of vitality: the ‘Whites’ of South Africa seemed to be passive agents, who were simply waiting ‘for something, anything, to happen’ (1985: 306), not only vulnerable to that ‘which is to come’, but also for whom the present lost its meaning. Instead, my data suggested that waiting among young people also had quite the opposite effect to that of paralysis. This response manifested itself most commonly in relation to the immediate and, often, dated future. So, in contrast to the experiences of the ‘Whites’ in South Africa, the present in BiH did not lose its focus on the now, and the world in its immediacy was not ‘derealized’. Actually, I argue, that at times, the focus on the now was not only the only alternative, but also made everyday life bearable (see also Dalsgaard 2005).

Character 6 – Emir is 20 years old. He lives with his parents and a younger sister.

He tried studying at the local university after graduating from high school, but it did not go well for him, so he decided to drop out. He thought that it would be better to find a job and help out his parents who seemed to be financially struggling, rather than be a financial burden upon their shoulders. Now he is unemployed and bored.

Since dropping out of university his plans for the future have been changing frequently. Although not a school leaver anymore Emir has been coming to my workshops: he is interested in doing something other than coffee drinking, something creative.
I first met Emir at the local theatre group. He has been part of that group for the past few years. His real dream is to study theatre. But he cannot afford it, so he does not even try to get into the academy. At times he tells me of his plan to work on a cruise ship in the United States, but he never tries to find out what is needed in order to apply for this job. At other times he tells me that he ‘cannot wait’ for ‘the visa issue to get sorted’\(^{46}\), so that he can go and work in Germany, where his aunt resides. Never does he consider that even if BiH citizens end up having free passage to the EU, they will be able to do so only as tourists. If he wanted to work illegally, he may as well do so now.

All his future plans are located in a distant future. For the time being, Emir is waiting, passing the time in cafés (see the video Emir made chapter 2). In that sense, waiting appears to have a paralysing effect on Emir’s future.

However when an opportunity arises for an action which may bring an immediate outcome, he takes it. Shortly before the elections I invite him to join me to listen to what ‘Naša Stranka’\(^{47}\) has to offer to the citizens. He agrees to come, but already in advance he informs me that he cannot vote for them. This is because his relative is a member of the SDU\(^{48}\) party and he is expected to contribute his vote to them. Also, his relative promised to secure Emir with a pre-election job, perhaps putting up the party’s posters. Emir concludes that if his relative really fulfils his promise and secures a short term job for him, then he will vote for him, and if he does not he will have to decide what to do.

Emir’s aspirations concerning the distant future were unrealistic and inconsistent (see also chapter 3). His planning for the near and long term future remained in the realm of unrealistic hopes. Over the time I have known him it was impossible for him to turn his aspirations into concrete reality. As Emir’s story suggested, young persons’ imaginings of their long term future possibilities or, in Crapanzano’s words, their ‘imaginative horizons’ (Crapanzano 2004), shaped their experiences, perceptions and actions in the present. Similarly to Malkki’s findings among Hutu refugees in Canada, the BiH youths’ visions of the distant future appeared dystopian. While among the Hutu associations with different political, cultural and social groups affected how people understood history and the future,

\(^{46}\) At the time of my research BiH citizens could not travel to EU countries without a visa. This changed in December 2011.

\(^{47}\) *Naša Stranka* [Our Party].

\(^{48}\) Short for *Socijaldemokratska Unija* [Socialdemocratic Union].
and hence their present (Malkki 2001: 328-9), among youth in BiH it was not necessarily their association with a particular group, or a political party, that shaped their understanding. In fact many young people who identified very differently in terms of their political opinions or ethnicity very often acted in a very similar manner.

What affected how they acted in the present and towards their futures was their understanding of their relative location in world, and their location within BiH: in that sense, as I show in the following chapter, it was where (Green 2005) that mattered, and their relative where seemed wrong. And because of that, there was no point investing in the long term collective future. In that sense, Emir’s engagement with distant future resulted in some form of paralysing waiting. He, like many other, felt that all he could do was to ‘shut up and endure (through suffering)’, or in other words wait, unless, of course, there was a reason good enough to ‘snatch agency’ (Hage 2009: 6). And that is what he did.

So, Emir’s character conveyed well that what motivated his action in the short run was his expectation of a (relatively) immediate material gain, through a (relatively) short chain of people. When around the time of the elections an opportunity to do something with a quick result was presented, Emir acted (upon my enquiry, I learnt that Emir knew nothing about what the SDU stood for). In that sense, immediacy of the effect was temporal: an immediate outcome to one’s action was that which shaped how one acted. But Emir’s story discloses another property of the action based on the immediacy of the effect: unintentionally, how one acted also suggested something on the reach of ‘we’ involved in a particular engagement. In that sense, immediacy of the effect was also spatial. I say unintentionally as I don’t think that Emir (or any his peers) cared explicitly about how many people were involved in the realization of his expectation. Rather, his intention was fixed on the temporality of his expectation. But of course these two were linked: an immediate outcome to one’s action was often mediated through a short chain of people. For instance, Emir engaged directly and only with his relative and it was in his relative’s power to assign him, or not to assign him, the pre-electoral job. In Emina’s case, she corresponded directly and only with her friend, Almaida, who was allocated a responsibility by the ZABOLJITAK to buy people’s votes.

So clearly, the basis for voting action was an expectation of an immediate effect. This immediacy was temporal (as soon as possible) and spatial (through as short a chain of actors as possible). But of course it was also important who one’s actions would affect. Also here immediacy was crucial: Emir was not interested in voting for SDU because this
would have a good effect on someone he did not know. Thus, the expectation was also that there would be some positive effect for someone in his immediate surroundings: himself or someone as close to himself as possible. As I have shown, it meant that this kind of voting was based not on any care for a collective beyond one's immediate surroundings, but strictly and only on pursuing a favourable outcome for oneself or someone close.

The importance that estimating the immediacy of effect has had for people’s actions, has been addressed in various ways by scholars working in different parts of the world (see Jeffrey 2010; Nuijten 2003). Nuijten, for example, studying dimensions of power in Mexico, showed the logics behind ejidatarios’ (members of an ejido – communal land used for agriculture) ambivalent attitude towards corruption. While Nuijten did not directly address the importance an immediate outcome had for the ejidatarios’ actions (in fact she showed how over the years they never actually got what they really wanted), it was nevertheless very clear from her ethnography that what was important was not to do things ‘right’, but to make things seem possible in the short run, even if it meant bending the rules. She argued that on the one hand, when ejidatarios were the victims of corruption, they complained about it; on the other hand, they themselves used services of ‘corrupt’ officials in order to get certain things done (Nuijten 2003: 167-8).

This reaction by ejidatarios reflected the paradox I encountered among youth around the elections; on the one hand they complained that things would never change, but on the other hand they themselves, took an active part in making the system seemingly unchangeable. Young Biščani, similarly to ejidatarios, turned to those they considered to be corrupt and who they normally criticized, for help. In the ejidatarios’ case this was because such ‘corrupt officials’ knew best how ‘to get around’ the law (Nuijten 2003: 167). In the case of young Biščani’s, they felt it was only those ‘corrupt politicians’ who had the power to help make certain things happen, hence they saw no alternative. In their view, one either played the game on politicians’ terms (and perhaps could get something out of it), or didn't play at all (and could be certain not to get anything). The ambivalent attitude of young Biščani and their understandings of their own rather ‘corrupt’ attitudes are best explained through a deeper exploration of their non-intimate and intimate engagement with politics. As I show below, their actions could be understood as ‘routine efforts to work the system’ (Jeffrey 2010: 158).

Non-intimate engagement with politics and societal hope
Ethnographic scene 16: Youth Film Festival

Early November 2009. Skies are grey. It is past lunch time. I am attending another day at the Youth Film Festival on Human Rights. The film I am watching engages with several human rights violations. It shows how some pupils are bullied because of their physical appearance. Then it goes on to suggest that one human rights violation is the inability of some of BiH’s citizens to move freely across state borders. The film shows how some teenagers can travel to the EU because they have a Croatian passport, while others, those with only a Bosnian passport, cannot go anywhere without a visa. After the screening, a discussion on the infringement of human rights presented in the film takes place. As the topic of freedom of cross-border mobility is brought up, it is instantly dismissed by young people present: it is considered to be a matter of politics, something greater than those present, something about which nothing can be done. As such, the conversation on it is stopped, and the discussion on other human rights is carried on. The conversations that take place after each screening seem similar: although a variety of human rights is presented in the films, the discussion is rather repetitive. Again and again young people’s reactions suggest that they think that no one can be trusted and that the prevalence of corruption shows that only some people, with the ‘right’ connections, can live good lives in BiH.

As already suggested, and as is clear from this scene, the ‘collective’ future was understood as being somehow external to ‘ordinary’ peoples’ acts. If any change for the ‘collective’ could happen at all (such as finding a solution for citizens’ inability to travel), it would occur on a large spatiotemporal scale; relating, in other words, to the long term collective future, presupposing action by those in power. So, non-intimate engagement with politics was based on a clear gap between two spheres: one in which ‘ordinary’ people acted and another in which these people could not make any impact, but which nevertheless directed their daily lives. This engagement with politics suggested that young Biščani had a very strong idea of the state (Nuijten 2003), and hence they also had very particular expectations from it: the state should provide for them. But not the other way round. However, this was not always the case. As the following scene suggests, not all young people responded with repulsion to the idea of political involvement, nor did everyone think that they, as individuals, could not cause a change.

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49 For more on this event see scene 13.
Ethnographic scene 17: Making change?

It is December 2009. It is evening. Another film and photography workshop. I asked everyone to draw a map of the EU as they experience it. While Neno and Amna are focusing on drawing their maps, Azra and Adi, with Fera’s and Emira’s occasional comments, discuss BiH’s future.

Azra: Ok, so what are we trying to say here? Our politicians suck, right! But what about us?
Adi: Look, new generations are coming, new generations who will hopefully be less bigoted.
Azra: Are you bigoted?
Adi: (a bit hesitantly, not very comfortable about being cornered) To be honest….I am.
Azra: (very understanding, nodding. She knew that is what Adi would say). You are….of course….now tell me what do you want to do about it?
Adi: Hmmmm….I …. I don’t know, I am for myself [sam za sebe]. I don’t like politics, I don’t like organizations.
Azra: Hmmmm (nodding), I see, so you would like the situation to remain as it is?
Adi: No, I would not.
Azra: (ironically) Well how do you expect things to change, if you are for yourself?
Adi: Well that’s why we have three heads, to agree on things.
Azra: (by this stage she loses her patience, she raises her voice unable to believe what she just heard, especially as Adi just contradicted what he said a few seconds before) But man, three heads have been ‘agreeing’ on things for the past 15 years, and look where that got us.
Adi: I know, but probably the time will come when things will change.
Neno: (drawing his map, commenting sarcastically) Sure they will [Hoće, hoće]
Adi: Azra, why are you so pessimistic?
Azra: I would like to make a change, what ever it takes: talking, smashing, but we all have to be united in order to make that change.
Neno: I know what you mean and I totally agree with you, but people don’t care.
Adi: But look, we did not find ourselves in this situation over night: it has been developing over many years. Now in order to change it, it will also take many many years. To begin with we need decent politicians.
Azra: But if we keep on sitting, doing nothing, nothing will ever change.

50 By ‘three heads’ Adi meant three members of the presidency, coming from the three different major ethnic groups in BiH.
**Adi:** But hold on a second, let me ask you (seizes an opportunity to corner Azra), when your teachers were on strike, did you go to support them?

**Azra:** No

**Adi:** Nor did I. Furthermore, last year I was passing by when disabled people were protesting for their rights, and people who sat in the nearby café were laughing at them. So if someone attempts to make a change he is being teased and laughed at! And you cannot change that overnight.

**Azra:** (trying to rationalize what Adi just said) Where was that?

**Adi:** Next to the government building.

**Azra:** In what café?

**Adi:** Albatros

**Azra:** (cynically) Well of course, police officers go there.

**Fera:** Our people are a bit primitive, if one tries to do something different, they automatically categorize you as insane [lud], and they basically laugh at you. I have issues with my mother on a daily basis because of this. I want to do things differently, but she disapproves of it. She lives in her world and I live in mine, and our worlds don’t meet.

**Emira:** (agreeing with Fera) Yeah, let’s say I wanted to do something ‘good’, maybe a particular voluntary activity, even my parents think I am crazy.


*Non-intimate* engagement with politics derived from youth’s understanding that they were located both in a place and a time that were inappropriate: the post-war time where nothing worked as it should, where nothing was in the ‘right proportion’, and the location which seemed ‘wrong’, especially in relation to other places, like the UK, where things were thought to work ‘properly’. Youth’s limited sense of effective agency contributed towards discouraging societal hope (Hage 2003: 15), and future possibilities, if there were any, came to equal private hopes only. But the above scene suggested that non-intimate engagement with politics was also encouraged by interpersonal relations. In order to explain this point let me embed the above conversation within the broader context of my acquaintance with Adi, Fera, Azra and others who regularly came to my workshops.

Although Azra and Adi’s approaches might appear different (Azra suggesting that young people could and should make change and Adi disbelieving their ability to do so), their daily routines were very similar: in practice neither of them undertook activities which attempted to make a change on the collective level. How can this be explained? There were some parallels between the above scene and Emina’s story. Through her voluntary
involvement in the Youth & Elections 2010 campaign Emina too argued for greater involvement by young people. While Fera and Azra did nothing about their belief, Emina got caught up in the expectation of an immediate material and practical gain (personal and for her friend’s father). Consequently, she also did nothing on the collective level.

Both of these scenes suggested that reasons for the lack of engagement with a long term collective future were embedded in interpersonal relations: while Emina wanted to help someone close to her (her best friend’s father), Fera, Emira and others suggested that a mere attempt to ‘do things differently’ or ‘to something good’ were not approved by their close kin, their friends, their acquaintances, and, in general, by the local community. As Nero suggested, if one were different, not only was one considered to be insane [lud], but also, as Emira put it, even parents ridiculed their own children if they expressed the will to bring about change. In the early stages of my fieldwork a friend told me a joke that sums this up very well:

There are three barrels: the first stands for BiH, the second for Serbia and the third for Croatia. Above the barrels is the EU. Above the Croatian barrel stands a man with a baseball bat and prevents any movement from Croatia towards the EU. Above the Serbian barrel two men stand with baseball bats and if someone attempts to leave Serbia they hit them really hard and prevent their movement. Above the BiH barrel no one stands. People wonder, how this is possible? Someone explains: if someone tries to leave BiH at least two persons from below pull him down.

It was in this sense that young Biščani’s non-intimate engagement with politics, and consequently their experience of time (how they engaged with the collective future), was inseparable from interpersonal relations. The importance of social relations for peoples’ experience of space and time also came across well in Mains’ ethnography (2007). Working with urban educated unemployed young men in Jimma, Ethiopia, Mains suggested that theories on neoliberal capitalism were insufficient in-themselves to provide one with a deep understanding of the dynamics and forces that shaped these young men’s experiences, and more specifically, their relationship to the future which was affected by their (un)employed status. One’s decision about what to do in terms of work was influenced by possible ways in which that status- being employed or unemployed- could affect or shift the social relations or the manner in which one related to others. Clearly then, work was not evaluated only in terms of income, but also in terms of interaction with
others (2007: 667). Hence, young men’s choice not to work in jobs that were viewed negatively, also shaped how these men experienced time (feelings of lack of progress) and their perceptions of space (whereby a ‘problem of time’ could be solved through movement in space - migration).

In ethnographic scene 17 school-leavers already suggested that their older kin (e.g. parents) but also non-kin (e.g. as Fera said ‘our people’) very often encouraged them not to take responsibility for the collective future. This was also conveyed to me on one occasion by a female pensioner. After being told by her friend that I was doing a PhD in the UK, she commented: ‘Ohhh, so what? Our youth also have all sorts of degrees, but what is it worth if they have no job?!’. Then she turned towards me and added: ‘To be honest I am surprised that youth are willing to study at all considering that when they finish they will not have a job’. This comment communicated that considering the socio-economic conditions, young Biščani were seen as victims of the time and place in which they were born. In that sense, this woman suggested that if they did not take any responsibility, it could be understandable, perhaps even expected. This was one way in which not taking responsibility for the collective was encouraged through social relations.

Another way was manifest through practices. Upon close observation I realized that pensioners (and the parents of the young people I knew) very often voted in a very similar manner as youth did, the only difference being that they hardly ever doubted their intention to vote in the first place. Most pensioners I conversed with saw voting as their duty, while the majority of school-leavers and students did not. This may well explain the extensive criticism of those young people who did not vote, while completely ignoring the numerous ways in which others did vote. Furthermore, as we have already seen, the older Biščani expected those younger to ‘contribute’ their votes to help family members and/or friends, or to use the elections as an opportunity to secure a job (even if only a short term one). It was within this context, which suggested that engagement with politics was non-intimate, that all sorts of intimate engagements emerged (e.g. Emina’s decision to give her vote to a party that helped her best friend’s father to keep his job, or to vote for money). Thus, two ways of how people engaged with politics were deeply intertwined.

**Intimate engagement with politics and private hopes**

*Ethnographic scene 18: voting among older Biščani*
It is September. The sun is shining on Bihać. I am in mjesna zajednica. As on many other days recently, a big proportion of the time is spent on discussing the elections. Today many people present are not familiar to me. They talk about whom they would vote for, but also about their perception of young people’s involvement in the coming elections.

**Esmir**: Our youth, they are the problem, they don’t vote. All they are interested is this, how it is called? (pause) this facebook, and to spend time in cafés.

**Vlado**: To tell you the truth, youth are the cleverest, they understood the situation here and they simply don’t vote. We are fools for voting despite nothing ever changing.

**Man y**: I still haven’t decided who am I going to vote for, I have to see.

**Man x**: We would all vote for Dodik\(^51\) if he secured us with pensions or younger people with jobs.

**Man z**: Do you know how things work here today? Let me tell you: in 1996 I had an accident, I was in a tractor, someone hit me with a car and then ran away. I fainted and when I woke up I found myself in a puddle. After some time, I found the person who hit me, so I sued him, three times, and every time I lost the trial. They managed to make me look guilty. This is only because the person who hit me had connections with someone from a very influential party. Not long ago I got hit again. This time I was crossing the street and this man was driving in reverse. I have decided not to sue him, what’s the point, I know how it is going to end.

**Vanja**: Do you think that something like this could have happened in the past, during the Yugoslav time?

**Man z**: No, I don’t think so, at least not this way. Look things were not perfect back then either, but there was only one party, Tito’s party, that made things simpler.

**Vanja**: So do you think that you will end up voting?

**Man z**: Yes, I will vote but I am not sure for whom yet. I know that it is not going to be for any of the ruling parties.

**Vanja**: I noticed that parties serve as job centres for young people. That’s how some parties get some votes from young people. Is there anything that pensioners get? I mean they clearly do not need jobs....

\(^{51}\) Milorad Dodik is the President of Republika Srpska (RS). He is a leader of a right wing nationalist party who aims at maximum independence of RS and aspires for ‘the transformation of this entity into a state-building subject’ (Sejfija 2013: 90). Because of his nationalist inclinations the relevance of the comment by man x lies in the fact that it would be very surprising if many people in Bihać indeed voted for Dodik.
Jasna: Well, parties may give money to mjesna zajednica, or to pensioners’ association. Also, just before the elections they organize parties, like big barbecues for everyone. Not all parties have money to do this, but eventually those who do get most votes.

A bit later a couple in their late 30s enters mjesna zajednica. She is pretty, but seems exhausted. He seems kind. She is a German language teacher and he is a criminologist, but they cannot find any work. Now they cannot pay the rent and the landlord asked them to leave. They have a son and they do not know what to do. They are here out of despair: they want to know if anyone in mjesna zajednica can help. Esmir tells them to meet him a bit later in a neighbouring café. It is clear that he has an idea, one which he wants to keep private, something the space in mjesna zajednica does not allow.

One day later...

Another sunny day. As I arrive I find Jasna alone making some food. She greets me with a big smile.

Jasna: Ahh, I was wondering when you would come. I was waiting for you so we could have a coffee together (starts preparing coffee).

After some time

Vanja: What happened with the couple that came by yesterday?

Jasna: Well, Esmir suggested they should join a certain party and that that way they may secure a job. She told him that she has been a member of ZABIH in the past 12 years and he has been a member of SDA52, but that did not help. Then Esmir encouraged them to join the ‘DNZ’53. But they were not very keen on that. I mean she said that perhaps she would do it, out of desperation, although a lot of her family died because of them, but her husband was

52 Short for Stranka demokratske akcije (Party of democratic action) in a Bosniak right wing national party.

53 Short for Demokratska narodna zajednica (Democratic people’s union). In order to understand the meaning of this conversation in mjesna zajednica some knowledge about the context within which it was held is necessary. The DNZ was founded in 1993 by Fikret Abdić, an influential politician from northwest Krajina who was convicted of war crimes in Croatia, and who at the time of my research served his prison sentence in Pula, Croatia. During the 1992-5 war the DNZ supported Abdić’s attempt to found an autonomous district in the northwest of BiH. In order to do so, Abdić’s troops - who were consisting mostly of Bosniaks and who aligned with the Army of Republika Srpska- came into conflict with the Army of BiH -which also mostly consisted of Bosniaks. This was ‘the only confrontation between military troops with nearly identical ethnic composition, which has particular repercussions on the process of reconciliation in that part of BiH’ (Sejfija 2013: 92). Because of this, the reputation of this political party (as well as of the northwest Krajina region -especially the town of Kladuša where its headquarters were located- where most of the battles between Abdić’s troops and the Army of BiH took place) was rather negative. Often, in an encounter with Biščani when the name of Fikret Abdić, DNZ party or Kladuša were brought up, they were followed by a derogatory or dismissing comment. For instance, when I said I was on my way to Kladuša, which happened a few times during my research period, people commented ‘Ohhh, you are going to autonomaši [people of the autonomy], often adding that during the war they were shooting at ‘us’ (Bosniaks) despite them all belonging to supposedly same ethnic group. Hence, when the young couple were advised by Esmir to join DNZ they were not very fond of the idea, and not only because according to what Jasna told me many family members of this women were killed in a combat with ‘autonomaši’, but also because people did not hurry to overtly make a bond with such a party.
against it. Then they said that they would join Dodik if he secured them with a job. You see that’s the thing, people do not care what you represent, they just want to live.

**Vanja:** It also seems to me that many pensioners change their opinions frequently or that they tell me one story, but act differently to the story they tell. For instance Esmir...

**Jasna:** (interrupts) Ahhh Esmir, he is for SDA, this is because his nephew is in the SDP and they have all sorts of family issues, so that’s why he does not want to support the SDP. Also, SDA helped his son (pause, raises her hand). Ahhh, family issues... He, like many others, wears a new coat every year [svake godine mijenja kaput].

**Vanja:** You said that you are going to work as an observer during the elections, what party is that for?

**Jasna:** DNZ. Look, perhaps I can sort out for you to work as an observer too. I think it could be really interesting for your work, to see how things work from the inside.

**Vanja:** Ok, how?

**Jasna:** I will call this woman who is in charge and give her your number. She will call you.  

**Vanja:** Ok, great. So did you ever before work for the elections?

**Jasna:** Yes, once I worked as an observer for HDZ. I hoped that that would give me some credit and that I could then perhaps apply for a Croatian passport. But it did not help.

As I have suggested, while people did not see a connection between what they did and what could happen on the collective level, the above scene illustrates how through intimate engagement with politics ‘ordinary’ people could work the system tactically for personal benefit, oriented toward short term goals. De Certeau (1997) differentiates between ‘tactics’ and ‘strategy’: tactics involve plans that are developed at the moment something is happening – a response to whatever is going on, and finding a way to deal with it. Strategy is more of a long-term plan, in which you think about what you want to achieve, and then

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54 Eventually I never got the job. Observers’ role was to make sure that during the elections everything happened ‘according to the book’. Every party was supposed to have number of representatives as observers that was relative to their size. This was done so that other parties’ representatives would not ‘cheat’ and assign some votes for their parties. Hence, those doing this role had to manifest loyalties to the parties they represented. On one occasion before the elections I received a phone call from a person who pretended to do a survey on the elections. In fact this person was a member of the DNZ. Later I learnt from Jasna that I failed my ‘loyalty’ test, hence was never assigned the role of the observer.

55 Short for *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* [Croat democratic union] is a Croat right wing party. It promotes the idea of a ‘third’ (Croat) entity in BiH (Sejfija 2013: 91).
work out a route to get there. So, in De Certeau’s sense, because in BiH there was no way to be strategic, many Biščani acted tactically. Intimate engagements encouraged one to act tactically and to reproduce the situation which they all complained about, but crucially, without acknowledging this. A general sense was that only a change on a small level for individuals, through personalized relations, was feasible. And while the actual change did not necessarily happen for many (even if they joined parties, or voted for particular individuals), a hope that it may happen affected how people acted (e.g. how they voted).

My conversation with Jasna, Esmir and others, illuminated how reallocation of political loyalty was shaped by one’s search for better opportunities in life and by interpersonal relations. The young couple did not share a political allegiance: they were members of different parties. They were both willing to shift this ‘allegiance’ and to join another party in search for a different, better, life, although within certain limits: they did not seem to be too keen to join ‘DNZ’. Older men were willing to vote for Dodik if he secured them with pensions, which perhaps suggested something on the limits of national ideology for everyday lives: as Jasna said ‘people just want to live’. Or Esmir, wanted to vote for SDA not only because they helped his son, but also because that is a rival party of SDP, a party in which his nephew is well-placed, and due to some ‘family issues’, to use Jasna’s words, he did not want to help him personally. Jasna, although not a Croat, nor nationalist, worked once for HDZ (the Croat right wing party) in the hope that they would help her secure a Croatian passport. Jasna had a good reason to have a Croatian passport: her only son and the only grand-daughter lived in Austria, but Jasna could not visit them without a visa and getting one was a complicated and expensive process. A Croatian passport would make travelling to Austria easier.

Other scholars have also discussed political participation involving an expectation of some sort of personal, often immediate, gain (Engelsen Ruud 2001; Jeffrey 2010). Working in a Bengali village, Engelsen Ruud looked at what seemed to be a clear paradox between how ‘ordinary’ villagers felt (embarrassment) and acted when it came to politics. On the one hand, they viewed politics (and politicians), just as many Biščani did, as shameful and morally dubious. On the other hand, they, as many of my interlocutors, actively participated in politics and supported politicians. Engelsen Ruud explained this paradox by suggesting that villagers understood politics to be about power and not about morality; thereby they had particular expectations from it. These expectations revolved around what could be gained through politics. So, suggested Engelsen Ruud, villagers were strategic players (2001: 120): through open reverence of particular politicians (often their
patrons) villagers exhibited submissiveness, and yet through private irreverence toward these same people they suggested that there was a strategy to their action: they clearly had expectations from that relationship (2001: 120-1). This also meant that sometimes villagers turned to another patron if they thought that that would be more profitable strategy. So, villagers’ embarrassment about being involved in something they considered to be ‘dirty’ was mitigated by seeing their involvement as strategic (2001: 122).

Just like the Bengali village, in BiH politics was not understood to be about morality (as Emina told me ‘What is he (her friend’s father) supposed to do, to act as a moral person among all those lacking morality?’), but about advancement of personal interests and (or through) social relations. This was expressed on numerous occasions during my fieldwork period. For instance, 22 year old student Elma’s parents tried to encourage her to join a party in which one of their relatives was already a member. Although they did not like what that party stood for, they nevertheless believed that Elma’s chances of finding a job were better if she were a member of a particular party, and to them, it only made sense that that party should be one in which she (or perhaps they) already had ties through kin relations. Or Emir’s family expected him to vote for SDU only because their relative was in that party. Or Džana, who hated the principles of the ZABiH party, nevertheless voted for them because they helped to secure her father’s job. The list could go on and on.

The reason I call this engagement with politics intimate has to do with a particular, rather individualised, relationship one could develop with a politician, which was not necessarily motivated by family concerns (even though as we saw it could be). This means that sometimes politicians were approached by individuals with very intimate problems, such as a gas bill, or an expensive and locally unavailable medical treatment (see also Brković 2012). Based on the ‘success’ of their request individuals acted. This is well expressed in following story recounted to me by Neno:

To be honest, I would not go out to vote if there were elections today, I would not give my vote to anyone, no one deserves it. Anyway, what’s the point of the elections? What do politicians do? They promise a lot, but in reality do little. Not long ago I listened to one of them saying (ridiculing while imitating) ‘we should stop crime, we should stop this, we should stop that’ and when you look at him, you can say that he is full of shit. (pause) Just wait for him to come to power, he will take everything, just like the others. Even Hamdija Lipovaća (at the time of my research the mayor of Bihać), who in my opinion is the best, did
a lot of bad things. He always talks about youth and how Bihać is in the hands of its young people, and how we should invest in the young people, but he does not invest in us. Listen to this: my friends and I wanted to go to Sarajevo to take part in the national competition of parkour. We did not have the means to get there, so we asked him (the mayor) for money to go to Sarajevo to participate in the competition. It is not like we asked for 5,000KM, we just wanted him to cover our travel expenses. I even found a driver, so we just needed some money for petrol and to rent a car, and just for one day. We went to his office and he promised that he would cover this for us. We were very happy, we did not go to school that day, we went to celebrate. A bit later I received a phone call from his office: his deputy said that Hamdija was sorry but that we could not have the money as there was a recession and the city was in a dire state. I was angry. I went to his office straight away. I did not knock on the door. I went in and simply asked ‘why not?’ He said that due to very complicated bureaucratic regulations they were not allowed to give more than 50 KM without proper papers. ‘Ok then’, I told him, ‘give me 49.99 KM’. He said that it was not how things worked. I was very angry and as I was leaving I said to him ‘you would never get a vote from me, not you, not the SDP (his party), not any other party or politician’. Eventually, my friends and I sold our mobiles so that we could afford a trip to Sarajevo. Next time if I go to a competition, I will represent only the city of Bihać, it will not have Hamdija’s name accompanying the name of the city’.

Not only did this scene suggest that if the mayor helped Neno, he would have voted for him, but also the way Neno talked about the mayor, as well as his expectations from him, were very intimate. Neno referred to the mayor by his first name, and not by his title, and, according to him, he entered his office without knocking. Within this engagement with politics a relationship created between people and politicians, or citizens and the state, appeared to be particular: very direct and informal. It is this directness which gave a sense of concreteness embedded in a relationship. Intimate engagement reproduced existing relations of power: most of the time it kept things and people in their place, making the situation in BiH seem unchangeable, while occasionally it also allowed individuals to get certain things done and to make their actions seem effective. The ‘success’ of this engagement, or its possibility to sustain itself, I argue, lay in its focus on the immediate

56 Parkour is a sport in which participants aim to move in a quick and flowing manner through an urban environment. The idea behind it that all physical obstacles are crossable through efficient planning.
future. In the temporal sense this meant that it allowed for a sense of very short term predictability and it encouraged private hopes. This was crucial as it entailed a sensation of effective action, even if only in the short run. But intimate engagement with politics was also made possible because of how politicians acted, and not only because of what ‘ordinary’ citizens expected from them. This is exemplified in the next scene:

Ethnographic scene 19: DOSTA

Mid-February, cold winter. The streets are covered with snow. I am attending a public forum organized by the movement DOSTA, DOSTA, which literally means ‘enough’, is a movement organized by citizens who hope to activate and mobilize fellow citizens in order to create citizens’ opposition that would deal with solving some of the most acute problems BiH experiences and which would manifest peoples’ dissatisfaction with the current state of socio-political affairs.

The forum is taking place in the Kulturni Centar [cultural centre]. It may seem symbolic that this public meeting is taking place here, where in what now seems to be a distant November 1942 the first meeting of AVNOJ [Anti-Fascist Council of the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia]57 took place. But it really is not. Most political tribunes, cultural events, festivals and so on, take place here. It is a matter of practicalities: a mixture of space availability and convenience.

The number of people that showed up for the tribune is unsurprisingly small. This does not pass unnoticed and as usual people make comments. Some try to comfort either themselves, or those present, maybe both - I am never quite sure - saying ‘malo nas je al smo jaki’ [we are a few but we are strong], while others make it explicit that this situation ‘is outrageous and very disappointing’.

Several presenters are on the stage: two city mayors - one of them Hamdija Lipovača, mayor of Bihać, the other Nermin Hajder, mayor of neighbouring Bosanski Petrovac; one OSCE [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] representative; and a few people from the movement DOSTA. They all present their views of the situation in BiH. While not all of them share similar views, youths’ lethargy and apathy seem to be mentioned in all of the speeches. Many of the questions posed, especially to the mayor of Bihać, were questions I thought to be concerning very personal and private issues. For instance, a woman wanted

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57 This meeting was a direct response to the Axis occupation during WWII. The Partisan leaders of Yugoslavia held this meeting in hope to gain political legitimacy. This and the second meetings of AVNOJ (held in another town in BiH, called Jujce) had a very important role in the Yugoslav history as well as in the creation of their inhabitant’s self image.
to discuss publicly with the mayor the injustice caused to her within the healthcare system, or a man wanting to discuss how the electricity company treated him unfairly. At first I found this somewhat strange, but then a question posed to the mayor by a young man put everything in perspective.

Young man: ...Also, I wanted to know why every time there is a change in this city, for instance if something new is built, or if refurbishments have been made, your name is put on it, a signature of a persona who made that change possible.

Mayor: (somewhat puzzled and surprised) What do you mean?

Young man: (quite sharply) Well, no matter what is being organized in the city, on the bottom of the poster promoting it, the signature always says Hamdija Lipovoča and the city of Bihać. I mean it makes it look as if you personally did it, whereas in reality all the changes are done by public funds.

Mayor: (clearly irritated by this question) Well, you do not expect me to put the names of all the people who contributed to these changes, do you? I mean the list could go on and on. This is how things are done everywhere in the world.

Young man: Well no, of course I do not expect to see a long list, but maybe it would be enough to write the city of Bihać and that’s it, there is no need to make it so personal.

Clearly, the politicians operated and represented their activities and themselves as omnipotent individuals who not only could but also should be approached for help when problems arose (see also Brković 2012). Hence no surprise that Neno went directly to the mayor’s office and asked for help. In that sense the mayor of Bihać, as all other politicians, or state representatives, was viewed as persona who had the power to turn certain hopes into reality. Their appearance in the open forums in which citizens were invited to raise and discuss their concerns perhaps served as a ‘hope generating machine’ (Nuijten 2003: chapter 7), which helped to sustain this image that some individuals were omnipotent and that they had the power to help all those other, powerless, un-identified citizens. According to Nuijten, every few years, when new elections would take place in Mexico, the state would introduce new programmes presented as tools to change the situation and reduce corruption. They came along with young and new officials who not only offered different ways in dealing with corruption, but also were enthusiastic about their execution. As such they raised hopes of officials and non officials alike.

The new ideas offered by the Mexican state enabled the generation of hope. This allowed a certain paradox to exist: while both officials and ejidatarios knew how things
worked in Mexico, they nevertheless hoped and believed in the ‘rationality of formal procedures’ (Nuijten 2003: 159). In that sense ‘the state’ was the hope-generating machine. This machine not only created possibilities to engage with ‘the state’, but it also defined how people, officials and ejidatarios alike, engaged with the future: it allowed them to see themselves as part of particular frameworks of hope in which everything seemed possible. So although in reality not much changed, there was a sense of possibility that things could change, and that made the whole difference.

Also through intimate engagement with politics some sense of hope was generated: private hope which most often concerned the immediate future. As in Mexico, people in Bihać also knew that their actions did not always result in a desired goal. For instance, when one joined a party, a bond between an individual and a party was created. The success of the outcome of that bond very often depended on whom one knew within the party and on the character of that relation. In other words, it was not enough just to join a party, but also to know ‘the right’ someone with already established relations and tight ties within that party. But that in itself was not enough either: the strength and the quality of the relationship one had with ‘the right’ someone also mattered. As one 23 year old man once told me: ‘It is not only about having connections, because there is always someone else whose connections are stronger’. What this meant was that all relations had the potential to create an unpredictable outcome, which could lead to a change in personal circumstances. Hence what really mattered was how fast the unpredictable became predictable. This was where the immediacy of the effect became crucial.

Let me put this into ethnographic context. Towards the end of my stay in Bihać, on several different occasions I met a young man, Emil. Emil lost both of his parents during the war. When I met him he worked seasonally, as a rafting skipper. Although his seasonal job was relatively well paid, and as he said, it was fun, Emil wanted a more secure income, not a seasonal one. Perhaps his aspiration was shaped by the fact that he did not have anyone to rely on financially and his livelihood depended on the money he earned. Emil told me that soon he might be joining the BiH army. I was curious to know what this soon involved and what he meant by might. He said he had connections, but he would not believe it until he saw it happening. This was because he had already mobilised his connections once, but then someone with stronger connections came along and got the position he was promised. At the time of our conversation he did not know how long it would take to know whether this time his connections would be effective or not. Last time I
got some information about Emil, from a mutual friend, he was not in the army. Emil was left to wait and see what would happen later. His inability to predict what would happen relatively quickly, affected his action in the present: he is still employed only seasonally, and his daily routine, which involved drinking in cafés, has not changed much.

As we already saw, in contrast to this story, the promise by Emir’s relative, to secure him with a pre-election job if he voted for the party he was a member of due to the election’s fast approaching date, was meant to resolve itself quickly. It was a matter of days when Emir would know whether he would or would not get the promised job. This meant that Emir’s ability to predict, relatively soon, what was about to happen affected his action (as he said he would definitely vote for that relative if he secured him a job, alternatively he would ‘have to see’).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I showed how Biščani’s engagement with politics was shaped both by their understanding that the time and place in which they lived was somehow ‘wrong’, and by interpersonal relations. *Non-intimate* engagement with politics suggested that young people’s expectations from the collective were understood as being *one-way-traffic*: it was the responsibility of the collective (the state, the society) to provide them with what they considered to be their rights. However, this expectation went hand-in-hand with a resignation that the BiH state (or the society or the collective) did not do its job. This was most clearly expressed in numerous complaints about politicians, their parties, and the prevailing nepotism and corruption in political circles.

At the same time, many young people did not think that their acts could possibly affect the collective and its future, hence they did not feel responsible for it. *Intimate* engagement with politics added to this: whilst the state was expected, though unable or unwilling, to take care of the collective, at times, some of its representatives were seen as those who had the power to take care of individual citizens. In response to this, some individuals felt relative responsibility toward particular state representatives. This responsibility was motivated by social (such as kin, or friends) or individualised (not motivated by family concerns) relations, but also, and crucially, by an estimation of how fast a particular action would bring about an outcome. So, without acknowledging it, young Biščani also participated in *two-way-traffic* through which the socio-political future of BiH and the existing power relations were remade and sustained.
I also suggested that individuals’ engagement with politics was further informed by *dated hope*. In this chapter, this was expressed through hope associated with the general elections, as it was through them that both political elites and ‘ordinary’ citizens engaged with dated future. In the opening scene of this chapter I suggested one way in which the political elites did so: through the use of propaganda (be it by NGOs who were sponsored by international funds, or by local politicians), the 3rd of October 2010 has become a meaningful date that was supposed to alter the social and personal lives of BiH citizens, but *only if* they played their part in the electoral process (hence in democracy). In that sense, as was the case in previous elections (see Coles 2007), slogans developed especially for the elections ‘expanded on the basic definition of election as choice by linking choice to agency, decision making, change, and the future’ (Coles 2007: 21).

Furthermore, many of my friends and acquaintances in Bihać, older and younger alike, who seemed only sceptical about the realization of changes the elections promised to bring about, had some personal expectations of this particular day. And, as Emina’s story illustrated, now and again they directly participated in the very making of these expectations. By doing so, the sceptics and the cynics, in fact, invested particular hope in a dated future: that is *dated hope*. As a result, ‘ordinary’ people and those in power contributed towards the experience that ‘waiting is hoping’, or perhaps that waiting is *dated* hoping. In the following chapter I show how waiting for something to be resolved, before anything else could happen, contributed to the very sense of being stuck.
‘This is Bosnia’

Ivana’s view: ...means that ‘although in this place the situation appears as not normal, is nothing like that. These have been the conditions in Bosnia since ever. Being located between east and west it is a place for which no one really cares. It is a place which is falling apart from within. It is a place in which everyone is selfish, minding her/his own business, hence the corruption, hence the evilness, hence the melancholy.

Chapter 5

Understanding future perspectives in a place called Bosnia

Image 4: photography project made by Amna

Ethnographic scene 20: Amna on her final project

It is mid April 2010, it is a pleasant evening. In the room normally used by an NGO called Novi Put [New Path], or by the association for blind persons, we have one of our final workshops. Despite its fairly big size, the room’s space is filled with smoke. Windows are
open but it does not help. My clothes will stink again. We all sit around two big tables we had put together. I am trying to encourage all those present to think and talk about possible photography or film projects for the exhibition we would like to organize. Some of them are sceptical and distrustful about the actual exhibition, asking me whether the exhibition is really going to take place. I am used to this by now: many young people do not seem to believe that one’s action aimed at a relatively distant future can actually result in anything concrete, such as a display of their works. I have also gotten used to repeating the same -by now- worn out answer: if they want it to happen it will, all they have to do is create a project.

Half way through the conversation:

Vanja: (referring to Amna) Did you think about a project? What would you like to do?

Amna: (hesitantly) Hmmmm I don’t know.

Vanja: You remember we talked once and you said that maybe you could do something about your grandmother going to Slovenia?

Amna: (unsure) Yes, maybe, but what can I do about it? And how can I do it?

Vanja: (referring to the rest of the group) Ok, how can we help Amna to come up with an idea, any suggestions?

Amna: (adding to what I have said in order to show the difficulty she encountered) How can I make photographs of her going to Slovenia? No chance. She is a bit here and a bit there, and that is constant.

Emira: (joining the conversation) Who is it that are we talking about, your grandmother?

Amna: Yes.

Vanja: (trying to get the attention of the whole group) So let’s think, how would it be possible to make a project of Amna grandmother’s movement across the border?

Amna: (again trying to emphasize her difficulty) But I can’t go with her, how can I photograph her if I can’t go?

Emira: Maybe you can have a photograph of yourself and your grandmother, and a car leaving towards the border crossing.

While I am trying to encourage Amna to think productively of how to deal with a difficulty she encountered, the air, in addition to smoke, is getting filled with many other conversations.
and giggles, unrelated to the main discussion. Adi, Momo and Neno are not really paying attention to what is being said. They seem bored with the idea of border crossing. Emira, although occasionally contributing to the conversation, is with us only partially.

**Vanja:** What happened to all of you today, why are you all so hyperactive? Adi, did you smoke again?

(Adi giggles but does not reply).

**Emira:** I am always like this. I think I had too many coffees today.

**Amna:** (laughs) How many did you have?

**Emira:** (silently counts with her fingers) I had one in the morning, then one in the noon, and then I had a cappuccino when I got home.

**Amna:** I had two coffees.

**Vanja:** (trying to get them to talk about their final projects) Ok, shall we go on with our conversation?

**Azra:** Amna, you can include your grandmother, a Bosnian passport, and maybe a passport of the EU, make something out of it.

**Amna:** But I don’t know when she is next going to go to Slovenia.

**Vanja:** How about your grandfather?

**Amna:** He goes all the time.

**Vanja:** Ok, so you can also focus on him if you prefer. Take a few days to think about it, and then we will talk again. Maybe, if that’s what you want, we can start working on it. Alternatively, you should start thinking about another project. (turning to Azra) Ok, Azra, how about you? Do you have any ideas for your project....

***

A few weeks later.

After some thought Amna found a way. In the black and white photographs opening this chapter she shows her grandmother leaving BiH for Slovenia, a place where she regularly spends time with her husband and three of their four children who live and work there. Her husband has been living and working in Slovenia since the 1960s. Although most of Amna’s family lives in Slovenia, neither her parents, siblings nor herself can go there without visas.
Before the war though, and before Amna and her siblings were born, her parents used to live there too. When the war started they decided to return to BiH. It was this decision that shaped their current movements and possibilities.

Relatively recent changes in borders, and what it meant for young people’s everyday lives and potential futures, was what interested me most when I chose to work in the border town of Bihać. Unsurprisingly, I was yearning for moments in which people talked about, or, even briefly mentioned, borders. But that did not happen. At least, not as often as I hoped, nor in ways I had hoped it would emerge. To put it bluntly, upon my arrival in Bihać, I expected people to talk about clearly defined borders, in quite direct ways. I thought, for example, that people would wonder what would happen with them, when and if Croatia entered the EU: after all, many of them frequently crossed the border between BiH and Croatia. Or, in December 2009, when citizens of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia secured visa free travel to the EU, leaving BiH ‘behind only with Albania’\(^{58}\), I had strong expectations that this would be a widely discussed theme: I thought that people would feel some sense of unfairness, especially considering the rhetoric of recent violence. In short, I imagined that people would talk about borders in a way that would revolve around their (in)ability to move.

Many young people in Bihać experienced the current state borders as a consequence of forces that were greater than any individual or group (see also Green 2005: 7), a matter one could do nothing about (see ethnographic scene 16). Hence, any discussion about borders seemed futile to them. This, of course, is not to suggest that borders did not matter, quite the contrary. Over time, how borders powerfully mattered surfaced in numerous ways. Many young Krajišnici (people living in Krajina) understood Krajina borders as having entrapping characteristics, and not necessarily in terms of movement, but rather in terms of what it meant about the future and about the past. Let me explain.

\(^{58}\) While young Biščani did not discuss this as I expected they would, in the media an opportunity to comment on this event was not missed. On 19/12/2009 the local news presented the BiH society as a ‘sick society’ [bolesno društvo] and it suggested that ‘now BiH is left behind only with the Albanians, and that says a lot’. What exactly it said was simply assumed, but by all means it was supposed to imply how BiH citizens should feel something negative about their place in the world.
Amna’s experience, presented through her project, was not unique in any sense: most young Biščani had at least one close relative/friend for whom travelling to the EU countries was not an obstacle. Present movements across borders were shaped by past decisions as well as by the economic and socio-political circumstances that have been encompassing Krajina in the past few decades. As a consequence, many of Krajina’s inhabitants held double citizenship. There was a reasonably large group of people, for example, who managed to obtain a Croatian citizenship straight after the 1992-5 BiH war. People were able to do so in numerous, and often ambiguous, ways. One way, for instance, was conveyed through stories implying connections between one’s ethnic declarations during Yugoslavia and post 1992-95 war, and one's ability to obtain a Croatian citizenship. In other words, if one declared themselves to be Croat in the past, in BiH post 1992-95 war, one had greater chances of getting a Croatian passport. This is not to suggest that only those who were ethnically Croats were able to obtain the Croatian citizenship: I met people who at the time of my research ethnically defined themselves as Croats, but because they did not declare as Croats a few decades back, could not get a Croatian passport; or I met people who presently identified themselves as Bosniaks, but who declared as Croats during Yugoslavia, and who now held Croatian citizenship. This also meant that there were families in which only some members held Croatian citizenship. In any case, I met many people in Bihać, regardless of their ethnicity, who as Croat citizens, (albeit within certain limits and in relation to EU regulations) were entitled to relatively simple movement within the EU space.

So although many young people in Krajina, such as Amna, were unable to travel in Europe and other places due to the strict visa regime, for many others the feelings of entrapment did not evolve in relation to movement per se. Instead, a sense of entrapment related to one’s feeling of the place they had in this world, and how historically they understood this place; always in relation to other places (see Green 2005; Gupta & Ferguson 1997, 1999; Massey 1992, 2005; Soguk 2008). Ivana, one of Amna’s peers, for instance, had Croatian citizenship and could have easily had a Croatian passport issued. Despite this, Ivana often talked about being ‘stuck’ in Bihać and in BiH. It is this sense of ‘stuckedness’ that once prompted her to explain that she felt ‘like you are somewhere, but you don’t know where, and you know you would like to do something, but you don’t know how, and that is why we need something else’. Ivana told me that this feeling was a consequence of her location (she used ‘our location’ and sometimes it clearly related to
BiH, at other times to the Krajina region, and yet at other times it was not quite clear). ‘We were always located in-between places’, she said, ‘we always belonged to everyone and yet to no one, not even to ourselves’.

This particular feeling of location was, in itself, a consequence of various unresolved conflicts among political powers. Ivana continued: ‘Romans, Illyrians, Slavs, the surrounding Croatian, Hungarian and Serbian lords - either directly through imperial domination or indirectly through diplomacy - influenced and tailored conditions and possibilities in Bosnia. People living in Bosnia always had to re-adjust all over again, and the borders were in constant danger’. What Ivana’s words meant was that she felt unable to control or influence what might happen next because of what she understood to be Bosnia’s ‘specific history’. This is where, to her, all the ‘answers to its present circumstance were’. At the same time though, she had some expectation of what might happen next based on her narrative, history was repeating itself. However, that which was replicated was the feeling that one had to wait for something to be resolved before anything else could happen. So there was a combined sense of ability to know and not to know what would happen next. This strengthened the feeling of entrapment, while also being produced by it. For many young people the future was predictable, but in unpredictable ways; a point I will return to.

In this chapter I deal with my interlocutors’ understandings of the Krajina region as a particular location in this world, and I argue that this location (Krajina) projected very different possibilities for its inhabitants and especially for its young people during Yugoslavia and during BiH. In her inspiring article *Reciting the Future*, Green (2012), using ethnographic research from two different historical periods - the 1990s and the 2000s - and two different border settings - the Greek-Albanian border in Epirus and the Greek-Turkish border in the north Aegean - suggested that a comparison between these two locations demonstrated ‘that the specific historical moment and the different iconic significance of the two border regions mattered considerably in people’s speculations about what might happen next’ (2012: 111).

According to Green, people in these regions redefined and relocated borders through - what she identified as being - two kinds of widespread modes of talking. One of these modes Green calls recitations. Recitations were based on ideas and stereotypes, which never necessarily occurred, or at least not how they were imagined or discussed, but
which nevertheless had a significant impact on how people envisaged their futures. These recitations were less spatially and temporarily particular (2012: 119). But there was another mode of talk in the Pogoni and in the Aegean, which was more spatially and temporarily particular, and which was much more mundane, consisting of people’s personal and particular experiences. The focus in this talk was ‘on what happened, on the event, and not so much what it represents’ (Green 2012: 118). In these mundane stories there was not necessarily repetition, but sometimes some stories were told by many so that they became somewhat repetitious.

In what follows I show how the sense of Krajina’s location was expressed through these two main, and not entirely separated, modes of narration. I propose that in addition to the historical moment and iconic significance (Green 2012) what mattered in how people speculated about what may happen next, and hence how they understood their future perspectives, was a ‘vital conjuncture’. While young people clearly were at a ‘vital conjuncture’, most of my older interlocutors, at the time of my research, were not. At least not in Johnson-Hanks’ sense; most of them were not facing anything where ‘more than usual’ was in play (2002: 871). However, in contrast to my young co-conversationalists, they had much more personal experience to look back upon. I suggest that because of differences in ‘richness’ of personal experience and different positioning in relation to the future and the past, how young and older Biščani understood their place in the world and what awaited them was different.

But they were also similar; presently, they all felt stuck. I explore how people’s sense of place was shaped by power relations of a particular time and how it worked: what it did for Biščani in terms of self-understanding, and, especially towards the end, in terms of imaginings and speculations of personal and collective futures. I argue that while for young Biščani the feeling of where they were was a product of a sense of entrapment and isolation, for older Biščani the feeling of their location at times was a product of entrapment and isolation, but at other times it was a product of a sense of possibility, connectedness and a positively defined place in this world. Thus, how younger and older Biščani felt belonging in Bihać and in Krajina, and how this defined their sense of locality (see also Smith 2012: 55) was different.

Biščani’s understandings of locality were central in how they understood their future life chances (see also Gardner 1993: 5). As I show below, different experiences of
location did not derive from different understandings of history - as was the case among different ethnic groups driven by nationalist rhetoric in Mostar (Palmberger 2010: 140-173) or Istria (Ballinger 2003). Rather, due to dissimilar life experiences evolving under different contexts, my younger and older interlocutors considered different territories as part of their temporal and spatial horizons and they also extracted different meanings from the surrounding landscape. This is not to suggest that younger Biščani, in relation to older Biščani, talked differently about the same historical events, but rather that they did not talk about them at all. Often, this resulted in mobilization of different landscape features in narratives of older and younger Biščani. Since the surrounding landscape played a significant role in how people understood their place in the world, in the following scene I try to put into words a simple and, for some people, everyday journey through the Krajina landscape.

**Through the Krajina landscape**

*Ethnographic scene 21: Krajina*

*It is Saturday morning, 10:30 am, May 2010. A beautiful bright day. I am on my way to meet Amna in her hometown, Bosanska Krupa, so I can help her with the photography project. Most of her week Amna spends in Bihać, where she boards in a high school. The reason Amna is in a boarding school during the week is that the only art high school in the Una Sana canton USK was located in Bihać. As her parents did not want her to travel on a daily basis from her home town to the school in Bihać, she spends time in the boarding school during the week. Over the weekends and holidays Amna is back with her parents in Bosanska Krupa. That is also where her grandmother spends most of her time.*

*I begin my journey from my little house next to the Una river. Shortly, I pass by the remains of the old Bihać fortress. Many years ago, in the 16th century, when the Ottomans conquered parts to the southwest as well as to the northwest of Bihać, a great part of the Krajina region (Bihačka Krajina) was surrounded (Lopašić 1890: 19). Many years later, in 1592, after a considerable struggle, Bihać was also (and finally) conquered by the Ottoman forces led by Hasan-Pasha Predojević (Franjić 1999: 161-2). According to the historian Franjić, on July 13th the newly appointed captain, Lamberg, of the Habsburg army, asked all those within the city walls, many of whom were born Biščani, to give a pledge that they would protect the city. Many did indeed swear that they would live and fall together (Franjić 1999: 162).*

*The conquest of Bihać occurred more than one hundred years after the first parts of today’s Bosnia fell to the Ottomans (1463), and is considered by historians (Franjić 1999:167;*
Smajić 2009: 65), archaeologists (Carlton & Rushworth 2009: x), and by locals to be the final fall of the region today known as Bosanska Krajina (Bosnian Borderland). Most people I talk to about this episode in history take pride in this fact: in their eyes the ability of Biščani to hold out for so long says something about the type of people they are today, about their heroic character (see also Lopašić 1890: 2), one which has come to be identified by some as ‘Krajiški identitet [identity]’ (Mulaosmanović 2009: 139) or ‘Krajiški duh [spirit]’ (Smajić 2009: 8).

As I drive northeast toward Bosanska Krupa I compete with the Una, the river known for its deep crystal blue/green colours. The Una is faster. I am thankful for the meandering road: although more difficult to drive, it makes me slow down. I enjoy the surrounding beauty of the Una canyon. About 14 km northeast of Bihać, I pass near what remains of Ostrožac castle. It is situated on a gentle incline, on the left bank of the Una river. Before it was turned into a castle, it used to be a fort. Like numerous other forts and watchtowers located in the Krajina region, such as the Bihać fort, its main purpose was protection: first against the Ottomans, then against the Habsburg Monarchy. After a few unsuccessful attempts to conquer Ostrožac, the Ottoman forces finally managed to do so in 1577/8 (Lopašić 1890: 21). Many died; those who managed to flee went to the Bihać fort, as at the time it was still in the hands of Habsburgs.

As I follow the winding course of the road I cut across the Una railway. Although fairly straight, it endeavours to follow the river, hence its name. Unlike the river, the railway, once rhythmically connecting places through constant movements of peoples and goods, now rarely sees movement. And yet, every time I need to drive over it, I stop, looking left and right, for maybe a train will appear behind the curve. I am driving not too far from the BiH - Croatia border. Both, the railway and the river, unknowingly and without documents, cross this state border seven times. However, while the recent geopolitical transformations did not stop the river's flow, they did largely halt the trains’.

Based on what I read in the history books I try to imagine how this landscape looked 400 years ago. The railway, for instance, was not there. Nor were the houses built in the socialist or labour migrant style. I wonder about Una’s appearance, how different was it? The forts, not their ruins, were fully functioning, ready to serve their main duty: in this whole region of today’s Western Bosnia bordering with Croatia (Carlton & Rushworth 2009: x; Franjić 1999; Lopašić 1890; Smajić 2009). Presumably, for those in centres of power, the region I drive through was a protection zone; it was there that battles should be fought, so that they did not reach too far inward (see Lopašić 1890: 23-27). For the inhabitants of the protection zone, on both Ottoman and Habsburg sides, this has been an area of constant struggle,
poverty and fear (Franjić 1999:168; Lopašić 1890: 20; Mulaosmanović 2008: 214), but also of economic (Smajić 2009: 25; Lopašić 1890: 19), and probably some other opportunities. In the eyes of many Biščani this region was the meeting point of two empires and it was in this area that their power relations were constantly negotiated, while at the same time forming it, through wars, frequent movements of people, and through particular ways of building and being.

Some other historical documents suggest that many years later, at the end of the 19th century, this landscape looked quite different once more. At the end of the 19th century, the construction of the Adriatic ports created the need for a new route that would be shorter and safer to transport goods and passengers through than the existing Lika railway (in today's Croatia), which due to its adverse tilts was relatively insecure (Mulaosmanović 2008: 212). Unlike at the time when the two great empires, Ottoman and Habsburg, negotiated their power relations, Krajina, now fully under Austro-Hungarian rule, was not a border zone anymore.

Despite the name, its landscape, shaped by different power relations, different movements and different ways of being, obtained a new meaning: that of connection. This connecting character was most explicit in the building of the Una railway whose primary target was economic, connecting Zagreb, the capital of today's Croatia, but also other towns in the region, with the Adriatic ports. The actual building of the railway was initiated in 1936, during the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Due to various complications, including the outbreak of the WWII, the railway remained unfinished when it finally started functioning in 1948, in Socialist Yugoslavia (Mulaosmanović 2008: 212). According to historians, it was the connecting characteristics of the Una railway which opened the possibility for faster development of Bihać and Krajina (Mulaosmanović 2008: 212).

After about half an hour's drive, I arrive in Bosanska Krupa and park next to a small building built in the socialist style. It is still called Robna Kuća [Department Store] as that was its service during Yugoslav times. Today it is a supermarket. I ring Amna. She arrives within two minutes. We drive to her grandmother's place. She lives nearby but we have to loop round in order to get there by car. We pass by the most central part of Bosanska Krupa where remains of another old fortress are located. In 1565, 448 years ago, just around this time, 11:00 AM, people inhabiting the fort were trying, unsuccessfully, with their last efforts to defend it from the Ottomans (Lopašić 1890: 216). Amna draws my attention to two local churches and the mosque, located only a few meters apart from each other. She tells me that their teacher once told them that having two different churches (catholic and orthodox) and a mosque within such a small space was unusual, not to be found in many places.

Finally, here we are, in front of Amna's grandmother's place. I soon learn that this large green-yellowish building is composed of two semi-detached houses, each one containing
three levels, each level encompassing a kitchen, a living room, a toilet, and, at least, one bedroom. On various occasions I have been told that many of these big houses belonged to people who spent many years working outside of BiH. Some of them, like Amna’s grandfather, still work there. While many went to places outside Yugoslavia, Amna’s grandfather, when he was a 19-year-old man, went to Slovenia. His wife stayed behind in Bosnia for some time, before finally joining him.

In addition to working in Slovenia many Krajišnici, like others from various parts of Yugoslavia from the 1960s onwards, started to work as guest-workers (Gastarbeiter) in Germany, Austria and elsewhere. Many guest-workers prior to the war considered these new environments to be no more than working places that enabled them to financially secure their futures in Yugoslavia (see also Erdei 2010: 119). However, with the fall of Yugoslavia and the resulting wars, their relation to these places changed as they became the only locations in which they felt they could secure their and their children’s futures. While many built their nests in Germany, Austria, or Slovenia some, mostly older people, decided to return to BiH. Amna’s grandmother commutes between here and there, but she tells me that she prefers here to there. In either case, because of her Slovenian citizenship, unlike Amna, she can travel freely. This fact serves as a main trigger for Amna’s idea for her project.

The where of Krajina

As the Krajina landscape was unfolding in front of my eyes its splendours, its tales, its complexities, I thought about the local histories I had read prior to my journey. In their own ways they all suggested that throughout history, Krajina as a borderland linked and connected, as much as it separated and disconnected. The reappearance and disappearance of the borders as a consequence of a shifting mélange of political, socio-cultural, administrative and economic interventions has left traces on Krajina’s landscape, as Ivana said ‘since time immemorial’ (see also Smajić 2009). Many ethnographies have shown that all borders had histories and were ongoing constructions (see also Berdhal 1999; Green 1998; 2005, 2012; Pelkmans 2006; Sturgeon 2004), and how their presence played an important part in local narratives of (not) belonging; even more so if the borders in question were viewed as borderlands over a long period of time. For instance, Berdahl (1999) remarked that Kella, a village located in East Germany, had been situated on a boundary line which had separated East and West, Prussia and Hesse, Hesse and Thuringia, Catholic and Protestant over the past 200 years. It was these multiple boundaries that were very important in narratives of belonging of the people in Kella.
Borders also played a major role in how people in Krajina viewed themselves and how they felt (not) belonging in the region. Krajina literally means borderland.\(^{59}\) Hence, unsurprisingly, Krajišnici thought of themselves as people of the border (cf. Gray 1999: 440). However, where Krajina exactly was, and hence, who the ‘true’ Krajišnici exactly were, was not always very clear in the conversations I had (cf. Smajić 2009: 13). Clearly, Krajina was understood to be much more than just a ‘geographical referents’ (Gardner 1993: 1). On one occasion, one pensioner told me that if I asked ten different people about what and where Krajina was, I would get ten different answers. Different understandings of Krajina’s location meant that people placed Krajina between and within relations, which as I show, at times were understood differently by older and younger Biščani.

*The where of Krajina: older people’s view*

I first noticed the ambiguity and complexity of where older people understood Krajina to be (located) one sunny spring day when I went to the local library to read on the history of Bihać and Krajina. It was not the books that perplexed me; most books aimed, not always successfully, to allocate quite clear and precise geographical boundaries to Krajina (see Smajić 2009: 11). Yet during a short exchange with the librarian I told her about my interests and she commented: ‘For you people (referring to me as a representative of people coming from Sarajevo, but also more broadly from eastern Bosnia) we are all Krajina. You also think that Bihać is Krajina. But the real Krajina is up north: it is Cazin, Kladuša, Bužim and that part over there’. I was confused. What did she mean? Of course I thought of Bihać as Krajina. But this was only because I have been told so, not only by maps, by books, by Sarajlije (people from Sarajevo), but also, and most importantly, by younger Biščani with whom, until that period, I spent most of my time. They never seemed to doubt that they were Krajišnici. After my visit to the local library I began asking older Biščani where Krajina was. As the following scene illustrates their answers revealed multiple locations of this borderland.

*Ethnographic scene 22: on Krajina*

\(^{59}\) For other meanings of Krajina see Smajić (2009: 13).
August 2010, hot summer's day. Having already been to mjesna zajednica once this morning, now I am here for the second time. Some older people come at specific times, and if I want to talk to them I need to adjust my schedule to match theirs. Esmir or Ramiz, for instance always come around lunch time: Ramiz when he finishes his volunteering in Merhamet, while Esmir prefers to have an easy morning. As I enter I greet everyone. Two men I don’t know sit at the same table as Esmir. Around the second table sit Ramiz and Huso. I learn that one of the men I do not know is from Cazin, a centre of what the librarian considered to be the ‘real Krajina’. I notice that again they are talking about sex. This happened before. Normally Jasna and I don’t take part in these conversations, but we cannot pretend that we do not hear them. And while most of the time we dislike what we hear, between ourselves, we cannot avoid laughing at its content. Eventually, when in Jasna’s eyes the conversation becomes too inappropriate, she tries to stop them. She did that this time too.

Huso: (smiling) But that is the way we Krajišnici are [takvi smo mi Krajišnici]: when we start talking about sex, there is no end to it.

I seize this comment as an opportunity to find out more about how people understand Krajina and ultimately what it means to be Krajišnik.

Vanja: So where is Krajina? I mean what’s geographically considered to be Krajina?

Ramiz: (moving his arms while talking) The real Krajina, that’s from before, is all the way to Banja Luka, including Banja Luka. These are its original borders, but now, I don’t know...

(Huso seems to agree with Ramiz)

A man from Cazin: The real Krajina is up north, around Cazin and Kladuša. People there are different and their mentality is different.

Vanja: Different to here?

A man from Cazin: Yes.

Esmir: (adding as if to explain better) They love you and look after you, but they can also kill you...

A man from Cazin: (interrupts to correct Esmir) No, no one will touch a stranger. Only locals between themselves can fight. But they would also die for you.

Esmir: You know Krajina is famous for its rebellious inhabitants, for instance there was the famous Cazin uprising (in 1950 against the communist government), no one else rebelled in the whole of Yugoslavia. (then adding somewhat proudly) Or did you know that Bihać was the last to fall to the Ottoman rule?

The others also add their opinions of where Krajina is, which eventually all suggest that its
location is somewhat vague.

**Huso:** (A few minutes into the conversation) That Krajina, up there, is also known as a place of trade and smuggling.

**Jasna:** Yeah that’s true, most of the people that worked in Germany, Austria, and other places since the 1960s were actually from that Krajina. They would always give or sell working warrants to their own kin or friends.

**Vanja:** What do you mean? What warranties?

**Jasna:** (Jasna by now got into a habit of explaining things to me that did not seem clear, so she does that now too) The way it worked was that people from here who wanted to work in let’s say Germany needed a warrant. These warrants were supplied by the German firms or factories. So how would they get people? Let’s say I already worked in Germany, and my boss would come and ask me if I knew anyone else who needed a job. He could issue maybe 50 warrants and I would go back and find people. But of course everyone was either giving warranties to their own kin or they would sell them.

**Vanja:** Interesting, I did not know that...

After some time I share with them my observation that many Biščani did not like Sarajevo, nor Sarajlije. I want to know why.

**A man from Cazin and Jasna together:** No, it is not true that we don’t like Sarajlije.

**Esmir:** We do like them, in the past all the best things were considered to be coming from Sarajevo.

**Vanja:** But people constantly tell me that they do not like Sarajevo. I mean ...

**Esmir:** Look, they don’t like politicians. And the political centre is in Sarajevo. If you look at it there are no people in high politics that are from Krajina. This also means that all the money goes to Sarajevo, and there is no investment in Bihać or Krajina. But also, you know for us Sarajevo is too eastern now, all these covered women. People are too Muslim there, we are more oriented towards Zagreb, we are more liberal.

**Huso:** But also they think of all Krajina as autonomaši. In fact they don’t like us, not the other way round.

**Vanja:** I have heard that from quite a few people in Bihać, I mean a lot of people have this image that Sarajlije do not like them, but I wonder what makes you think that. Every time I go to Sarajevo and I talk to people and I tell them that now I live in Bihać, I hear only good things about Bihać.

No one comments on my remark.
More than once, older people told me that the ‘real’ geographical extent of Krajina reached Banja Luka, and in fact had it as its largest city and its historical and cultural centre. However, since the end of the latest war Banja Luka was in RS, or on the ‘other side’ of the IEBL (Inter-Entity-Boundary-Line). It seemed that at times it was unclear to the older people how they should think of Krajina, and whether Banja Luka, which now appeared relocated, was still part of it, or just connected to it by way of historical legacy. So while sometimes they seemed to have had a clear image of the geographical boundaries of Krajina, at other times they suggested that what they considered to be ‘real’ Krajina was clearly changing. Yet, other narratives supported what the librarian told me, for they referred to real ‘real’ Krajina as a relatively small geographical area north of Bihać which included the towns of Cazin, Bužim, and Kladuša, and whose inhabitants were seen to have a very belligerent character.

Understandings of where Krajina was were further complicated by stories I occasionally heard that historically connected Bihać and its surroundings with the geographical area of Lika, located in today’s Croatia. Safet, for instance, an 83 year old pensioner, once told me that the ancestors of today’s Biščani’s originated from Lika, as once ‘it was all connected’. According to him, Lika was under the Ottoman rule for about two centuries and at that time many Christians converted to Islam. However, after the Peace of Karlowitz (1699) some changes occurred. This peace agreement relocated the borders between the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, and consequently it forced many members of the Muslim population who were unwilling to change their religious views to migrate (see also Lopašić 1890: 9). So, not only did the narratives by older Biščani suggest that Krajina’s location was far from straightforward, but they also contributed to the very process of border relocation (see Green 2012).

The where of Krajina: younger people’s view

Young Biščani’s views of where Krajina was seemed simpler. In a very practical geographical sense, I hardly ever noticed any ambiguities in terms of its geographical extent: when they talked of Krajina, young people talked about USK (Una Sana Canton). So their understanding of Krajina’s geographical reach was delineated by a relatively recent event: the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995), which created this canton within FBiH entity. To them, Banja Luka, having been assigned to the entity of RS, was not part of Krajina, and most did not discuss it as if it ever were. For most young Biščani, Krajina,
understood as USK, was located between two recently created borders: a state border with Croatia and an entity border. Crossing the first required bureaucracy, for it was crossable only by those having the right documents. While there were no check points on the latter, it had a deeply national meaning for many, and in that sense, it shaped not only their practices, but also how they felt in relation to it (see Jansen 2013). So, unlike for older people, Krajina’s geographical extent in the eyes of young Biščani seemed clearly defined.

Moving beyond its geographical extent, however, young people also occasionally referred to Krajišnici from ‘the north’ to be somehow different in character to them. Thus, without necessarily phrasing it as such, in their eyes too, there was a difference in terms of the location of ‘real’ Krajina. In a similar manner to my older interlocutors, they also called the northern part of Krajina, ‘ljuta’ Krajina [angry Krajina], and they also associated its inhabitants with belligerence. Upon my return to Manchester in early 2011, I had a Skype chat with Nikola, 22 year old Biščanin who was studying in Mostar (city in Herzegovina). I told him about some of my observations from my year in Bihać and especially in relation to Krajina and Krajišnici. I disagreed with him that Krajišnici were belligerent, suggesting that these were only stereotypes. Nikola, who very proudly identified as Krajišnik, told me the following story:

*I also thought that these were mere stereotypes, but then something happened that changed my mind. When I was in my first year at the university, a craftsman came to put up a new blackboard. Anyway, he needed a knife. And then he turned to the students and said: ‘I have heard that there are many Krajišnici here, could I borrow a knife from one of you?’*. Soon enough five guys took out their knives and handed it to the craftsman. I was totally shocked. Later I learnt that they were from Bužim, Kladuša or Cazin. So although we are all Krajišnici, in some sense we are different to them. I do consider myself Krajišnik, the mentality of Biščani is much more similar to Krajina mentality than to, let’s say, Sarajevo mentality. But we (Biščani) are milder. They (‘angry’ Krajišnici) tend to do things out of spite [iz inata], and they are quite belligerent [ratoborni] and defiant. It is not unusual for them to start shooting at each other at, let’s say, a wedding. Also, they are very nationalistic, whereas we are not. After all SDP (Social Democratic Party which is publicly declared to be multiethnic) won the elections here, this could never happen there (...). Look there are many Cazinjani (people from Cazin) here in Bihać and I can recognize them straight away, because of the way they talk and because of the way they are. There is a massive difference between them, and let’s say people who moved here (because of the war) from Banja Luka or Prijedor (...). But that identity is not a new thing: it has been built over years through the
Turks, sieges, WWII, Cazin uprising, and finally through the recent war. (Somewhat changing his voice tone) You know, when the (recent) war broke out many people, who were working in Germany or Austria, came back just to fight. And many lost their lives. You see what I mean? That is their proud defiance, their stubbornness. I would like to see, for instance, how many people returned to Sarajevo just for the sake of fighting ...

Nikola’s unfavourable talk about ‘their proud defiance, their stubbornness’, to be followed up by his wonder ‘how many people returned to Sarajevo just for the sake of fighting’, suggested that identification with the ‘real’ Krajina was indeed vague. That was not the first time that Nikola implied to me that they (all Krajišnici) were brave people and that Sarajlije [people from Sarajevo] were not. Once, over a beer, he tried to convince me of the historical importance of Bihać. He suggested that Bihać was not only an older city than Sarajevo, that it was even once a capital of Croatia, but also, by giving the example of Bihać falling last to the Ottomans, that throughout history its inhabitants were braver. Somewhat later he added that there were no heroic figures associated with Sarajevo, except for maybe Valter.60

The ambiguity of Krajina’s location and how it mattered

Similar to Green’s experience from the Epirus region, narratives of younger and older Biščani revealed that borders appeared and disappeared and again appeared and disappeared, and were simultaneously different and similar (Green 2005: 16), depending ‘on the scale, and the moment, at which you are looking at them’ (Green 2005: 142). Among Biščani, I suggest, this moment (the moment of my research), though historically the same, involved not only different scales, but was also experienced differently by people who were coming of age (or came of age) under different contexts. This suggested that indeed there were ‘many kinds of where’ (Green 2005: 16) and that ‘the spaces within which people live are constructed by and interwoven with their social, political, economic and cultural existence: changes in any of these will inevitably have an effect on the others’ (Green 1998: 82). A comparison of how this worked differently for different people, of different ages, may also contribute to the wider knowledge on ‘the process of generational

60 Vladimir Perić, known as Valter, was a partisan leader whose figure has become some sort of iconic representation of defense (of Sarajevo during WWII) and resistance (to the Axis powers).
change’ (Cole 2010: 5) as well as why, considering the future vision that informs them, young people (as I showed in previous chapters) ‘seize on certain opportunities in the present’ (Cole 2010: 5).

The ambiguity of Krajina’s location, which allowed for border relocations and hence for the (re)exclusion of some, and the (re)inclusion of other places and peoples, enabled my co-conversationalists to adjust Krajina’s location, and what it meant, to the content of the conversation. In other words, at times there were reasons to be proud to be Krajinšnik; in those moments people clearly linked their embodied selves to Krajina, identifying as Krajišnici. At other times though, their sense of belonging to Krajina was somewhat ambiguous and they tried to distance themselves from the ‘real’ Krajina, suggesting differences between them and people ‘up north’, whom they considered to be aggressive and violent. So the label Krajišnik, as a rebellious person, was sometimes brought up in conversations to suggest something considered as being negative (such as belligerence) and at other times something considered positive (such as courage). Though what was positive and what was negative was not always viewed similarly by all.

Esmir suggested how Krajiški’s rebellious character was at once belligerent and heroic. When he was telling me about the famous Cazin uprising he suggested something negative about the Krajiški’s rebellious character. When he was telling me about Bihać holding-out the longest before it fell to the Ottomans, he implied that the courage of people inhabiting this region could be traced back through history. Through the first example he was distancing himself from Krajina suggesting that the ‘real’ Krajina was up north. This was because he identified with communism and since the Cazin uprising was aimed against the communist government he did not want to be associated with it. In the second example though, he was clearly linking himself to Krajina, and was proud that Bihać and Biščani held out the longest against the Ottoman conquests. It is in this sense that I suggest that in many ways negotiations of belonging in Krajina also entailed ‘the testing of social values’ (Herzfeld 1985: 232), which was itself shaped by where one was located: historically, socially and within the life trajectory.

There was some similarity in how Biščani talked of Krajiški character, which affected their practices, and how Glendiots (people from a small village Glendi, located remotely within Crete) in Herzfeld’s ethnography talked about their acts and their character (Herzfeld 1985). When the latter talked to outsiders about animal theft, for instance, they
oscillated ‘between acute embarrassment ... and defiantly self-conscious assertions about what makes Cretans different from -and better than- all other Greeks’ (Herzfeld 1985: 20). While Biščani sometimes made distinctions between themselves and other Krajišnici, them being a milder version of those they considered to be angry and somehow purer, they never suggested that they themselves were not Krajišnici. If anything, their narratives suggested that there were different types of Krajišnici, with the same assets, but somewhat different intensities to them.

In their narratives, the historical conditions of repression (cf. Herzfeld 1985: 21), of being located within and between changing borders, as well as a present sense of negligence from the centres of power (see below character 8: Ibro), were recruited in order to explain, recreate and maintain their self image of being different from other people in BiH. Their character, which they sometimes took pride in and at other times resented, was a consequence of how they understood the political powers of a particular time, and in relation to that, of their dissatisfaction, or alternatively satisfaction, which allocated specific value to Krajina as a place.

Movement, mobilization of different landscape features and sense of place

Yet the differences between older and younger people's understandings of Krajina were not only related to its borders. They also entailed the mobilization of different features offered by the surrounding landscape in order to express where they were. Landscape, suggests Bender (2002: 103), like time, can never stand still (see also Ingold 1993). Human interventions are not done to the landscape, but rather with the landscape, and that which is done affects what can be done. In short, landscape is not passive. The construction of landscape, according to Bender, is historically particular, deeply political, and overlaps with social relations (2002: 104). I would add that this is perhaps felt even more strongly in the border regions. Bender argues that the plurality of a place is always in the making and how it is used depends on the contours of gender, age, ethnicity, status, etc, of those people who live within it (2002: 107). In other words, it matters who one is (in terms of beliefs, skin colour, age, political orientation etc), and (perhaps even more) where one is located (see Green 2005), as any combination of causes may assume significance in one context, but not in another.
This is illustrated well in Sturgeon’s ethnography (2005). Working with the Akha people living on the border between Thailand and Burma and the border between China and Burma, she showed that the landscapes of the villages in both locations in the 1950s looked very similar. However, that changed over time and while the border landscape in China in the 1990s had a lot in common with the landscape from the 1950s, the border landscape in Thailand had significantly changed. Sturgeon showed how this change happened in relation to state practices (which allowed different land uses), different border possibilities and the particular histories of the Akha people in these two contexts. Consequently, where Akha people were located - in Thailand or China - significantly shaped both their present and future possibilities, as well as their landscape practices.

Considerations of issues of power and inequality and of the historical specificity of the social relations in play were also of great importance in understanding Biščani's interpretations and understandings of landscape. Thereby, Krajina’s landscape was in tune with Sturgeon’s findings (2005); it was a physical manifestation of social relations based on the exercise of power, within a particular historical and geographical context. As Sturgeon suggested, border landscapes were sites for manoeuvring, struggle and negotiation, which over time changed and took different shapes. This point is important because space is hierarchically organized in relation to geographically centralized economic and social powers (Massey 1992; Green 2005), and the way we think of it, as Massey (2005) argued, has both political and social implications.

Within this hierarchically organized space, as Green’s (2005) findings show, people never constitute places as places on their own, but always in relation to other places, based on a combination of geopolitical, social and economic factors (see also Gupta & Ferguson 1997). For instance, Green illustrated how phenomena that seem to be occurring on completely different spatial, temporal and discursive scales (such as tectonic activity, geological processes, climate, political disputes between nations) continually and inevitably interweave. So, the Pogoni people discussed places and differences between them in terms of ‘differences in status and power’ and especially power to ‘ascribe different meanings to places’ and power to shape movement (namely how, where, and whether people move) (Green 2005: 89). It was this power that people understood as constituting all places in the world. In their eyes the main difference was how
places as well as people were located in relation to the spatial hierarchy which resulted from
the continual exercise of that power; and the difference across time lay in how that power
was exercised at different moments, which resulted in shifting configurations of spatial
relations (and separations), as well as shifting in the relative visibility and invisibility of
places (Green 2005: 89)

In what follows I show that the way Biščani understood their location strongly resonated
with how people in the Pogoni region understood place and that which constituted it.

The Una railway story and older people’s sense of location

In order to communicate their sense of place to me, older Biščani utilised certain landscape
features in the stories they told, which at times were ‘recitations’ and at other times more
attuned to what Green identified as ‘kinds of talk …that were … much more mundane’
(2012: 9). In many conversations they directed my attention towards the Una railway. In
these narratives the railway stood for the privileged place they once had in the world, and
which was now lost. So, in their ‘recitations’, people would tell me that during Yugoslavia
many trains would pass through Bihać on a daily basis. Some said 50, others said 80, and
others still, argued that it was more than 100. The exact number did not really matter, what
mattered was that this relatively high number stood for the sense of importance they felt
they had as Yugoslav citizens, and perhaps more importantly, as Biščani, considering their
town an important connecting node.

In fact, as we saw, the building of the railway was initiated in order to connect. Originating
during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia61 the idea was put into practice during the
Second Yugoslavia (SFRY), after WWII. Yugoslavia, as a Non-Aligned country, was
located between Cold War power relations, between the East and the West. Its key role in
the Non-Aligned Movement ‘fostered a national imaginary linked to international
belonging’ (Greenberg 2011: 90), as the Yugoslav passport, most commonly referred to as
red passport (see Jansen 2009), allowed passage across Cold War borders (Greenberg
2011). This advantaged position people felt they had as Yugoslav citizens derived from a
sense that they were connected to the rest of the world. During that period they clearly had
‘a place in the world’ (Jansen 2009: 824). According to Greenberg, it was Yugoslav

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61 The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, also known as the First Yugoslavia (Prva Jugoslavija), existed in interwar era of 1918–
1941. Until 1929 (CHECK) it was known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.
citizens’ ability to travel that ‘produced Yugoslavia’s respected internationalist status’ (2011: 90). The Una railway in turn, was evoked by many older Biščani as evidence of that privileged internationalist status, which also suggested that once they were moving forward (Jansen 2009: 824).

This related to recollections of much life-time movement. These modes of personal (hi)stories were in tune with Green’s idea of mundane talk (Green 2012: 117), and they revealed that older people did not only move a lot, but that they also moved differently to how young people moved in present day BiH. As Yugoslav citizens, they had a greater variety of choice in terms of education, healthcare, work possibilities, etc (see chapter 2) than present day youth. For instance,

**Zaida** was born in Bosanska Dubica (BiH). After a few years, when still very young, she moved to Zagreb (Croatia) where she attended a school. Some years later she moved again, this time to Sarajevo (BiH), where she went to high school. During this period, as a member of the local folklore dance group, she got to travel a lot in Europe and in Yugoslavia. Eventually, she moved to Krajina (BiH) for work, where she met her husband. As part of a family business she frequently travelled ‘the world’, visiting 48 countries.

**Safet** was born in Sokolac (small village near Bihać). During the WWII he joined the partisans and fought all over BiH. Soon after the war he moved to Banja Luka (today in RS) to study. Some time later, he commenced to work in Beograd (Serbia). After several years he moved to Sarajevo (BiH), and eventually to Bihać.

**Ibro**, who was born in Bihać, first moved with partisans within BiH. Towards the end of the war he returned to Bihać. After finishing high school, he went to study in Beograd (Serbia) for 2 years. For family reasons he halted his studies and instead went to Macedonia for compulsory military service. After that he commenced a new university course, this time in Zagreb (Croatia). Eventually he returned to Bihać from where he frequently travelled in Europe.

Working on the Greek side of the border between Greece and Albania, Green noted how people in the Pogoni region talked about the history of a certain place or about their own histories in terms of movement. As people moved, things changed, but they also stayed the same as there was always movement involved (2005: 23-4). Because movement used to be part of people’s everyday experiences it was perceived as ‘normal’. Today, Green argues, for people in the Pogoni region movement seems to be different in relation to the past, largely due to the creation of new state borders that replaced the earlier Ottoman territories,
and to the political development of national identities that were explicitly identified with the new state’s territory. So the presence of the controlled border affected the physical ability of people to move, and over time, this made movement itself appear unusual (Green 2005: 24-5). Similarly to Green’s observation, also in Bihać it was through movement that people discussed ‘all kinds of events’ (Green 2005: 24). During Yugoslavia, movement was perceived as something one just did (or could do). As Zaida told me ‘it was absolutely normal’ for them, as Biščani, just to go to Zagreb or even to Austria for shopping. Today though it has become an effort, and for many even impossible. Today, what was normal, according to Zaida, was to shop in FIS. In short, how people moved significantly changed.

This change was a product of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and the subsequent changes to its borders. In a practical sense, these changes meant that the railway’s connecting function ceased. New border regulations required changes of the engines when crossing borders (inter-state and intra-state). Over a relatively short section of about 61 km, the railway crossed these borders (between HR and BiH and between RS and FBiH) seven times. Furthermore, following its independence the Croatian government sought self sufficiency through its own access to the sea, and it built a new railway that did not cross the BiH territory. According to the narratives by older people who had the chance to enjoy the railway during Yugoslavia, this change was perceived as distancing them from the centres of events and opportunities, from possibilities to develop tourism and trade. As a man in his 50s told me when he compared today’s train operation to that of the Yugoslav times:

Today the train station is dead...this literally means that peoples’ ability to communicate with the world has been reduced...in the past trains were coming and going every 15-20 minutes...everything was so much easier then, there was progress, everything was progressing, the society, the people....

The general feeling was that while the trains were moving they too were moving (forward). From this position in which they felt more privileged (in relation to those who were unable to travel the Cold War borders), older Biščani now entered a new sphere, a different kind of position: when the trains stopped their movement, they too came to feel stuck. This was

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62 FIS is a chain of shopping centres in BiH in which one can find various goods, from technology, kitchen necessities to clothes. In any case shopping for clothes in FIS was in no way considered prestigious.
more often and more explicitly evoked by young people.

The forts’ ruins and younger people’s sense of location

Young people too, expressed their sense of place through the recruitment of landscape features in their stories about local history. But they utilized different landscape features to reveal something very different about their experiences, compared to those of older Biščani. Young people borrowed from the landscape’s ruins in order to express the sense of the place they had in the world. Their narratives also relied on what Green identified as ‘recitations’ (2012) As Fera, an 18 year old school-leaver, once told me: ‘This situation did not happen to us over-night, we have been in this position since ages ago, and everyone always dictated us and we never quite knew how to deal with it’. Once, while walking with Ivana around Bihać as she experienced it, she took me to the ruins’ remnants and said:

For instance look at this (pointing towards them). Don’t you have a strange feeling when you come here? We have so much history here; that is what is so specific about Bosnia. For instance Bihać has always been located near the border, thus we belonged to everyone and to no one...’. (For more on this see character 7)

Evoking ruins in order to say something about their sense of place, suggested that young people such as Ivana, saw BiH’s ‘stuckedness’ (stuck in-between places) as embedded in their history. So although their sense of stuckedness directly related to recent changes, the great majority of young people talked about BiH as a place in which things were always in one way or another stuck. From their perspective, BiH did not become this kind of place, as perhaps was the case with older Biščani, but rather always has been that kind of place. For young people who were born in 1992, the current border landscape, including the very limited functioning of the railway, was a given fact of their realities. And so was Amna’s lack of ability to travel freely to Slovenia with her grandmother; it was not something that one day changed for her (as it did for her parents), but it has been the case all of her life (cf. Markowitz 2000: 3). So despite their knowledge of history, which suggested that over time things changed, their personal experiences suggested that nothing changed. This was conveyed to me by Nikola during the same Skype conversation I mentioned above. At the beginning of our conversation I asked him what was new, he said: ‘this is Bosnia, nothing is ever new here’. As I show later, this image of BiH as place in which nothing ever changed has inevitably shaped how people related to and imagined the future (cf. Vigh 2009).
The sense that they were stuck, or entrapped, resonated more with young peoples’ feelings of lack of what Hage called existential mobility (Hage 2009), than with actual ability to physically move. This became apparent not only during my fieldwork when those who could move (because they had an additional citizenship) did not do so, but also three months after I left Bihać in December 2010, when the long-awaited visa-free travel to the EU space was finally realized. Now that they were free to travel in Europe, I was curious to know what would happen and whether their talks that echoed feelings of entrapment would change. Through emails, Skype and telephone conversations, I kept in touch with many young Bišćani and soon I learnt that some indeed took this opportunity to visit their relatives who lived abroad, or to earn some money. Azra for instance visited her grandparents in Holland, Amna went with her grandmother to Slovenia, Emir visited his aunt in Germany and also managed to work there for a couple of months. Despite this, in our conversation I sensed that they still felt stuck, as if nothing changed. Or rather while things changed, in their eyes, they did so in the same way (Green 2005: 28). These personal stories were in tune with Green’s idea of mundane stories (Green 2012).

The recent war and its consequences marked people’s movements in very different ways to what happened in the post-WWII period, and it deeply restructured the sense of progress. For many young Bišćani war meant too much (unwanted) movement. I will give a brief example of Elna’s movement.

Elna was born in Bosanska Dubica (in today’s RS). Some time after the war started she moved with her family, first to Croatia, and later to Germany. Within Germany they also moved a lot. In 1997, two years after the war ended, she and her family returned to BiH. Since Bosanska Dubica, her birth town, was relocated and placed in the ‘wrong’ entity (RS), her family, not being ethnically Serbs, decided to move to Bihać, a town that was also located in the Krajina region, but one which was placed in the ‘right’ entity. After finishing high school in Bihać, Elna moved to study in Sarajevo. After her BA she applied for funding and commenced her MA in Brno, Czech Republic. At the time of my research she was on a holiday in Bihać visiting her family and her boyfriend and was about to commence a PhD at the same university in Brno.

There are two interrelated and important points to note about Elna’s movement, as she herself emphasized them. The first period of movement was accompanied by what she described as statuses which carried negative connotations: in Croatia she was considered a
‘refugee’ and in Germany an ‘asylum seeker’. Eventually, upon her return to BiH, her status was changed and now she was ‘the one who left when things were the hardest’ (cf. Stefansson 2004a). Possibly because of this, it was not easy to make friends and Elna often felt depressed. The second period of movement was marked by her desire to leave BiH, a place of ‘stuckedness’ and lack of possibility for progress. This ‘stuckedness’, according to Elna, was most evident in ‘the amount of time youths spent in cafés’. While the first period of Elna’s movement was enforced, the second period of her movement was more to do with her view of BiH, or rather with a place BiH has become as a consequence of various political conflicts which imposed movement on her to begin with.

However, for many others, such as Amna, war meant no movement at all or very limited movement (in terms of geographical reach as well as frequency). Unsurprisingly, this was the case for the majority of young people I spent time with during my stay in Bihać. As I show visually on a map featured in the conclusion, many young people moved only within the space of BiH, and mostly for their studies. This was in sharp contrast to a map I created based on movement narratives by older people, which encompassed geographical areas beyond BiH. Stories I heard by older people about going to Rijeka (on the Croatian coast) just for a coffee, or to Zagreb just to see a theatre play were not so common among today’s young Biščani. In what follows I show how being located between Sarajevo and Zagreb further shaped people’s sense of place.

**In-between Sarajevo and Zagreb: older and younger Biščani’s view**

While young Biščani rarely mentioned the Una railway in the stories they told, and older Biščani did not talk so much about the forts, their ‘recitations’ and personal stories revealed that being located between Zagreb and Sarajevo further affected how they felt about their location. This particular sense of location, which they shared, was informed by two processes. Firstly, by people’s contemporary experiences of waiting for the EU to open its gates to BiH citizens, and secondly, since the fall of Yugoslavia, Krajina has once again become a border zone in a literal sense. Those with whom a supra-national Yugoslav identity had been shared, once again became neighbours, living in another state. This meant that Krajina was understood by Biščani of all ages, also those without a personal experience of Yugoslavia, as being neglected and marginalized by the centres of power that were located in Sarajevo. This shared sense of place - shaped by the waiting experiences and by Krajina’s recent ‘relocation’ - has itself contributed to the very sense
that Krajina was located in particular way in relation to the west (mostly Croatia but also the EU) and to the east (mostly eastern Bosnia, and more explicitly Sarajevo). Some of this particularity is explicit in the following scene:

**Ethnographic scene 23: living in the same yet different place**

*It is April 2010, 4 p.m. There is a knock on my door. It is Ibro, a 76 old year pensioner who lives in the neighbourhood. We agreed to meet today so he could tell me about his life. Although it is springtime, it is too cold to sit outside. We sit in my living room, Ibro on the two-seat sofa, and I opposite him, on the three-seat sofa. I offer him coffee and some cake from the local bakery. He refuses explaining that he has set meal and snack times. Now clearly was not a time for either. Ibro tells me that he just came back from Vienna where he visited his son and his family.*

*Ibro:* (in a very calm and somewhat monotonous manner) I don’t know if I already told you last time, but I have a three year old grand-daughter in Vienna. Her mother is a Sarajka [a woman from Sarajevo]. When she was only three months old my wife and I went there to look after her as her mother had to go back to work. Upon our arrival our daughter-in-law said about her new born daughter that she was a true Kraj škinja. My wife and I wondered why. ‘Well’ she said ‘already now she did not allow anyone to look at her with a nasty gaze’ [ne da na sebe ružno pogledati].

We laugh.

**Vanja:** Do you often go to Vienna?

*Ibro:* Yeah, fairly often. We stay 2-3 months. (pause) Perhaps sometimes we would stay longer, but my wife only has a BiH passport, so she cannot stay longer with her visa, and I have a Croatian passport, so for me it is easier.

**Vanja:** How long can you stay with a Croatian passport?

*Ibro:* Also three months, but I just need to cross the border, get a stamp and return again, she cannot do that as she needs a visa. (pause) But I hope that as of June 2010 we will have a ‘frei ulaz’ [free entry].

**Vanja:** (curious and somewhat sceptical) Do you really think that it will happen?

*Ibro:* Well they have no choice: I mean they have to accept us. Otherwise, one may think that this is some sort of Crusaders’ war against Islam which has been going on for ten centuries.
Look, they (Europe) are not ready to accept the Turks, why not? They are big, a strong and fast developing country...

Our conversation goes on. Ibro tells me about many of his life experiences. The conversation though does not follow a chronological order. At times he narrates events from the WWII, soon to be followed by stories about the family relations, and then about the recent 1992-5 war. I am used to this by now, on many occasions narratives by older people were not chronologically structured.

After some time

**Vanja:** Could you tell me a bit about the relation between Bihać and Zagreb, or perhaps about Biščani’s relation to Zagreb?

**Ibro:** Look, we, Krajišnici, always had tendencies toward Croatia. Sarajevo and Zagreb are not comparable. Zagreb is a big European city. That’s why people who live here, if they can afford it, will prefer to study in Zagreb. I studied in Zagreb, my son studied in Zagreb.

**Vanja:** Yes, I know that a lot of people from here studied in Zagreb.

**Ibro:** For Sarajlije, we (Biščani, perhaps also Krajišnici) are the west [za Saraljile mi smo zapad].

It must be my unconvinced facial expression which makes Ibro pause for a second only to add:

**Ibro:** But really, they will tell you the same [ali stvarno, to će ti i oni reći].

Imagining Bihać and Biščani as somehow more western in relation to Sarajevo was evident in various conversations I had, but also in people’s practical inclinations toward Zagreb, the closest big city to Bihać. It came across in numerous ways. For instance, people would tell me that they only watched the Croatian television since the national Bosnian television (with its centre in Sarajevo) was ‘shameful’. Or occasionally people would tell me that they had no plans to go to Sarajevo ‘unless they really had to’, remarking ‘what’s there for me to do?’ [šta ću ja tamo?]. Furthermore, I encountered quite a few individuals and families who, being able to financially afford it, went for medical treatments with private doctors in Zagreb. Very often these very same people preferred buying clothes and furniture in Zagreb or sending their children to the university in Zagreb (or perhaps in Austria). This inclination to think that everything Croatian was better extended also to goods; in the supermarkets in Bihać people preferred buying Croatian products to BiH
ones. Tea, a 22 year old student in Zagreb, once told me that Biščani would rather consume Croat beer, even though there was a brewery in Bihać, or people would consume Croat dairy products or Croat mineral water, even if there were very similar BiH products. She concluded by suggesting that in Bihać there was no loyalty to BiH products. These inclinations were in no way new. Zaida, 62 year old woman once summarized this as follows:

Look, we are 340 km away from Sarajevo, and 156 km away from Zagreb. For that reason, until the war, in a very practical sense we were oriented toward Zagreb by all means, for instance through healthcare system, through cultural events, through clothes shopping. It was absolutely normal (as in routine like) to go to Zagreb just to buy clothes, or to go to Zagreb just for a concert. Today in a practical sense that is not possible, first because we cannot afford it and second, because Croatia is another state. But despite this, in some other ways, our tendencies towards Croatia are still present. For instance that is expressed in the way we talk.63 For us, at least people of my generation, Zagreb is Zagreb.

Clearly, it was not just Zagreb’s geographical proximity that mattered: as Zaida said ‘Zagreb is Zagreb’. Throughout history, as pointed out by Helms (2008), BiH’s geographical locus, as part of the Balkans or of South-Eastern Europe, has had many geopolitical and social implications. Within Yugoslavia, which was comprised of six republics, members of some republics (most explicitly Slovenia and Croatia) tried to portray themselves as western, European, and thus superior, while depicting their southern neighbours (including BiH) as eastern, oriental, and thus inferior (Helms 2008: 91).

Clearly, being from somewhere and being somewhere suggested a specific relation to the East and to the West. For instance, and in relation to the East, Biščani’s narratives suggested that due to their relative proximity to the EU, Krajišnici considered their location as Europe’s ‘shrinking immediate outside’ (Jansen 2009), to be somehow more immediate in relation to the rest of BiH, and most importantly in relation to Sarajevo, BiH’s capital. They not only felt that they were BiH’s gate to Europe (see ethnographic scene 13), but that this also meant they were more European than the rest of BiH. Furthermore, some people cherished the image that because of their status as ‘a gate to the

63 Different language nuances in this part of today’s Bosnia in relation to the eastern part of Bosnia go back in history. For more on this see Lopašić (1890: 12).
EU’, Bihać was literally the first place in BiH to receive all the ‘latest trends’, or the goods from the West.

Equally some believed that because of this proximity to the ‘West’, they somehow knew more about it: as one 62 year old woman told me ‘We are near border, we are close to information’. So being more ‘western’ in relation to the rest of BiH was not only about how Krajišnici thought about their ways of life and what clothes they wore, but also, and very crucially, about knowledge and information. Once, Nikola told me that Croats did not know much about Biščani and BiH in general, whereas they (Biščani) knew a lot about Croatia and Croats. Instead, Croats knew a lot about Slovenia and Austria, etc. Nikola suggested that knowledge about the other, about its customs, practices, its history, etc, was oriented towards the west too.

And yet other narratives, and in relation to the West (but also East), suggested that they felt somehow, and most often wrongly, excluded and marginalized (cf. Green 2005). This exclusion was expressed in two ways. Firstly, as pointed out by Esmir in the ethnographic scene 22, people felt excluded by Sarajevo (namely, the East), especially from its very centric state funding and investments. However, their feelings of exclusion were somewhat ambiguous though, because there was a question of whether they wanted to be included (or not) by it in the first place; as suggested, they considered themselves to be more western than Sarajevo. Another significant exclusion was in relation to the West. As already implied, becoming neighbours of those with whom they once shared citizenship (Croatia) was experienced as both a practical and emotional exclusion. This combination, feeling excluded not only by more western Zagreb and Croatia, but also by more traditional and backward Sarajevo, further contributed to feelings of ‘stuckedness’. Secondly, Biščani occasionally suggested that the reason BiH citizens could not yet travel freely in Europe, or were not EU members, had to do with the fact that many of its citizens were Muslims. On one occasion Nikola told me that ‘even Clinton himself’ said that the reason it took international forces so long to intervene in the war in BiH had to do with the fact that European politicians did not want a Muslim state in the heart of Europe’. Despite this kind of talk, which suggested that many of my interlocutors thought that the West identified BiH citizens as Muslims, many of them found ways to distance themselves from Muslims that lived more to the East. As Esmir suggested in the above scene, they were
considered to be more traditional, more eastern and more Muslim.\textsuperscript{64} Being where they were shaped their sense of belonging to a place, but also, as I show below, how they aspired towards and understood their future, which in itself shaped their practices.

**So what about future?: young and older Biščani’s views**

Vigh suggests that it is through social imaginary that people ‘anticipate the unfolding of the social environments our lives are set in - evolving positively or negatively from the potentialities of its current state’ (Vigh 2009: 100). It is these social imaginaries that allow people not only to anticipate, but also to ‘act in relation to a world that is constantly approaching us and engaging us rather than merely being subject to our command or a solidified surface of enactment’ (Vigh 2009: 100). These imaginaries, I would suggest, are constituted and reproduced within and through the type of narratives people tell, both ‘recitations’ and mundane stories (Green 2012). As Green found in her research in Greece, whether people recited ‘stereotypical rhetoric’ (Green 2012: 118) or whether they spoke about particular events of which they personally knew, had quite different meanings in terms of people’s expectations of what might happen next. In Green’s own words:

> The result was a sense that what would happen next would be both predictable—a repetition of what had come before, the playing out of a theory that we already know—and yet lively and contingent, open to the possibility of (one) being surprised (Green 2012: 118-9).

The stories told about personal experiences and/or recitations, became even more complicated when considering speculations about what comes next amongst older and younger people. I show how through two characters that already appeared in various ways in this thesis, but whom I further establish and develop in the following pages.

**Imagining the future: Ivana’s character**

**Character 7: Ivana** is an 18 year old school leaver. She lives with her parents, her maternal grandmother and a younger sister in an apartment in the relative centre of Bihać. Her grandmother receives a pension. Her father is currently unemployed. Her mother works at the border, in the tax department. Ivana is intelligent, creative and pessimistic.

\textsuperscript{64} It seems to me that this in itself was somewhat ambiguous: as I mentioned previously, Nikola pointed out that some parts of Krajina, north Krajina, were more Muslim and nationalistic than many other BiH locations. So clearly this image of eastern part of BiH being somehow more Muslim, or Muslim in another way, was discussed mostly in relation to Bihać, but also differently by youth and older people.
Ivana was born in Bihać in 1991, at the time when Yugoslav future was in a rather precarious stage. The war period, which she does not remember, she spent in Bihać. She has been a part of a local theatre group since she was 10. At a certain stage her fervour for theatre, but also for the written word, started to materialise in a variety of forms: poems, plays, stories. Her second passion is photography. She gladly accepted my invitation to join the film and photography workshop. On our first encounter she expresses her excitement upon learning that I have been living in the UK for some time. Her dream is to study theatre in London, a city known to her only from the books and television. The tension between her aspiration and the financial circumstances of her family suggests that London is not a feasible option.

She thinks that Bihać is not a city with many opportunities; she finds it monotonous and dull, a place in which young people are encouraged to follow a certain route and not to step out of it. This route suggests that if one does something differently one faces the option to become deviant. She spends a lot of time on the internet, often communicating with people from around the world of similar interests and age to that of her own. She often talks about her good friend from Australia.

Her personal map of the city of Bihać, the way she experiences it, consists of a few places, one of them being the old part of the city, where one can still see remnants of the old fortress, the old church, the city walls. In her view these ruins suggest that Bosnia has a lot of history; it is very specific in that respect. Since the year 375, when the emperor Theodosius divided the Roman Empire, Bosnia was on the border between the west and the east. Accordingly, she understands Bosnians to be people who have always been surrounded by a variety of social, political, socio-economic and psychological influences.

In Ivana’s view, within Bosnia it was Krajina that always lasted the longest. Because of Krajina’s proximity to the border, people always had to know how to fight. Also in the previous war (1992-5) the area of Bihać - Kladuša was known for heavy fighting. Bihać and its surroundings are almost always the last to be conquered. Hence the image that ‘angry krajšnici’ (‘ljuti krajšnici’) last the longest, accordingly it is in people’s blood to know how to fight and to protect their homes.

Ivana thinks that the answer to the question ‘why things are the way they are in BiH?’ can be found in BiH’s past, in its history, as BiH always belonged to everyone and to no one at the same time. Now, according to Ivana, perhaps for the first time in history, Bosnia must finally find its way all alone, and it cannot find it. She thinks it is in a vacuum. Maybe one good decision could take it out of its misery, or maybe another decision could put it into greater calamity. She does not know. And actually the fact that she does not know what will happen next is what frustrates her most, and the more she thinks about it, the more frustrating it becomes.
Within this context Ivana understands her personal future perspective as rather limiting. Living in Bihać she feels small, especially in relation to her dreams and things she wishes for. From her position her dreams seem to be getting further and further away. This has already happened once in her family, to her mother, who once also had a dream to leave, but she never did. That is also why Ivana thinks that nothing will change in her life and that she will always be stuck in Bihać.

When Ivana talked about Krajina’s history she suggested that Krajina was a meeting place. In my reading this understanding had a double meaning. On the one hand, as she clearly pointed out, Krajina was a place that always changed. Young people were familiar with the local history, to different degrees, but they all knew that over a long period of time different powers ruled over Krajina; that once in this region Ottomans or alternatively Habsburgs ruled; or that much before that this region was at the junction between the Roman and Byzantine Empires; or that not so long ago it was a part of Yugoslavia, which in itself was at the junction between two ideologies: communist east and the democratic west (cf. Green 2005). As suggested, at the time of my research too, Krajina was understood to be some sort of a meeting place; it was metaphorized as a gate to the EU. Accordingly, young Biščani understood Krajina to be a place of frequent change and understood themselves, people of Krajina, to be a product of these changes as well as active participants in their making. So Krajina, as a meeting place, was understood to be a product of new relations, as well as engendering new relations, global and local. As Ivana said, it is relations between things and people that have ‘tailored conditions and possibilities in Bosnia’, and that have also made it into somewhere particular.

On the other hand though, Ivana also communicated that in BiH nothing ever changed, and that both, Krajina and BiH, were experienced as fixed, established in their location of waiting for something to be resolved or altered. In other words, it seems to me, for Ivana events changed - war or peace agreements implicated in the relations between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, or between the Romans and the Byzantines – but ‘the process ... remained the same’ (Green 2005: 8); people in BiH always waited for something else to happen. Thus, Ivana and many other young people understood both what was, and what was yet to come, as placing them in one and the same location.

According to Ivana, because young people in BiH did not get a chance to live through any of the changes they occasionally evoked, these changes seemed like nothing more than a repetition of the same, which eventually always located Krajina (and its
inhabitants) similarly in relation to other things, places and people. This was somewhat similar to Frederiksen’s observation that at times, uncertainty, and the inconvenience it might generate, might provide one with a ‘perverse degree of certainty in the sense of their permanency’ (2012: 8). Young people subsequently understood their lives to be no more than ‘“ordinary” tales of continuity’ (Markowitz 2000: 3; cf. Frederiksen 2012: 8-9), and their futures as ‘repetitions of what had come before’ (Green 2012: 119).

Amongst young people, personal stories and recitations suggested that what would come next in relation to the collective future was subsequently predictable. This was expressed through Ivana’s character and through maps she drew of BiH and Europe (see the next chapter). She made a link between the general BiH historical context and her mother’s personal experience (of never leaving Bihać although that was what she really wanted to do) to suggest that her own life would not change and that she would never leave this place either. But this was explicit in other stories too. Various personal experiences suggested that what may happen next was clearly contingent (young people were different with very different personal aspirations), this contingency deriving from personal stories was not understood to affect the collective future, but rather it affected only some individuals and overall, things remained the same.

So to conclude, although youth understood Krajina as changing over time, this change was not understood as progress. Following Kosselleck’s idea of progress Mains suggested that ‘progress is the expectation that the future will not be like one’s past and that, instead, it will be qualitatively better’ (Mains 2007: 665). It was in this sense that the future amongst many young Biščani was viewed simultaneously as being both predictable and unpredictable. The predictability of the future related to their historical position of being stuck, not as an abnormality, but rather as a matter of routine. As Ivana said, this has always been the case in BiH, it was in no way a new thing. It was this very ‘stuckedness’, which revealed how people understood ‘their society’s movement through time’ (Vigh 2009: 99). ‘Stuckedness’ has become part of the landscape (often literally through ruins that are just out there), that ‘no longer creates a spectacle’, that ‘ceases to surprise’ (Mbembe 1995: 330). Instead, it is ‘inscribed into the everydayness of life’ (Mbembe 1995: 331). However, what this predictability of the future really meant was that nothing was predictable; that which has become the routine, ‘the everydayness of life’, was the very instability and inability to know, the waiting itself. Thereby, predictability of the future became its very unpredictability.
Character 8: Ibro is a 76 year old pensioner. He lives with his wife. They have two children: a son who was a student in Zagreb when the war started, and who eventually moved to Vienna where he still resides with his family, and a daughter who spent some time in Vienna, but who now lives with her family in Sarajevo. Ibro and his wife often go to visit both of their children.

Ibro was born in Bihać in 1934 in the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. His mother died in 1937 while giving birth to Ibro’s brother. He was brought up by his grandparents. In 1941 the Germans conquered Bihać and it was included in the so-called Independent State of Croatia. That was the second state in which Ibro lived. After that, in 1942, on the 4th of November, the partisans entered Bihać. Many members of Ibro’s family were partisans, including his father, his uncles, one of his aunts. Since Bihać was an important location for the partisans, in 1943 the Germans again took over. At that time Ibro with his family ran away from the Germans. They ran to the South East eventually ending up near the river Neretva. After some time, some of Ibro’s family were captured by Germans, his aunt for instance, ended up in Auschwitz. He managed to escape and was soon relocated by the partisan forces near Livno (town located in Herzegovina). After some time he returned to Bihać and since most of his family were captured, a neighbour looked after him.

When the war finished, most of his family returned to Bihać. They gathered their lives together and at the age of 12 Ibro began primary school. Bihać was bombarded 64 times during WWII and Ibro, like many other young people at the time, helped to rebuild it. Although he started his education late, he managed to go to university. When he was 21 he first went to study dentistry in Beograd. After 2 years, due to family problems, he returned to Bihać and did his military service in Macedonia. Upon his return from the army he went to Zagreb where he started another degree, this time in economics. Zagreb, due to its proximity to Bihać, was a more convenient choice for Ibro.

He got married whilst studying, so he relocated to Bihać and went to Zagreb only occasionally. First Ibro and his wife had a daughter, and a few years later, a son. Ibro’s wife, Mirjana, was a school teacher. Before the war Ibro used to work for Kombitekst, the textile factory. He was positioned quite ‘high up’. This meant that his and his family’s lives were financially secure and comfortable. Before the war they frequently went to Vienna and not only because his wife’s aunt lived there. When Bob Dylan was in Vienna in the 1980s he surprised his children with tickets to his concert. Then, with the red passport, it was possible just to go.

However, just before the war he lost his job due to his socialist political inclinations and his refusal to support SDA, the main Bosniak nationalistic party. Since then he was unable to obtain another job. During the war he organized a local territorial defence. The trigger for his action was
a phone call they received one day at the beginning of the war. His wife answered. The person on the other side of the receiver said ‘Leave! A sniper is pointing at you’. This made Ibro very angry, his family had been living in Bihać for the past 300 years, he did not feel that anyone had a right to tell him to go. So he thought to himself: ‘Ok if you want to fight let’s fight’. First thing in the morning he went to mjesna zajednica and organized a territorial defence.

Reflecting on this in post-war BiH, he did not think that he should have waited longer, as waiting would only turn Bihać into another Srebrenica. After the war Ibro got a Croatian passport. His wife did not. Hence their ability to travel to their son in Vienna is shaped by ability to obtain a visa. Ibro’s frequent travels to his son in Vienna and to his daughter in Sarajevo make him often comment on the state of the roads in BiH. He says that going to Vienna takes him the same amount of time as going to Sarajevo. This normally leads him to praise or to blame politics and politicians for their deeds. Accordingly, Branko Mikulić, who was a communist politician at the time of Yugoslavia, is recalled as someone who built the roads between Bihać and Sarajevo and ‘without whom Bišćani would still travel to Sarajevo using the gravel road’. Alternatively, Haris Silajdžić, a contemporary Bosniak politician, is recalled as someone who refused to agree to build a highway between Sisak-Knin (Croatian cities) via Bihać. This, Ibro found particularly annoying as this highway could have connected Bihać well with ‘the west’ and would make travelling (west) much easier.

This leads Ibro to comment on another issue: apparently, Haris Silajdžić, being the leader of ‘ZABiH’ party, just like some other politicians who are members of the ‘SDA’ party, ‘do all these things to USK because in this canton SDP rules and they (ZABiH and SDA), being nationalistic parties, dislike it’. That, he says, was also why recently they banned the use of the Euro in the FBiH. This act is viewed by Ibro as ‘direct attack on USK’, as because of their relative proximity to the west, people from Krajina enjoyed the fact that they could use Euros. For instance one could pay in Euros for the use of the Croatian highways, whereas one could not pay in BiH currency. So the ban of Euros is viewed by Ibro as a matter of politics in which the eastern parts of BiH are trying to impose ‘their ways’ on USK out of spite.

By the age of 10 Ibro lived in two different states; when he was 76 he lived in his fourth state, or perhaps sixth depends on how one counts. In his life time he experienced changes

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65 Srebrenica is a small town located in the east part of BiH. During the war it became a Bosniak enclave, a ‘UN safe area’, in which in 1995 according to some sources more than 8,000 thousand Bosniaks (mostly men and boys) were murdered. Since then for many people in BiH Srebrenica has become a symbol of war, cruelty, victimhood.

66 In many parts of the USK one could equally use Euros and the local monetary currency KM (the Konvertibilna Marka). At the final stages of my research, and just before the general elections 2010 the use of Euros was banned.
in power relations, in a geopolitical sense, very concretely: he lived through it. So, similarly to young Biščani, older people also understood Krajina as a meeting place, a place of change, modified by different political powers. However, in total contrast to the understanding of Ivana and other young people, to him, the current borders’ situation was not just the ‘way things were and have always been here’. For older Biščani the change was understood as potentially being able to bring to a variety of outcomes. How Ibro and his peers understood Krajina, in a very embodied sense, was about ‘appearing, disappearing, reappearing, and disappearing again: it was about separation, division, and recombination’ (Green 2005: 8). In relation to this, sometimes they felt more connected, and at other times more stuck.

This came across in what Ibro was recounting about the transport system in BiH as part of Yugoslavia and today’s BiH. Ibro mentioned that it was during Yugoslavia when the road from Bihać to Sarajevo was built. He had a good salary, he could afford to travel and indeed, he and his family did travel. So he explained how, after the experiences of WWII turmoil, Yugoslavia and its citizens, with their red passport, found their place in this world. He viewed this positively, because it positioned them in a relatively privileged place in relation to others, who could not move as freely, and in this sense were less connected. The fall of Yugoslavia however, did quite the opposite for many Biščani. As we saw, in many stories this was communicated through the interruption of trains. In Ibro’s case, this was more apparent in his comments on today’s road situation in BiH, or a need for visas, as well as in his comment on the prohibition of the use of Euros in this border area. Clearly, as Ibro’s story illustrated, it was through the changes in connections – roads, trains, visas- that people felt more connected or more peripheral.

But we can also identify all sorts of ‘recitations’, in Green’s sense, in Ibro’s story. Perhaps most explicit was in relation to Sarajevo (see also ethnographic scene 23), or in general east BiH, as it tried to ‘impose’ its ways on them (USK) who are more liberal and democratic, and definitely less nationalistic. This kind of recitation directly related to intra-state relations, although it also addressed relations that went beyond state borders. Another kind of recitation in Ibro’s character related directly to global relations and political

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67 Occasionally when people say eastern BiH they refer to RS. This was not Ibro’s intention as her referred to anything that is east to them (which in most of the BiH territory).
powers. For instance, in *ethnographic scene 23*, Ibro suggested that BiH citizens could not freely travel to the EU because ‘we are Muslims’. In this suggestion there were two somewhat contradicting recitations: on the one hand Ibro remarked that if BiH were not allowed a visa-free passage to the EU countries one could interpret this as ‘800 years of Crusaders’ war against Islam’. In that sense, he suggested not only that the Muslim population of BiH did not have a clearly defined place in Europe, but also that the relations between non-Muslim Europeans and Muslim Europeans have been problematic for a very long time. On the other hand though, he clearly pointed out that BiH would *have* to be allowed visa-free passage to the EU, and in that sense he suggested, as some other older Biščani did, that BiH would soon need to locate its place in the world anew. For many older people, recitations about the future suggested that no matter what, they eventually always found a place in the world.

Each one of these recitations - that as Muslims they did not have a defined place in Europe, and that eventually no matter what they would always find a place in the world - on its own suggested some sense of predictability about what may happen next. However, when put together, they actually suggested that what would come next was quite unclear. When added to Ibro’s personal story, it becomes ‘entirely unclear, actually, what the border meant or what might happen next in relation to it’ (Green 2012: 118). He, as an ethnic Bosniak, though non-practicing Muslim, was allowed free passage to the EU as he had a Croatian passport. His wife on the other hand, who was born in Croatia and who ethnically was a mixed German-Serb, though non-practising Christian, was not allowed ‘free passage’ and she always had to apply for a visa to go to Vienna. So, similarly to Green’s findings (2012), through recitations people suggested that the future would be predictable, and through personal narrative they implied that it in fact could be contingent. In short, what the future would hold was not quite clear: some speculated that it would be one thing (somewhat predictable) or another (contingent), or something else altogether (both).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I showed that Biščani understood geographical diversity as formed not so much out of a ‘home-grown uniqueness’, but out of the ‘*specificity* of positioning within the globalized space of flows’ (Massey 1992, emphasis added). I suggested that how people felt belonging in a place was always in relation to somewhere, and that this
somewhere changed over time. The ‘process of locating the border’ (Green 2005: 7) was clearly implicated in complex historical and political processes (see Gupta & Ferguson 1999: 4), both local and global, which were interpreted differently by younger and older people. It was how Biščani understood their positioning within ‘the globalized space of flows’ (Massey 1992: x), as well as what it meant for different historical and political periods, which had implications upon their understanding of the future. Jansen & Lofving suggested that places ‘are endowed, to different degrees, with hope, with the capacity to control and to project a sense of possibility’ (Jansen & Lofving 2008: 3). As we saw, Krajina as part of Yugoslavia projected very different possibilities to those that Krajina as part of BiH did.

Older Biščani, because of their longer and more diverse life experience, suggested that not ‘everything is (already) related to everything else’ (Massey 2005: 11), not all of the interconnections are already fixed and established, and that there are always future possibilities for ‘connections yet to be made’ (Massey 2005: 11). Young Biščani’s understandings of Krajina, however, suggested that sometimes within the relational understanding of the world, space was experienced as if everything already did relate to everything else, and in that sense the future seemed predictable. So, although borders are always ephemeral and never eternal (Soguk 2008: 284), and there is ‘nothing natural about borders: they are all created to assert power and control’ (Sidaway 2005: 171), on some occasions people may get so used to their presence and the meanings that borders have for their everyday lives, that they seem eternal, and somehow natural (see also Pelkmans 2006).

This was the case among many young Biščani for whom no matter how often it changed, Krajina was always somehow in the same place from which everyday lives seemed difficult in terms of living and planning for a distant future, and hence, from which they could not do much but wait. The status that BiH as a place had in the eyes of many youth was that of despair, isolation, entrapment, feelings of ‘stuckedness’, all deriving from a sense that political powers have not been able to resolve their differences over a great period of time, which made their own ability to plan difficult. Instead, they felt that they had to wait for some resolution before anything significant, on the collective level, could happen. Hence ‘Waiting is hoping’. This shaped their aspirations and made the future seem always already negative; both known and predictable, yet in an uncertain and unpredictable kind of way.
On one occasion while walking with Ivana and Emir through the streets of Bihać, while snow was melting under our feet making the concrete somewhat unpleasant for walking, Emir was telling me about all sorts of facebook groups that he joined recently. They conveyed a deep cynicism and sense of entrapment among young people. The following are only a few samples: ‘If Lassie were from Bosnia it would never return home’; or ‘Four million people are lucky to live in BiH, the rest of the world does not have that luck, but it has everything else’; or ‘It is not that we are in recession, it is just that now the rest of the world knows how we have been in the past twenty years’. The final group Emir mentioned related directly to the strict visa regime: ‘Once the visas are abolished, the one who leaves BiH last should turn off the lights’. After telling me the name of the last group, Emir commented that even if they ‘really changed the visa regime, most people would go nowhere’. To that Ivana replied that that did not really matter, what mattered was the feeling of despair that prevailed ‘here’. I suggest then, that it was not the ability to move \textit{per se} that mattered most, but rather a reigning sense of despair in a place called Bosnia. This sense of despair is something that I elaborate further in the following chapter, but from a different angle: the visualization of ethnographic research.
Chapter 6

Beyond lines: representing borders visually

*Ethnographic scene 24: Ivana’s maps*

*It is August 2010, late afternoon. It has been a very hot day. Under the parasol in the small garden between my house and the Una, Ivana and I are enjoying the cool breeze coming from the river. I have been very lucky to have the Una next to my house, it is an instant cooler in these hot days.*

*At the very beginning I asked all participants in my workshops to draw maps of their city, of BiH and of Europe. Since Ivana joined the media and arts workshops later than many others, I never got a chance to ask her to create these maps. Well, until recently. Now she is here for a visit, and she brought a map with her. On the same piece of paper she drew on one side her map of BiH and on the other side her map of Europe. Through maps I was hoping to learn something on young people’s experiences of these places. As we are sitting Ivana explains:*

*Image 5: Ivana’s map of BiH*
For me, this little dot stands for Bosnia: somehow we are always small and invisible. I don’t know who I am and what I am; it is ridiculous that I have to think who I am and to whom do I belong. Being here makes me feel little: in Bosnia one is nobody and nothing [niko i ništa], that is because Bosnia is nobody and nothing. Within this small dot a lot is condensed, we are all in agony, we cannot see the exit.

(pause)

Bosnia has a fascinating, very specific, history: no other Balkan country has ever had such a history, with such a mixture of people and things; and no other Balkan country was defeated so strongly. Due to its geographically favourable position, it has always been the target of conquerors. Paths to the east, or alternatively to the west, pass through it. Also, it is near the Adriatic and Mediterranean seas. We were always good for someone, and we always needed someone. Bosnia has always been a thorn in someone’s eye, or a stone in someone’s shoe. Hence Bosnia was never at ease [nikad nije bilo rahata]: it was either recovering, or in tension, or there was a war.

(pause)

Image 6: Ivana’s Map of Europe

On the other side I put the question mark. This is my map of Europe. At first I thought that maybe I should leave it empty, but still I decided to put the question mark. It is because in these other places in Europe, people, to some extent, have something more defined, something a bit more secure. Or maybe they have more options, possibilities, and more people who understand them. Here we don’t have that. I mean some people here are trying, but it is hard, not impossible, but much harder.

However, eventually I decided to put the question mark as maybe this is not how things are. There are people there too who equally feel bad in their place. But still, I don’t know, somehow I hope that one day it will be different, and that I will be elsewhere. No matter how
much I love this city, I love it because of the past memories and connections, and not because this is where I would like to be in the future. In reality the unknown elsewhere can be very similar to the known place and can equally hurt you, but somehow it still seems more appealing. The unknown, because it is unknown, gives one hope. Maybe that’s why I want to be elsewhere.

Talking and showing borders

My thoughts in this chapter are inspired by my impression that the way border scholars talk about borders is different from how they show borders. It would be fairly unusual these days to find a border scholar who thinks and talks of borders only in terms of static and separating lines. However, when it comes to representing borders in a visual manner, these same scholars, through the use of ‘conventional’ maps, show borders exactly, and usually only, as static and separating lines, fixed in ink. This contradiction between what we see (or what we are being shown) and what we hear (or what we are being told), although very clear, seems to be disregarded. But maps matter. Western maps, which tend to be ‘resolutely spatial’ (Edson 1998: 18), ‘give the impression that space is a surface – that it is the sphere of a completed horizontality’ (Massey 2005: 107). They do not show space (or borders) as a product of interconnections, a dynamic simultaneity, which is ‘constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore always undetermined) by the construction of new relations’ (Massey 2005: 107).

Consider, for instance, a couple of many possible conventional maps of BiH I found on Google maps:

One is the map of BiH and the other is the map of BiH which shows where exactly the Krajina region is. Both of these maps illustrate my main concerns with visual representation of borders just as lines. Firstly, on the above maps, borders convey a status
of finality, as if nothing ever shifts or changes; Secondly, similar visual representations (borders as lines) do not reveal how and if borders matter. Yet, although all borders (intra-state, inter-state, regional) on the above maps appear as lines, in practice they do not separate (or connect) places in a uniform manner, and that which they connect (or separate) matters differently to different individuals/groups. Finally, borders as lines may visually contribute to the idea - which in the past decades has been strongly criticised by anthropologists (e.g. Alvarez 1995; Clifford 1992, 1997; Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 1997; Malkki 1995; Olwig & Hastrup 1997; Rapport & Dawson 1998) - that cultures can be conceptualised as separate and unique entities which correspond to particular localities. Although my criticisms of conventional maps are numerous, I am not suggesting the rejection of such maps. Not only because they have various uses (e.g. navigational), but to reject them would also mean to deny Biščani’s practices and understandings of their place in this world, which in many ways derived from, and were informed by, such conventional maps.

Rather, in what follows I suggest two things. Firstly, visual mapping of human experience is another way of knowing, learning and telling, and as such, visualization of ethnographic research through mapping could be a very productive and useful means through which scholars might contribute to the generation of (anthropological) knowledge. And secondly, because ethnography involves a profound interest in and concern with peoples’ lives over a long period of time, it could be a very valuable resource that could contribute to recent inclinations in cartography, which endeavour to create maps that would be politically powerful in ways that differ from conventional maps. In other words, while many maps are political and power-driven, few are in tune with lived human experience. So, ethnographic data could be used to generate maps that would be political and powerful in terms of spatial representation, economic and social inequalities, interrelations, and so on, while focusing on the ‘the practices that are foreign to the “geometrical” or “geographical” space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions’ (De Certeau 1984: 93). Ethnographic mapping and maps would differ from conventional maps, which are often unrelated to peoples’ lives and in which space comes across as a traversable surface, a completed horizontality (Massey 2005: 107), but also from many other maps made by artists’ or other individuals who although very creative, often more than anything else, are faithful to their own, very personal, ideals.

**Visual representation of borders**
Cardinal directions (North, East, South and West) are important tools in how (some) humans in (some) societies read maps and describe locations (Meier et al 2011: 548). A psychological study has shown that in the USA, although unrelated to direct physical experiences of individuals, ‘North’ was considered to be up and hence good, whereas ‘South’ was considered to be down, and hence bad. Consequentially, individuals, if given a choice to live anywhere, preferred to live in the North\textsuperscript{68} (Meier et al 2011). Maps, as Wood suggested, have become a prominent part of the world in the last 50 years; newspapers print as many as thirty million maps a week (this is without mentioning map uses on the web and television). And while many new genres of maps came into existence during the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, only some of those new maps have come to proliferate ‘until they’re as taken for granted as indoor plumbing’ (Wood 2006: 7). Maps that thrive seem to be those that make space seem surface-like, those that mark borders as static lines, those that, as the research mentioned above indicated, may give a sense of space being divided into up (good) and down (bad). So the impressions maps leave on us shape how we think of space, and consequently, of borders; they may also affect peoples’ practices in very concrete ways. Below, through use of ethnography, I elaborate my main concerns regarding borders as lines on conventional maps. As will soon become apparent, these concerns are entangled and the division I will suggest is not absolute, but is nonetheless necessary for the sake of clarity.

\textit{Borders as static lines: natural, timeless elements that divide surface.}

Borders on a conventional map ignore the temporal element, the fact that space (and hence borders) is dynamic, shifting and changing, not a crossable surface. In other words, borders are ‘active entities’ and ‘time is crucial to experiences of borders’ (Green 2009: 12). Among Biščani borders were rarely experienced as static lines, thus, visual representation of borders as lines was is not in tune with their everyday experiences. This became visually apparent when I juxtaposed the opening map of this chapter with the two conventional maps of BiH. The drawing and the text that opened this chapter were one part of Ivana’s map. Another part took shape during a walk she took me on one sunny winter day through the streets of Bihać, \textit{her} Bihać; how she experienced and lived in this city. During this

\textsuperscript{68} As part of the same research, when the north and south were reversed on a map, namely south was placed on the top, and the north was placed on the bottom, most individuals preferred the top, namely the south (Meier et al 2011).
walk, her daily routines, her personal thoughts, feeling, experiences were embedded within the larger socio-political context of BiH as a place in the world.

Her map - the drawing, the walk, the stories - of Bihać, of Krajina, of BiH, of Europe, of people, of her subject-centered world within the historical context of a place she physically inhabited, did not endeavour to orient one in space. Namely one could not use Ivana’s map to go from point x to point y. Instead, it suggested ‘the dialectic between lived experience/embodied space and the larger political and cultural world’ (Bender 1999: 35) of which Ivana was part. The difference between school-leavers’ maps and conventional Western-style maps becomes manifest in what they tell us visually of space and time and what they tell us visually of borders and the multiple ways in which they come to matter, or not to matter. Accordingly, maps made by school-leavers and conventional maps contributed differently to the generation of spatial knowledge, but also spatial experience.

One of my main discomforts is with the visual aspect of borders as lines. But, as suggested by Green, ‘some sense of line – denaturalized, made multiple, non-dichotomous, formed in trajectories and historically contingent – is still important for understanding a sense of borderliness’ (Green 2009: 6). In other words, the problem with the line is its current form. Hence, instead of thinking of borders as lines, which make them seem somehow natural, Green proposes the notion of tidemark, which is ‘what is left after some kind of past activity has occurred, and often implies more activity to come’ (Green 2009: 7). A tidemark, as a more useful form of thinking about borderli-ness (‘what gives a sense of something or somewhere being a border’), includes a line or, more accurately, multiple lines, ‘in the sense of connection and relation, in the sense of movement and trajectory, and in the sense of marking differences that make a difference’ (Green 2009: 17).

Ethnography could be a useful process to visually portray borders as tidemarks. In the conclusion of this thesis, I propose a layered map, in which I hope to show how different narratives and experiences of people I spent time with in Bihać allowed me not only to show that which is left after past activity, and to imply that there is more to come, but also to illustrate that past and future are understood differently not only by people of different ages, but also by people of similar ages. All of the maps that will feature in the

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69 Although as suggested in the previous chapter, at times they may be experienced as seeming natural.
conclusion, when combined together into one layered map, show how a sense of space has changed over the past 50 years, but also how it stayed the same, and how in turn that shaped a sense of inhabited location differently for different people. This brings us to my second concern with the visual representation of borders as lines.

Whose border, whose space?

Visually, borders on a conventional map may suggest similarity in experience since, as lines, they make space seem separated or connected in the same way, as they consistently separate or connect between supposedly different political and economic territories. But these maps never tell us how, and if, these lines indeed separate different political/economic spheres, and how and if it matters, for whom, and how much. On the above maps of BiH, for example, there is a clear order that defines inter-state and intra-state borders, as well as a clear territorial portrayal of where the region of Krajina is. All of these borders which are visually, through lines, portrayed as almost the same (lines may vary a bit, some are a bit thicker or thinner, others are dotted) mattered to different Biščani in very different ways. For some the intra-state borders, which were easily crossable and did not require documents, were experienced as psychological barriers, more so than the inter-state borders were (see also Brković 2012). For others the opposite applied. For some, both intra-state and inter-state borders served as barriers, but very differently; for others, neither played a major role in terms of their practices, but shaped their understanding of their place in the world. One of these maps also presented us with a very clear and defined location of where exactly Krajina region was. But, as I suggested in the previous chapter, the reality was far more complicated than this visual representation might suggest as understandings of where Krajina was were multiple and various.

So visually, due to maps’ seemingly objective character, all their signs, such as borders, appear uniform. This conveys ‘detachment and impartiality’ (Wood 2006: 8), and makes maps appear as governed by a “scientific” rationale’, which not only masks the fact that maps are social constructions, but it also contributes to rendering the map’s authority indisputable (Wood 2006: 9). This gives maps a power to ‘transmit the world as it is’ (Wood 2006: 9), and as such, according to Wood, maps (or rather, their creators) are free to execute any violence they choose (Wood 2006: 9). As he suggested, a map ‘can display,
for example, in lurid pinks and greens and purples, a world smashed into nation-states and pass it off as ... only natural’ (Wood 2006: 9).

I still remember my primary school geography classes, in Yugoslavia, in which the teacher would ask one of the pupils to get in front of a map (the map of the world, of Europe, of Yugoslavia) and to tell the class everything we knew about a particular location or a particular topic (the biggest countries in the world, or the smallest; the highest mountains, the longest or shortest rivers; the places these rivers cross; and perhaps something on their agricultural or economic characteristics, on their natural resources, etc). Our knowledge of physical features as well as of some demographic and economic facts was to be translated, located and placed on the map, always relationally: other places in relation to us, the Yugoslavs.

These maps probably had a significant role in shaping our (pupils’) understanding of space as surface and of borders as static lines, but they also showed the world as a very organized surface, on which there was a clear, natural, here (Yugoslavia) and a clear, equally natural, there (everywhere else). Some of these there due to their size (e.g. USSR), or due to their geographical position (e.g. Germany or France) or due to what each one of these two elements – size and geographical position - carried with them (e.g. I clearly remember the USSR always being somehow very impressive due to its size, and Germany, being part of the West, somehow desirable) appeared superior. These maps did not show political and social inequalities, nor different trajectories. They did not tell us a thing about how USSR became so big or how Germany became so desirable: they just showed us that they were so. And what they were, seemed somehow natural.

Thinking of those maps now, more than twenty years later, here and there on my childhood maps differ greatly from today’s maps. The map of the world from my childhood had the USSR, not Russia, as its largest country, it included countries like Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and many others that do not exist in their previous geopolitical shapes. In that sense, these maps in the classroom stood as credentials of a particular knowledge, as the truth, however without revealing that this truthful knowledge was established under particular power-laden historical and geographical conditions. They all neglect(ed) to tell us that what appears as ‘completed horizontality’ (Massey 2005: 107) in fact changes, and will keep on changing. In other words, both of these ‘fixed representations’ of reality – the world map of my childhood and today’s world map -
‘rapidly decay into unusability and anachronism’ (kanarinka 2005: 4), as here on maps from different periods is never quite one and the same here. But also, here in different, yet temporarily simultaneous, understandings of space is not quite the same here.

In For Space (2005), for example, Massey suggests that when the Spanish and the Aztecs met, because their understanding of here was so different, they were actually in different places. Elsewhere she says:

Space has its times. To open up space to this kind of imagination means thinking about time and space together. You can’t hold places and things still. What you can do is meet up with them, catch up with where another’s history has got to ‘now’, and acknowledge that ‘now’ is itself constituted by that meeting up. ‘Here’, in that sense, is not a place on a map. It is that intersection of trajectories, the meeting-up of stories; an encounter. Every ‘here’ is a here-and-now (Massey 2003: 2).

So, for Massey here is shaped by a historical moment, an encounter; it depends upon stories-so-far (2005: 9). Those stories, though, do not necessarily have to involve two totally different, even if temporarily simultaneous, worlds, such as the Aztecs and the Spanish. They can have implications for parties having much more immediate relations. I will illustrate this through my ethnography.

Ethnographic scene 25:

It is a sunny spring day, April, 2010. Nikola and Emina came by. We are sitting and drinking coffee in my living room, Emina leaning over the window smoking, Nikola and I having a conversation, as we often do, on the recent Yugoslav wars. He refers to the 1992-5 BiH war as ‘agresija na Bosnu i Hercegovinu’ [an aggression on BiH], whereas I understand the recent war as ‘građanski rat’ [civil war]. Different naming of the same war, of course, have many political implications: it says something about how we understand not only the war in BiH, but also how we understand BiH itself, how we understand Yugoslavia and ultimately how we understand space. During the conversation I start feeling that although Nikola and I inhabit the same location geographically, in fact we share the same room breathing the same smoky air, our understanding of here was very different. Each one of us explains why we feel the way we feel, trying in our own ways to persuade the other of the ‘rightness’ or ‘truthfulness’ embedded in our personal experiences and feelings. But all in vain! Towards the end of that conversation I am beginning to realize that our personal understandings of
the recent war were shaped by many factors, which in turn formed where we were. For example, Nikola was less than four years old when the war started and has almost no concrete experiences or memories of Yugoslavia; he lived in Bihać during and since the war (apart from one year in Mostar for his studies); and lost his father in the war. I, on the other hand, was thirteen when the war started, left BiH never to return to live there until my fieldwork year; I have no real, personal experiences of life in wartime and post-war BiH, but many memories and experiences as a child growing up in 1980s Yugoslavia (which kept on being formed as part of my experience of emigration). Nikola, I suddenly realize, was never part of the place called Yugoslavia, not in the concrete tangible experiential way that I felt I was, at least. I, until now, was never part of independent BiH. For him, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro were more or less neighbouring countries (some were aggressors too), that once also happened to be part of the same country. For me, Serbia, Croatia, and Montenegro at the time of our conversation were also that, but in many other ways, they were also part of a country in which I was born and in which I grew up, in which I spent summer and winter holidays, and of which I and my peers were an essential part (through the pioneer pledge we all had to give in the autumn of our first year of school, celebrations of many socialist holidays, numerous references of and ‘pilgrimages’ to important locations where WWII partisan battles took place, references to our teachers as comrade, etc). Our attempts to understand each other in many ways were in vain: we were, all of the sudden I understand, in different places.

The conversation Nikola and I had illustrated that our understandings of here were shaped by both different periods within which we were coming of age (because of the age difference my experience reached somewhat further back in time) even if in relation to supposedly the same geographical location (although his experience was from Bihać and mine from Sarajevo), but also by different current locations (me being in Bihać only for research, not to stay and him living most of his life there), even if within simultaneous temporality. It is this idea of different heres that is omitted from conventional maps: borders as mere lines do not suggest anything of these different places Nikola and I inhabited. In fact, on these maps, the geographical region of Yugoslavia and of former Yugoslavia appears relatively similar. The same lines separate the republics of Yugoslavia and today’s independent states, ignoring how these shaped lived lives, experiences, possibilities, and understandings of here of millions of people.

**Who is the real Krajšnik? Some implications lines on a map have for understandings of ‘culture’**
In continuation to my previous point, borders as lines on a map also make ‘cultures’ seem connected or separated, without considering the multiple relations, connections and stories beyond bounded territories, stories of the past, present and potential futures. On these maps cultures often equal (nation) states. Consider my understanding of what was ‘my home’ (Yugoslavia) and Nikola’s understanding of what was ‘his home’ (BiH), and how these understandings were shaped by changes in borders. Studies on borders have shown that the exploration of lives around and across borders can be used to critique understandings of cultures as bounded units (Alvarez 1995; Kearney 1998:121). Yet, because borders appear on conventional maps (namely, as lines), visually they may do quite the opposite, and contribute to the idea of cultures as separate and unique entities that correspond to particular localities.

In addition, borders on maps inform understandings of various senses of identification. We saw in chapter 5 that the understandings of where Krajina was significantly varied among Biščani. For young people, Krajina’s location directly corresponded to the canton borders defined by the Dayton Agreement in 1995 on the new BiH map. None of the older Biščani, on the other hand, ever talked of Krajina in relation to the canton borders. For them there was no one single idea of Krajina’s location. The important point to note here is that different understandings of where Krajina was corresponded to shifting borders, and in that sense also made notions of the ‘Krajiški character’ correspond to a particular, differently-understood, location.

Although this approach - of cultures corresponding to particular localities - has been informing anthropologists’ understanding of cultural differences since the beginning of the discipline (Olwig & Hastrup 1997: 1), in the last couple of decades the idea of culturally bounded units has been greatly criticized, primarily through the notion of ‘the field’. Clifford (1992), for instance, argued that the idea of fieldwork excluded movements of both the anthropologist and of cultures. The image of the ‘native’, so common in anthropological literature, has been of a settled person whose life could be conceptualized in relation to a particular culture in a particular place. Movement, unless part of a nomadic way of life, implied up-rootedness and thus loss of cultural foundation (Olwig 1997: 18; see also Malkki 1995). Furthermore, the traditional approach to fieldwork, separating ‘the field’ from the researcher’s ‘home’, created a hierarchy of purity of field sites and of topics or objects of study. Accordingly, some locations were considered more anthropological
than others, and some topics, mostly unfamiliar and different to the western world, were more valued in their ‘anthropological-ness’ (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 11-8).

Clifford, borrowing De Certeau’s idea that space has meaning only through people’s active occupation, their movement, suggests that ‘field’, in this perspective, must be ‘worked, turned into a discrete social space, by embodied practices of interactive travel’ (1997: 186). And indeed, one of the many limitations of the traditional understanding of the field, was a tendency to study those people who stayed put in a particular area while ignoring those who were not physically in the place of the fieldwork, even if they had a great importance for those that were in the ‘field’ (Olwig & Hastrup 1997: 5-6).

Recent anthropological studies point out that movement may constitute a normal condition of life for many people (Alvarez 1995; Clifford 1997; Green 2005; Gupta & Ferguson 1997; Jansen & Lofving 2008; Malkki 1992; Olwig 1997: 17; Olwig & Hastrup 1997; Rapport & Dawson 1998), suggesting that in some areas, for some people movement is a key means by which events in peoples’ lives are marked, and through which they are discussed (Green 2005: 26). Hence considering movement and those located beyond ‘the field’ has become widely recognised as crucial to anthropology. Despite this, Gupta & Ferguson argue, and although anthropology as a discipline ‘rejects received ideas of ‘the local’ it still leaves ‘the field’, its most commonly used method that takes ‘the local’ for granted, unexplored (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 2-4). Gupta & Ferguson suggest that the idea of the anthropological ‘field’ needs to be re-evaluated (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 4). They, like others (Clifford 1992 & 1997; Olwig 1997; Olwig & Hastrup 1997), do not suggest abandonment of fieldwork practice, but rather

its reconstruction - decentering ‘the field’ as the one, privileged site of anthropological knowledge, then recovering it as one element in a multi-stranded methodology for the construction of (...) ‘situated knowledges’. (...) ethnography is beginning to become recognizable as a flexible and opportunistic strategy for diversifying and making more complex our understanding of places, people and predicaments through an attentiveness to the different forms of knowledge available from different social and political locations (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 37).

Gupta & Ferguson suggest we may reconstruct ‘the field’ in various ways, for example, through knowledge available from reading newspapers, analysing government documents, tracking the internal logic of transnational development agencies, etc (Gupta & Ferguson
I would add that we could try to ‘reconstruct’ the notion of the field from creating maps and using various kinds of mapping techniques, which would allow the visualisation of ethnographic data. This is because the use of conventional maps not only visually supports that which has been criticized for some time now, but it also visually isolates the place, the people that inhabit it and the events in their lives. So although anthropologists have been critiquing the idea that the settled way of life was the ‘natural’ state of being, and although ethnography is no longer viewed through the notion of a ‘field’ which implies ‘fixity’ (Clifford 1992), and although anthropologists no longer think of borders as static lines, an image of a field-site on a map or borders as static lines, visually localizes that which has been verbally trying to deconstruct and rework the very understanding of what location is for quite some time.

However, there is a paradox that needs to be taken into consideration. While many current anthropological approaches tend to de-essentialise the concept of culture and deconstruct the notion of bounded localised cultural wholes, the tendency of the studied people is often to do the exact opposite. The essential link anthropologists’ interlocutors make between themselves and places, of course, is something that must not be taken for granted but rather analysed as place making (Gupta & Ferguson 1999: 6) or home-making processes (Jansen 2009: 54) in relation to other places that themselves are made through these processes (see chapter 5). Here I suggest that in addition to using conventional maps, mapping the experiences and narratives of older and younger Biščani, may provide a balanced solution to this paradox, by visually taking into consideration human relations that define fieldwork sites (Olwig & Hastrup 1997: 8), as well as their embodied relations with places (and their history), with institutions, etc. In other words, I suggest mapping peoples’ movements and the historical and social significances of places in their lives, as well as the visual representation of their connections with other people we (anthropologists) never encounter, but which have a great significance for people we study; I suggest, in other words, mapping of space and time.

**From maps as stories to maps as descriptions of territories**

In order to create a map that shows space as a product of interrelations, heterogeneity, the multiplicity of stories, always under construction, one of course needs to create a map of space and time. This is the greatest challenge for cartographers. However, there were times when maps were all about space and time, and less about orientation, or about political
power in the modern sense. For instance, Edson (1998), concentrating on medieval maps and on the various ways in which these maps encompassed elements of time and space, showed that maps made during the Middle Ages were very different from today’s maps. This not only suggests something about different understandings of the world by people living then and now, but also something about different purposes of today’s maps and maps made during the Middle Ages (Edson 1998: viii).

Many of the maps from medieval times included exotic animals, places, different peoples, plants, explanatory paragraphs, historical stories and biblical events within them (Edson 1998: 134). In other words, they clearly were ‘not designed for travel, but for contemplation’ (Edson 1998: 15). These maps portrayed the greatness of the world and the variety of wonders it contained, but they also suggested something about its mysteriousness. This was most commonly manifest through monsters (re)presenting unknown regions and empty spaces. These maps simultaneously created a very particular (most often negative) image of these unknown places (for instance it is not a surprise that many of these monsters could be found in the southern edges of Africa), but they also left room for contemplation of God’s prominence (Edson 1998: 16).

Medieval maps that were more of ‘a projection of history onto a geographical framework’ (Woodward cited in Edson 1998: 135), were, unsurprisingly, often referred to by their makers as ‘histories’ (Edson 1998: viii). These maps, such as the Mappa Mundi, the Ebstorf World Map, or the Psalter World Map (Barber 2005: 55-60) although telling a Christian story, nevertheless entailed elements of historical time and space too. Mappa Mundi, for instance, displayed at the Hereford cathedral, was called by its creator ‘estorie’ (Edson 1998: 140). Some argued that its dominant message was embedded in the contrast between the ‘divine timelessness and infinity and the transience and limitations of human time and space’ (Barber 2005: 55). Harvey described it as ‘a kind of encyclopedia, arranged geographically’ (cited in Edson 1998: 139), as it included a great variety of pictures, towns, events, plants, animals, peoples of the earth and scenes from classical mythology (Edson 1998: 142). The world of the Mappa Mundi was represented as ‘bursting with action’, and it was quite difficult to put in order that which was seen (Edson 1998: 142).

According to Edson, during the Middle Ages, there was no single way of making maps, nor was there one word which exclusively meant ‘map’:
the word *mappa* meant ‘cloth’, and *carta*, used in some languages today, was translated ‘document’, *Descriprio*, frequently attached to medieval maps, could also mean a textual description, as is true of both *carta* and *mappa*. *Pictura* and *figura* could be any diagram or drawing. This imprecision of language indicates to us that the visual representation of physical reality, so highly prized by ourselves, was perhaps less important to people of an earlier era (Edson 1998: 2).

As made explicit by Edson, the focus of medieval maps was less on visual representation of physical features, as these maps were clearly not made to help one find one's way around and in-between places. According to some scholars, voyages of ‘discovery’ were to alter the way maps were made by the Europeans: ‘in time, maps came to narrow their focus to physical space and eliminate other dimensions, such as religious meaning and history, which were so important to the medieval world map’ (Edson 1998: x; see also Massey 2005: 107). Perhaps one of the reasons for this shift was Europeans’ need for a more reliable navigational tool that would enable them to expand and to conquer more efficiently, and later, possibly, to visually represent their success. Maps subsequently stopped being a thing of space and time and instead became ‘objective’ descriptions of reality, simply reporting where things were (Wood 2006: 8).

The new ways of making maps ordered spatial knowledge: space was conceptualized in terms of points, lines, surface, etc. The world was made ‘knowable through specific calculation of space for reasons of government and management’ (Crampton & Krygier 2006: 20). Taken ‘to be descriptions of the territory ... rather than descriptions of the behaviours linked through the territory’ (Wood 2006: 8), maps carried many implications. One is that they made space seem ‘instantaneously interconnected’ and fixed, instead of merely a ‘simultaneity of stories so far’ (Massey 2005: 106). In any case, this shift in itself suggests that what has become conventional map was shaped by power relations and political needs of a particular era.

**How can ethnography contribute to map-making?**

Despite the limitations of conventional maps, they make things seem in order and hence for certain purposes (e.g. navigation) they not only make sense, but are also, in fact, necessary (at least in a Western context). Maps that are more in tune with our experiences are often a mishmash of chaos, unclear ideas, or might simply seem odd: not quite like maps one is accustomed to. This is manifest within Ivana’s map, which may make one
raise one's eyebrows, thinking ‘is this a map?’, but also in other maps created by school-leavers during my fieldwork. Most of the school-leavers drew three maps: one of a place they call ‘home’ (they always chose the town they and/or their closest kin lived in), another of BiH, and third a map of Europe. While on their own most of these maps did not make much sense, accompanied by the stories told by their creators they were compatible with the experiences and realities of those living in the proximity of borders. In one of the workshops Neno brought ‘his map of BiH’. It consisted of a pair of shoes. He explained:

One shoe is rather worn out, it seems un-wearable, the other shoe is fine looking, seems wearable. The wearable shoe stands for Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, or in short, for all the countries, except BiH, that were once part of Yugoslavia. BiH I associate with the un-wearable shoe. Once upon a time these shoes were a pair and they stood and walked together, now they are apart. And although the wearable shoe is not perfect, in fact (pointing out to us) it has quite a few damaged areas, but this damage is not serious in a sense that they did not have a great impact on its ability to perform. As such, the wearable shoe is on its way to the EU. In contrast, the un-wearable shoe, that is BiH, is really damaged. This damage is manifest in its inability to perform its main function (movement). As such, the un-wearable shoe is left behind and alone. One can bin it, it has no use... (everyone laughs).

Indeed, we all laughed, but Neno’s provocative way of communicating his opinions and feelings was very telling. Many of his peers felt similarly and they too, as we saw, associated BiH with ‘stuckedness’ and hopelessness. Neno’s map, his story and his shoes, were a story of a trajectory (towards the EU) and of BiH’s non-movement on that trajectory. Like the school-leavers’ maps, other maps which attempt to portray experiences and interrelations, which endeavour to portray complexity and to promote social change, at first seem very confusing. Some examples include the maps that appear in An Atlas of Radical Cartography (Mogel & Bhagat 2010), or the MigMap,\(^{71}\) or many maps created by an increasing number of artists.\(^{72}\) However, upon closer inspection, it seems that many of these maps, made by individuals, political activists, artists, etc, have removed the mask

\(^{71}\) The MigMap which was produced by the Labor k3000 collective in collaboration with the Transit Migration project is a virtual map of European Migration Policies. See [http://www.transitmigration.org/migmap/](http://www.transitmigration.org/migmap/) (last viewed on 20/01/2013).

\(^{72}\) Many of these works can be found in The Map as Art: Contemporary Artists Explore Cartography (Harmon & Clemans 2010) and You are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination (Harmon 2003).
from mapping and in doing so have pointed ‘to the presence of the mask on the normative maps of Western Christian culture’ (Wood 2006: 9). As suggested by Wood:

In pointing towards the existence of other worlds – real or imagined – map artists are claiming the power of the map to achieve ends other than the social reproduction of the status quo. Map artists do not reject maps. They reject the authority claimed by normative maps uniquely to portray reality as it is, that is, with dispassion and objectivity, the traits embodied in the mask (Wood 2006: 10).

The reason we find it difficult to read and understand these maps is not necessarily their inherent complexity, but rather us being used to maps as something particular (consider for instance how I was taught to use maps in my geography classes): a navigational tool, one that tells us where we are and where everything else is and, often in relation to this, a tool which in a very clear and organized manner serves as an ongoing claim to the legitimacy of those in power, or those who want to be in power, or those who want to change their (territorial) circumstances. So maps are often employed to settle or create political and social disputes (Monmonier 1995), as was the case in many wars, including the recent BiH war.

‘Cartography cannot be seen in isolation from struggles for power/knowledge: mapmakers make choices about what to show or not and they select a certain overlap between statistics and territory’ (Jansen 2005: 48). Based on this, most of the Bosnian peace proposals put forward by nationally-oriented local and/or international bodies (see Bougarel 2004) were based on a nationalistic approach to territory that was expressed through maps and statistics (Jansen 2005: 51). It is on the basis of this logic that the Dayton Peace Agreement came into being, territorially dividing different national members and creating intra-state borders. Today in BiH, nationality statistics and maps, or ‘national numbers’, play a central role among scholars and ‘ordinary people’, as well as in diplomatic discourse and the implementation of policies, while ignoring the differences, inequalities and struggles (Jansen 2005: 50, 60-62) that are ‘beyond ethnicity’ (Bougarel et al 2007). Borders appearing on these maps, of course, derive a significant part of their identity from a complex system of representation in these maps, but also in texts, treaties, etc (Sidaway 2005: 167-170).

In the example I mentioned above of where Krajina was, it was clear that the new BiH map, based on the Dayton Agreement, altered the shape of Krajina, to an extent that
people coming of age in different contexts thought of Krajina in very different territorial terms. But the post-Dayton map of BiH also amended orientational experiences. For instance, some areas became less attractive destinations due to the many war-related implications they carried with them (see also Jansen 2006: 181 and Jansen 2008: 56). For Azra, 18, a common BiH map not only suggested something about her relative location to other things, places, people (though it did that too). The new map, with particular intra-state borders, also suggested at what particular moment in space she should start feeling uncomfortable. For her, this moment was when she crossed the border between FBiH and RS. It was at that moment that she instantly felt fear. And it was these recurring experiences of intra-state border crossings that shaped her understandings of movement within BiH as being somehow restricted. I say somehow because in Azra’s case this restriction was more mental than practical: she often went to RS to visit her boyfriend who at the time was studying in Banja Luka. So, the question was not just whether people crossed or did not cross the borders, but whether they felt they crossed something when they did cross (Jansen 2013: 31).

For Davor on the other hand, a 26 year old man who lived in Bihać but studied in Banja Luka, it was not the whole of RS that elucidated sensations of discomfort, but just some of its parts. In Banja Luka, for instance, he felt very good, ‘sometimes much better than in Bihać’. It was his frequent travels from Bihać to Banja Luka that could cause some disquiet. For instance, he preferred driving to Banja Luka via Bosanska Krupa, which took longer, rather than via Ključ. This is because in order to take a faster route - namely via Ključ - one had to drive through Manjača Camp (a concentration camp near Banja Luka which was used to imprison individuals (mostly men) belonging to Bosniak and Croat ethnic groups). The idea of this gave Davor ‘goose bumps’.

Perkins has suggested that within geography, which is traditionally interested in the visual, the actual knowledge production within the discipline eventually takes form in the written word. Thus, ‘analysis and deconstruction predominates over creation’ (Perkins 2004: 381). While Massey and other scholars (e.g. Monmonier 1995) emphasize the problems current maps have, they do not suggest a visual alternative. The end result of this is that critical cartographers employ words ‘to extol the virtues of socially informed critiques of mappings, leaving the messy and contingent process of creating mapping as visualizations’ to other people (Perkins 2004: 381), or alternatively, as performance (kanarinka 2005). However, as argued by Crampton & Krygier, in recent decades
cartography has been ‘undisciplined’: ‘freed from the confines of the academic and opened up to the people’ (2006: 12). Artists, political activists, and various other individuals and groups have since taken on the role of generating all sorts of political, social or experience-based maps. Yet while many of these maps through their makers’ creativity are original and in many ways also significant, they do differ from what I am trying to propose here, primarily because their contribution is not often embedded in ethnographic research. In other words, they often do not take into consideration people’s practices and relations to space, and even when they do, they are usually not based on long term acquaintance with those they attempt to represent.

In her *Art-machines, body-ovens and map-recipes: Entries for a psychogeographic dictionary*, kanarinka (2005), who considers herself to be primarily an artist, elaborates on ‘map-art practices’, or art projects that deal with the articulation of space, and which are ‘interested in social and political engagement, and in geographies of various kinds’ (kanarinka 2005: 3). She suggests a point at which making art and making maps meet: accordingly, she argues that they are both ‘about making a selection from the complexity of the world, choosing to highlight certain things while others go unnoticed’ (kanarinka 2005: 4). But there are many perspectives, politics, peoples, and so many possibilities to make both art and maps. Emphasizing the lack of a temporal element in maps made by cartographers (or for that matter pictures made by artists) kanarinka suggests that creating a map (or a picture) which would incorporate time seems too complicated. She argues that it is not about making better or more accurate maps, or pictures. Rather, while criticizing maps that are a mere form of representation, she asks whether it is ‘possible to think of a map not as a representation of reality but as a tool to produce reality?’ (kanarinka 2005: 5). In other words, kanarinka thinks of maps as enactments and performances, something that cannot be represented. In her view, for maps to be functional, they need to be activated and used (kanarinka 2005: 6).

While I appreciate kanarinka’s criticisms of maps as representations, and, as I have shown, I think that maps in general and borders as lines in particular are problematic when it comes to conveying the experiences of those living in the proximity of borders, I nevertheless think that if I truly want to consider many elements that inform Biščani’s sense of location and their understandings of space, maps as representations cannot be ignored and some sense of a regular map format needs to be maintained. This is for two main reasons. Firstly, it seems to me that conventional maps often have dual characteristics.
being both representation and performance (see also Green 2005: 33). For instance, the post-Dayton map of BiH had a significant role in literally altering how things were in BiH (e.g. youth’s understandings of where Krajina was), but also how things were done in BiH (e.g. in terms of peoples’ movements and practices). Thus, these maps were about showing how things were (representation), while also contributing to the making of how things were (performance). They created realities that they represented, but also, and very powerfully, they were these realities. Secondly, and interrelated to this, for the majority of my interlocutors their sense of locality was informed by the cardinal directions North/South, and more importantly, as we saw in the previous chapter, East/West, as they appear on conventional maps. Hence, I do not think that completely ignoring the conventional map format is a viable option for anthropologists, who aim to represent, analyse and theorize ethnographic data. Rather, we should think how to make use of conventional maps and other kinds of maps and adjust them so they are more in tune with our ethnographic findings.

**Conclusion**

As I set off to do my fieldwork, I did not plan to create maps. At the time I did not think of the visual portrayal of borders. It is something that occurred to me after my fieldwork. This may seem a trivial point, but it is not: if I planned to create such a map in advance, my work while in Bihać would have involved a somewhat different set of possible research methods. To give just one example, pensioners found my request to take me for a walk through the city as they experienced it somewhat odd. Accordingly, they either dismissed it straight away (saying something like: ‘well, I could only take you to …, so what’s the point’), or they said that they would take me, but never quite seemed keen to do so, so I never really insisted. I assume that if at the time of my research I planned to make a map, I would have probably insisted more. In other words, when I asked people to take me on walking tours I did not know what the purpose or the end result (in terms of my usage) of these would be. So the data I collected was shaped by my lack of clear idea why I did what I did (experience-based city tours), and hence also the production of anthropological knowledge was formed by it.

When I first recognised that I would like to create some kind of map that would be more attuned to Biščani’s experiences this realisation - that I lacked older peoples’ maps - struck me and made me frustrated. However, over time my frustration became productive:
I came to understand that the actual lack of walks with pensioners and their dismissal of my occasional attempts to ask to go for a walk were rather telling. For many of them, due to their previous experiences of life in Yugoslavia, places of real significance were experienced as being there and not there at the same time. There were not there in two ways. One was very material: so for instance a particular shop that they liked (or disliked) was literally no longer there. The other one was more experiential: they did not perceive the relationship between the place they presently inhabited, and between them within it, as adequately fitting: for them Bihać (or perhaps BiH) has become a different where (Green 2005). Older people expressed this literally when occasionally they would tell me that this was no longer their place [ovo nije moje mjesto], or that they did not know quite how things worked these days [sve je nekako novo, drugačije]. So sometimes, their narratives suggested estrangement from present localities.

But their places of significance were also there; and again in two ways. In a material sense many of these places (building, parks, Una) were literally still there, even if they obtained a different meaning (perhaps because of different uses) and hence were experienced as being different. But they were also there in a more experiential sense as these places came into life through older people’s narratives, in their and my own visual imagery. Hence, places were simultaneously experienced as there and not there. So somewhat similarly to what I felt during my conversation with Nikola (ethnographic scene 25), when all of a sudden I realized that we were in different where, also many Biščani who were coming of age in different post-war periods (post-WWII Yugoslavia and post 1992-95 war BiH) were in contemporary BiH dwelling in different and yet the same where. It was this very acknowledgment that eventually encouraged me to use what seemed a frustrating fact (me not going on walks with older people) as a useful datum which helped to further contribute to and inform my knowledge of people’s experiences of places they inhabited.

Due to recent changes in its ‘border circumstances’, BiH was a very useful location for creating a map, because it brought the importance of borders into play. As shown in many border studies, borders come to matter when they are somehow disputed, when someone asks a question about them (e.g. Berdhal 1999; Brković 2012; Green 2005; Pelkmans 2006) and in BiH they certainly were, and still are, disputed. Furthermore, working with two different age groups allowed the creation of a map that would include stories embedded in very different geopolitical and socioeconomic settings. This allowed
me to put the element of time back ‘on the map’. This focus on two different age groups also allowed me to create a map that did not seem like a finished product, but rather a map that contained only some stories, and only so-far (Massey 2005: 9).

Following the idea proposed by radical cartographers (Baghat & Mogel 2008), in the conclusion it is my attempt to create a map, not the map. This proposed map, which is layered, is just one of many possible stories, and in no way am I suggesting an ‘ultimate’ map (no matter how many layers it included). This layered map is based on the ethnographic data I gathered over the course of thirteen months and it incorporates maps made by school-leavers, walks they took me on, my observations, frequent conversations, and, in general, time spent and lived with and among younger and older Biščani. As such, my map is also a means of representing ethnography in a visual form. Within the proposed map layers are meant to add the element of time to this particular story; an element that, as we have seen, is so often omitted from conventional maps.

So, my attempt is to create a map in which historical and future time forms borders and is part of borders; which will not portray space as separated (or connected) in a uniform manner by and through lines; which will not presuppose cultural unity or disarray; which will include loose ends and ongoing stories, with possibilities for openness (Massey 2005); a map in which the anthropological ‘field’ extends beyond Bihać and Krajina; a map which is based on qualitative rather than quantitative data, partly because not much quantitative data existed for BiH, and partly because qualitative research is the real strength and the main point of ethnography. In short, through a map I endeavour to think of creation, analysis and theory as inseparable. Eventually I thus propose a way to visualize ethnographic research that will not only be more in tune with the complexity of social experience (of Biščani) than the above conventional maps, but also, because of that, which may differently contribute to the generation of anthropological knowledge.
Conclusion

Visualization of ethnography: a layered map

Have a look at a layered map (enclosed).

A layered map concludes what I have been discussing, analysing and theorising so far. It takes a visual form; it is supposed to present the complexity and multifaceted nature of human experience and of ethnographic research, which does not come across visually in ‘conventional’ maps. Three different sets of layers are presented: layers I created based on my ethnographic data, layers made by young Biščani, and one layer which is comprised of the ‘conventional’ map. That is the layer I begin with.

A note on maps on movement and maps on sense of location

I created these maps (layer 2, 3, 5) based on what I had been told of people’s movements (layer 2 and 5), and about how I understood people’s experiences of their location (layer 3). As I illustrated in various chapters, changes in the connections between places made people feel at times more connected and at other times more peripheral. Roads, visas, trains, they all related to how people presently felt about their place in the world, how they thought about its past and the potential future. Within Yugoslav Krajina, the sense was that hope resided among people. Within BiH Krajina, as Husein Dervišević advised Toni Janković, the sense was that one should not bring any hope when coming to BiH. Layers 2 and 5 visually convey that different possibilities were on offer; the world of the possible for contemporary youth seemed smaller than it was in the recollections of the older Biščani.
This has inevitably shaped how young people who were coming of age within these two very different contexts experienced their location (layer 3), and consequently their practices and aspirations. Although respective youth were at the similar ‘vital conjuncture’ (Johnson-Hanks 2002) of deciding what their next step would be, the direction they were to follow in two different socio-political contexts was different, and they engaged with their futures very differently. Hence, as suggested by Johnson-Hanks, the focus should be on aspirations respective youths had and how it was possible for them to aspire, and not on the life stage they occupied.

On the other hand, contemporary Biščani, both older and younger alike, who were at different life conjunctures, felt that the future was not good. This made some of them (mostly older) feel that they were no longer inhabiting ‘their place’ (see layer 4), and others (mostly younger) that there was nothing they could do to cause a change on the collective level (see layer 6). The end result of this was that many of them engaged with future in similar ways, for example, through voting. So again, it was not the life stage that should be a point in focus here, but rather, how it was possible for people at different (vital) conjunctures to engage with the future. As I showed, the value of Bosnia in the eyes of many people in comparison to other places was both not entirely clear and quite low in the hierarchy. Consequently, they felt they were in the wrong place and the wrong time. This resulted in a feeling that one’s ‘agentive capacity’ was limited, and this made people feel stuck and not in control of the future. I illustrated how this sense of ‘stuckedness’ was manifest (e.g. through café routines), negotiated (e.g. through engagement with practices that have an immediate result), and the results it led to (e.g. various types of waiting).

A note on maps of older people and maps by youth

I created maps of older Biščani based on what they told me. Young Biščani created their maps. Put into ‘conversation’ together, narratives and experiences by older and younger Biščani showed that whether institutions worked properly, mattered more sometimes than at others. I showed in various chapters that although in the post-WWII period institutions did not work perfectly, there was no sense of chaos and collective unpredictability. In that period, despite many difficulties, the general feeling was that things were in the ‘right’ proportion and that one, more or less, knew what one could get and expect from the state and its institutions. In post 1992-5 war BiH, institutionalized unpredictability had very debilitating effects on people, both in practical and in moral terms. The ability to know was reduced only to the ability to hope, which also meant that one’s expectation from the state
and its institutions was ambivalent. This resulted in intimate and non-intimate engagements with politics, which was influenced by one’s estimation of immediacy of the effect.

The inability to know what would happen next generated a feeling of ‘stuckedness’. The feeling that they were stuck was experienced similarly and differently by older and younger Biščani. Young people experienced their ‘stuckedness’ as going back in history. As I illustrated, this had dire effects on how young people thought of their place in the world; in their eyes, territories and spaces seemed a lot bigger than people. Also the powers that influenced them seemed bigger, both in time and magnitude. They felt there was not much they could actively do to affect the place where they were; in terms of how things were and how things would be. Because of their longer life experience, older people understood their ‘stuckedness’ to be a relatively recent thing. However, in most stories, by older and younger, today seemed worse than yesterday, and the future did not seem good. The way they lived their present(s), and the way they engaged with their futures, directly related to this sense of place; there was a feeling that they had to manage with whatever was provided by something greater than themselves, for example politicians (see layer 6). The only (if any) possible change was small scale.

A note on an empty layer

It was not my attempt to create the ultimate map, one which would capture all stories (so-far). As I made clear, I do not think that is possible. Hence the empty layer; yet to be made and open to possibilities. A map I created is unfinished, and always will be in the process of creation, partial in its attempt to convey an experience, a story, an encounter that makes space. This means that this layer also suggests the importance ‘open-endedness’ has for ‘ethnographic analysis and writing....as a basic condition for knowledge production’ (Dalsgaard & Frederiksen 2013: 50). Dalsgaard and Frederiksen argued for the importance of paying attention to openness, especially in situations of uncertainty and scarce possibilities among young people. This openness itself ‘entails hope’ (Dalsgaard & Frederiksen 2013: 56).

Epilogue

Below I show where some of the people I spent much time with are today, September 2013.
In 2010 Adi began studying law at the University of Bihać. He finished the first year and invested about two years in an attempt to finish the second year. Recently he dropped out commenting: ‘Now I have become a typical Bosnian routine [Bosanska kolotečina]: I dropped out of university and I am searching for job’. He lives with his parents.

As she had hoped, Azra, began to study in Tuzla in 2010. She is still a full-time student studying special education and rehabilitation. She is still distrustful about what people do or say. She has a new relationship and, in that sense, seems happy.

Emina eventually enrolled on her desired MA course in Mostar. Her parents took a loan and supported her in all possible ways. In Mostar, she lived with her boyfriend. Recently she has finished her MA course and returned to Bihać to live with her parents. Her mother helped to secure a job for the same boss she is working for. Emina is not very pleased with this job as it pays very little for a full-time position. Furthermore, she is probably overqualified for it. However, she is grateful for having something. She is still in a relationship with her boyfriend, Nikola.

After the lifting of EU visa restrictions for BiH citizens, Emir went to Germany and worked there illegally for two months. Eventually he returned to BiH and for some time was again unemployed. Then he found work as a waiter in one of the local cafés. Since the job was difficult, underpaid, and he hardly ever got a day off he decided to leave it. Currently he is unemployed and lives with his parents.

Emira eventually enrolled on a civil engineering course at the University of Bihać. She was not pleased with this but had no choice due to her parents’ financial difficulties. At the beginning she hoped that she would be able to transfer to Sarajevo, but that did not happen. She is in her final year. She still lives with her parents.

Fera commenced a civil engineering course at the University of Bihać in 2010. However, he was not pleased with the course so he decided to transfer to the University of Tuzla in 2011. It was not easy to adapt to a new life in Tuzla, but today he is pleased.

Ivana studies law at the University of Bihać. She will graduate in 2014. This was not her first choice, but she had to stay in Bihać for her studies and this was her only choice in terms of what the University of Bihać had to offer. Her real dream, to study drama in London, was not (yet) realized. She still writes a lot and regularly posts her poems, text and photographic images online. Her parents separated so she lives with her mother, her grandmother and her sister.

Nikola is at the final stages of his course in computer sciences in Mostar. He is very keen to finish it as his girlfriend Emina and his mother put a lot of pressure on him: he has repeated the second
year three of four times. He is eager to find a job. He currently lives on the line between Sarajevo and Bihać.

Neno at first attempted to enrol on a university course, but eventually gave up that idea. He established his own parkour club and he teaches young Biščani between the ages of 10-17. It seems to be rather popular as he has 80 members. In addition he occasionally makes short films with his friends. He says that his past still hangs above him like some burden, but that all in all he is happy. She still lives with his mother.

Jasna still runs the café in the mjesna zajednica. With each telephone conversation she tells me that life in BiH is becoming increasingly difficult as ‘people have less and less, and prices are always going up and there are no jobs’. During my fieldwork Jasna and her husband, Izo, used to go to Croatia on a weekly basis in order to get metal and to resell it in BiH. Since Croatia joined the EU the increased border inspections between BiH and Croatia have affected their ‘metal business’. Now, Jasna’s modest earnings in the café and Izo’s small pension are their only source of income.

Except for Jasna I have not been in touch with other older Biščani as they do not use the internet, and I was not able to visit BiH in the last couple of years. Hence I cannot comment much on their current affairs. Jasna tells me though, that most of those that I got to know in mjesna zajednica lead similar routines. ‘Professor’, who used to recite poems to me, had passed away.
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