

Vanja Čelebičić

University of Durham
vanja.celebicic@durham.ac.uk

Institutionalized Unpredictability and Café Routines: the Case of Young People in Bosnia and Herzegovina

When life is very unpredictable or uncertain, a routine set of practices may become a very significant element in a person's daily life, as it may allow a sense of protection from the unknown (Ehn & Löfgren 2010) and encourage feelings of belonging (Rapport & Dawson 1998). In this article I explore how people relate to the immediate future when their presents are filled with unpredictability. More specifically, I explore the everyday practices around café routines of some young people living in Bihać, a town in northwestern Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). Popular discourses often link between young people's tendencies to spend time in cafés with apathy and letargy, or alternatively with bad economic conditions. However, these views, whether empathetic or critical, are neither adequate nor very empowering. Instead, I suggest that we must view café routines within the context of what I call 'institutionalized unpredictability'. This allows us to distance ourselves from thinking about young people's practices through dominant paradigms of engagement and disengagement and opens up the possibility to view café routines as 'radically unpolitical' acts (Farthing 2010). I argue that café routines are both young people's *response* to 'institutionalized unpredictability', as well as their way to *criticize* and *reproduce* it. I further show how institutionalized unpredictability was shaping and shaped by both state and non-state related practices, relationships, processes and aspirations, suggesting that this is precisely what made it so powerfully pervasive and debilitating.

Key words: institutionalized unpredictability, young people, café routines, Bihać.

Институционална непредвидивост и „кафенисање”: студија случаја младих људи у Босни и Херцеговини

У животним околностима обиљеженим непредвидљивошћу и неизвјесношћу, рутинске активности могу постати веома значајан елемент у свакодневном животу људи, јер пружају утисак заштићености од непознатог и оснажују осећај припадности. У овом раду се истражују свакодневне праксе младих људи у Бихаћу, чија је рутина организована око свакодневног испијања кафе („кафенисање”). Уобичајено је да се навике младих људи да своје вријеме проводе у кафићима повезују са осећањем апатије и летаргије, или са лошом економском ситуацијом. Међутим, овакви ставови, било да су емпатични или критички, нису ни аналитички адекватни, ни оснажујући за младе људе о којима је ријеч. Умјесто тога, предлажем да се праксе „кафенисања” посматрају у ширем контексту нечега што би се могло означити као

„институционализована непредвидивост”. Овакав приступ нам омогућава да се дистанцирамо од оних дискурса који активности младих људи посматрају кроз призму доминантних парадигми ангажовања и/или пасивности, и отвара простор за разумијевање „кафенисања” као „радикално неполитичног” чина. Праксе „кафенисања” представљају одговор младих људи на институционализовану непредвидивост; њихов начин да се непредвидивост критикује, али и репродукује. Коначно, у раду се показује да је институционализована непредвидивост свеобухватан и свепрожимајући феномен, који се обликује различитим државним и вандржавним праксама, процесима, односима и аспирацијама, при чему и сама бива њима конструисана.

Кључне ријечи: институционализирана непредвидивост, кафенисање, Бихаћ, млади људи.

Introduction

During the fourteen months I spent in Bihać (2009-2010), a town in north-western Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) near the border with Croatia, I organized arts and media workshops for a group of young people during which the participants used visual means, such as film, photography and drawings, to express themselves. One of the end products of this workshop was a short video created by Emir, a young man in his late teens. The camera placed on Emir's head visually recorded his movements while he was running in an attempt to physically recreate his daily routine: he ran from one café he visited on a daily basis to another. He also ran next to the Una River, past a place called 'beton' (concrete). It is there that many young people gathered in the evenings to socialize while drinking alcohol. Once Emir completed the 'routine circle' he stood in front of a mirror. This was the first time the viewers saw him. Then the video briefly faded into black, eventually exposing spectators to a quick glimpse of how Emir imagined his distant future: at the same place, only now as an old man.

Emir's video is interesting on many levels.¹ However, for the purposes of this article, I will narrow it down to two observations. The first observation concerns Emir's visit to cafés and relates to young people's predictable daily practices, one I call *café routine*. One way in which café routines have been discussed in day-to-day conversations and media coverage was critical of young people and it linked between café routines and lack of (political) engagement. For example, one can read/or hear about protestors in BiH, and those who look, and even ridicule, the protestors from cafés, while sipping their coffees. Another way in which this practice has been viewed was more empathetic and it made connections between café routines and the overall bad economic and political conditions in the country. For example, older people would tell me that they understood why young people spent so much time drinking coffee: 'what else was there for them to do when there

¹ For example, one could explore what happened to the time between present running and distant future that is absent from Emir's video.

were no jobs'. Although more understanding, this view too placed young people within a 'disengaged paradigm' (Farthing 2010).

The second observation concerns Emir's inability to imagine the future other than himself as an old man who is still in the same place. This relates to the conditions within which lives in BiH unfold and which are highly unpredictable, what I call *institutionalized unpredictability*. By this I mean the unpredictable ways in which state and non-state, small and big institutions (e.g. from families and privately-owned shops to universities and hospitals) functioned and reproduced one's inability to anticipate what would happen next, even within contexts where one expected to be able to do so. Unpredictability, I suggest here, very powerfully organized individual's aspirations and practices, and Emir's video illustrates that very well. I suggest that café routines must be understood within the wider framework of institutionalized unpredictability. Unpredictability, which according to Bourdieu creates 'a context favouring every form of manipulation of aspirations ... and the total disconcerting of anticipations...' (2000, 227-8), has a lot to do with power relations. Namely, power relations govern one's orientation towards the future as they shape both the experience of anticipation and hope (Bourdieu 2000, 225-6).

In what follows I first suggest that café routines are important because of the sense of predictability entrenched in them, which allowed young people a sense that they still had some control over their futures. Furthermore, I show how highly unpredictable conditions - which most of the time were debilitating - might also generate some sense of possibility, while highly predictable routines, which most of the time were cherished, might also create the impression that life is stuck. Secondly, I claim that understanding café practices through the framework of institutionalized unpredictability - which was shaped by both state and non-state related practices, relationships, processes and aspirations - would enable us to move away from thinking about young people spending time in cafés only within the disengaged paradigm, opening up possibilities to see café practices also as political acts, or rather to view young people as 'radically unpolitical' (Farthing 2010).

Institutionalized unpredictability

While doing research in Bihać much of my time was spent in the company of school/leavers and other young men and women who were in their early-mid twenties. In an attempt to learn about their engagements with, and hope for, the future, I noticed that many daily practices and relationships were shaped by unpredictability. To give only one typical example, when I tried to arrange an interview one day in advance with a young truck driver, employed in the private sector, it proved to be difficult as he was unable to know if he would be called for work. And while one could argue that, overall, life is unpredictable (only recently a suicide bomber in Mali, or an avalanche in Italy, left many people injured, or without their loved ones), I suggest that within certain conditions, unpredictability systematically dominates day-to-day lives, rendering both individuals' anticipation and decision making difficult. I call this institutionalized unpredictability.

Institutionalized unpredictability was shaping and shaped by both state and non-state related practices, relationships, processes and aspirations. And that, I suggest, is precisely what made it so powerfully pervasive and debilitating. On the one hand, institutionalized unpredictability was frustrating because it was not possible to evade it also within the most intimate relationships. For example, when parents were constantly confronted by occupational insecurity they were unable to anticipate how much money they would be able to earn per month and, as a consequence, they could not commit to financially support their children's aspirations (e.g. to study in a university outside Bihać); a situation which often caused some vexation among family members. On the other hand, institutionalized unpredictability generated feelings of negligence as it helped to reproduce a sense that there was not enough of the 'state' (Jansen 2014, 256-7). Jansen shows how individuals' expectations of, or yearnings for, 'normal life' are structured in relation to an ordering framework, or gridding, which required 'institutionalized predictability that would provide a basis on which one could mobilise one's 'agentive capacities', and which would 'to an extent be experienced as organised 'from above' (Jansen 2015, 72).

Consequently, institutionalized unpredictability meant that there was institutionalization, or standardization, of arbitrariness:² it seemed that nothing at all could be relied on, no relationships generated with/through state institutions, and not even through family intimacies. Thus, institutionalized unpredictability shaped and organized relationships between individuals and between individuals and institutions (e.g. lecturers or the university and students; office manager or commercial firms and 'subordinate' workers; between parents and their children): one's 'inability to know' produced other 'inabilities to know', namely, how some (state and non-state) institutions functioned unavoidably influenced other institutions and relations. 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. This meant that young Bišćani (as well as other city dwellers) lived in what Bourdieu calls 'an alienated time', time that is oriented by others (2000, 237). The following ethnographic vignette, which illustrates well the frustrating effects and modalities of institutionalized unpredictability within the state-run university context, also shows how institutionalized unpredictability at times opened up possibilities.

Ethnographic vignette: The University of Bihać

It is late January 2010. Snow has covered the streets of Bihać. It is cold. I am with Nikola, Emina, Šejla and Darmin in Pivnica, one of the local cafés. They all drink their usual coffee, I drink a peppermint tea. 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

² Of course my use of this term plays on the contradiction it embeds: both standardization and institutionalization in fact suggest predictability.

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 did not only relate to high unemployment rates in BiH, but also to this university's reputation,³ which would, in their view, further limit their possibilities. Since it is the exam period, 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 somewhat frustratingly) 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.⁴ This is how they make money. Most of our lecturers are external: they come to teach from Banja Luka, 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)

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 Bihać and they have to take a bus, pay for it, waste time and money 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."

Emina: "Look, it is not just that [what Darmin is saying]. I am in my final year now, and I cannot say that I have learnt much. I am still not quite sure what economics⁵ 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

³ According to Almaida, Elma and Edna this reputation derived from this university's relative novelty (it was established in the post 1992-5 war period), and various informal practices associated with it.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Emina was studying economics.

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)... Anyhow, he always fails a large number of students."

Bourdieu suggests that aspirations and expectations are adapted to objective chances (2000, 216). In another words, he argues that what governs one's inclination to invest (time, work, money etc.) in the various 'fields' is the adaptation of 'subjective hope of profit' to 'the objective probability of profit' (2000, 216). This means that one may invest in education, for example, in relation to their chances of success and as long as the education system was important for the reproduction of their capital and/or their social position. Not everyone has the same chance to profit or succeed, symbolically and materially, as the relationship between expectations and chances is governed by power: those with more social power, not only have more hope, but also, because of that, they are better placed to control their possibilities and impossibilities (2000, 216).

Thinking about Bourdieu's proposition in relation to this ethnographic vignette, one could say that with the particular professor in question, many students decided not to invest themselves, time-wise or emotionally, in his exams as they knew that their objective chances of success did not depend on this investment, but rather on the 'professor's mood' which could not be anticipated. In an encounter between the professor and his students, he was the one with more social power - even if he was himself governed by greater institutionalized unpredictability - which means that he simultaneously, and often randomly, closed off and opened up possibilities and hopes for students, and in fact controlled their (in)ability to anticipate. Namely, 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) or alternatively, one could not study at all and for various -again often unknown - reasons pass the exam. A variety of inconsistent and unpredictable possible outcomes of encounters between students and professors triggered among students at Bihać a sense of negligence and frustration.

In its overall ability to reproduce unequal economic and social structures, institutionalized unpredictability generated a sense that certain inequalities are rooted and, as I have heard so many times, nothing could be done about it! However, even with institutionalized unpredictability being most of the time exploitative, it also contained a possibility (cf. Vigh 2012, 151), generated through all sorts of *as if* performances. Namely, in order to obtain a university degree, students had to follow formal routes and procedures, even if in practice they often felt they did not necessarily learn much in this way. As the above ethnographic vignette shows, sometimes students did attend the exams *as if* they were studying and being really examined, and sometimes professors acted *as if* they were marking. 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. Thus, institutionalized unpredictability at the same time encouraged and discouraged hopes; hopes which *could not* and *would not* exist

without institutionalized unpredictability (for example, hope to pass the exam without studying, and even when writing a recipe).

Café routines within institutionalized unpredictability

Considering how unpredictable presents and futures were in BiH, it is not surprising that a routine set of practice became a very significant element in young persons' lives. During the period I spent in Bihać much of my socializing time and many of my ethnographic accounts took place in cafés. It was through café practices that I got exposed to young people's routines and developed my own routines. On average, I would either receive an invitation, or invite someone to go for a coffee, two or three times a day. 'Shall we go for a coffee?' [*Hoćemo li na kafu?*] was commonly a call to socialize and converse, even if most often, at least during the day, the majority of young people I spent time with, socialized over coffee.⁶ Indeed, coffee drinking was an old and popular tradition in BiH. Many people I talked to, older and younger, understood coffee as a beverage, and coffee drinking as a ritual, that has cultural significance in Bosnia. For example, Nikola, a 22-year-old friend, when comparing between people in BiH and countries located in 'the West', once told me that unlike 'Westerners', after finishing a day of work, people in BiH 'want to relax and socialize over a coffee...'. Thus, he, like many others, linked coffee drinking with social relations.

This coffee drinking tradition in BiH often also 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. Working in a rural community in BiH in the late 1980s, Bringa, for example, 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 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 coffee drinking was 'a marker of normal(ized) relationships' (Helms 2010, 24).

However, the café routines Emir's video engaged with differed from the above discussed home type 'coffee visits' in an important way: while the coffee vis-

⁶ It is beyond the scope of this article to address the question of the socioeconomic background of young people involved in café routines, but I will say that (unlike some people may think) café routines were practiced by young people who came from various socioeconomic statuses.

its discussed by these authors were mostly a cherished practice, one that many people in BiH were proud of, or which served, to use Herzfeld's words, as 'assurance of common sociality' (2005, 3), popular media and day-to-day conversations mostly disapproved of café routines, making links between these practices and political disengagement. Furthermore, café routines were also different in a spatial and temporal sense. Young people would meet up in one of their regular cafés - usually cafés where they felt most comfortable in terms of people that hang out there, the music that was played, the dress code, and so on – several times a day, every day, and at usual times. This spatiotemporal regularity allowed them some sense of anticipation, which, as I suggest, was crucial.

Ethnographies from other geographical contexts which identified similar practices of consumption by young people (especially young men), such as drinking tea in Senegal (Ralph 2008) or coffee in Albania in order to 'kill time' (Frederiksen 2009), smoking khat and watching films in Ethiopia (Mains 2012), or 'hanging out' on street corners or tea stalls in India (Jeffrey 2010), situated the experiences of too much free time, or unstructured time, in relation to new economic contexts that created high rates of unemployment. And while it might seem paradoxical that young people, despite the bad economic situation, spent so much time consuming coffee, tea, cigarettes, khat or even movies (all of which they needed money for –even if only little money), Graiouid, writing about the café culture in Morocco, showed how high rates of unemployment may allow for a 'bright future' of cafés (2007, 548).

In BiH too, at the time of my research, unemployment rates were, and still are, very high. Despite this, I would not say that the young men and women I spent time with had too much free unstructured time: they were all high school or university students and, in theory, their daily lives had structure. However, these structures, as I already suggested, were often unpredictable (cf. Jeffrey 2010, chapter 3). Thus, in order to understand café routines, I do not look for answers in high unemployment rates *per se*. Rather I propose looking at institutionalized unpredictability, which permeated all aspects of Bišćani's daily lives. According to Bourdieu, in order to confront future actively, an individual needs to have minimum assurances – for example financial security achieved through a stable job - concerning their present and future. Having this kind of security does not only allow one to have aspirations (adjusted to their chances), but it also opens up the possibility to control the future (2000, 225). It was this sense of possibility of controlling the future, which can happen on an individual level – when one can simply have a 'life plan' – or on a collective level, when one can be engaged in 'a reformist or revolutionary project' (2000, 225), that was missing from the everyday experiences of many young Bišćani.

This is why I suggest that café routines were important: they were a *response* to conditions of institutionalized unpredictability practiced by young men and woman in order to 'protect themselves from uncertainty' (Ehn & Löfgren 2010, 86) and to generate feelings of belonging (Rapport & Dawson 1998). Café routines were one of those rare practices in contemporary BiH through which young people could - to an extent - anticipate what would happen in the relatively *immediate* fu-

ture (cf. Čelebičić 2017), and which thus allowed them a sense that they still had some control, however small, over the immediate future. However, predictability embedded in café routines, as any routine, constituted ‘a cultural field full of tension’ (Ehn & Löfgren 2010, 81). In *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*, Ehn and Löfgren remarked that routines are often seen as examples of ‘dull and predictable existence’ (2010, 80). However, they argued that 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).

This tension was expressed also during my time in Bihać. Café routines were simultaneously perceived to be relating to ‘normal life’ (Greenberg 2011; Jansen 2014, 2015) or of 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’ (Hage 2009), lack of progress, lack of opportunities, boredom, and in that sense ‘a source of external embarrassment’ (Herzfeld 2005, 3). According to Bourdieu, when ‘the quasi-automatic coincidence between expectations and chances ... is broken’, time comes to be ‘really experienced’, generating forms of time such as waiting, boredom or ‘discontent’ (2000, 208-209). 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 [*prepričavanje*] of the same tales. I mean how many times can one (re)tell and (re)hear the same story?”

While Nikola suggested that cafés provided one with a sense of familiarity and security, Emina complained about the boredom of the café routine. They both, however, referred to the sameness reproduced through these daily rhythms. 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, or stability, embedded in café routines that which was simultaneously cherished and despised by many young man and woman in Bihać. Therefore, while it was clear that within the context of institutionalized unpredictability – which most of the time generated a sense that one had no power over future - young people wanted more stability and certainty, it would be wrong to assume that they considered all predictabilities to be always desirable.

Café routines as political acts?

Thus far I have suggested that institutionalized unpredictability was so effective *because* it was shaped by and shaping both state and non-state related routines and practices. Then, I have contextualized café routines within institutionalized unpredictability, dwelling on the importance of this practice’s potential to serve as an anchor in times of high unpredictability. As such, I have suggested that

café routines are young people's *response* to conditions of institutionalized unpredictability. In the remainder of this article I would like to add to this by suggesting that café routines could also be viewed as acts of *criticism* and sites of *reproduction* of institutionalized unpredictability. Thinking about café routines in terms of *response*, *criticism* and *reproduction* allows us to move away from thinking about young people along lines of apathy, or alternatively empathy. Crucially, it enables us to see their 'inability to do nothing' as 'radically unpolitical' choice (Farthing 2010).

According to Farthing (2010), the two most dominant paradigms in which young people have been discussed in relation to politics are that of engagement and disengagement: while some suggest that young people are apathetic and disengaged, others show that they are politically active and engaged but in novel ways, for example through online activism. Farthing argues that these approaches, which view young people either as political or apolitical, are neither adequate nor empowering young people. Instead, drawing on Beck's theory on young people in risk society, she proposes to think about young people as 'radically unpolitical'. This view, which does not conceive of young people in terms of engagement and disengagement, and which allows 'new *agendas* for youthful politics, new *spheres* of power and novel *forms* of action, including, powerfully, the ability to do nothing', is much more empowering (Farthing 2010, 188, emphasis in original). Namely, the argument is that by 'depriving politics of their attention and labour, and ultimately challenging its monopoly of power' (Farthing 2010, 190), young people are acting politically, even if the impression they leave or their own understanding of their acts seems not political (Beck 2001, 159). In other words, 'rejection of politics is a new form of action' (Farthing 2010, 190).

Furthermore, while disengaged and engaged models of political participation locate young people's sphere of (in)action in relation to their ideas about 'the state' (Farthing 2010, 189), thinking about young people as 'radically unpolitical' opens up possibilities to view their acts and forms of action also beyond the state, and as such it 'addresses the incipient unbundling of 'state' power' (Farthing 2010, 189). This, of course, is not to say that the state no longer matters. In the case of BiH, as Jansen has powerfully shown (2015), it is quite the contrary. However, when young people I spent time with told me, most often over a coffee, that they were not interested in 'politics', or that they did not believe in 'voting' and/or in the 'politicians', or alternatively, when the majority of them were skeptical about participation in NGOs, were they simply apathetic and lethargic, were they naïve, or was their rejection of what they considered to be 'politics', 'dirty' and 'corrupt' in itself a political act? As much as Emina's *as if* performance (once she realized how thing worked within her university setting) could be viewed as a 'radically unpolitical' choice, so I argue should café routines. These were routines through which young people's spheres of (in)action reached also beyond the state, when, for example, they actively decide not to volunteer in a particular NGO. Thus, through café routines young people responded to, criticized and reproduced an overall sense of institutionalized unpredictability, which relates to both state and non-state aspirations, processes and relationships.

Conclusion

Once I asked a young woman, Ivana, why, in her opinion, she and her peers spent so much time in cafés. She replied:

“Because we experience an existential crisis, spending time in cafés serves both as a good excuse and a useful task...one can always say ‘I can’t do X, because today I am having a coffee...’”

Ivana’s response addresses a few issues that this article was concerned with. First of all, and without breaking it into pieces, it suggests that young people’s ‘ability to do nothing’ was their ‘radically unpolitical’ choice (Farthing 2010). Furthermore, I suggest that a lot of the time when young people felt that they were experiencing an ‘existential crisis’, it had to do with the unpredictable ways of how things were done in BiH, and how various practices and interpersonal relations evolved in relation to it. This, as I showed, had a debilitating effects, both in practical and in moral terms, because institutionalized unpredictability allowed some a sensation of omnipotence and left others with feelings of impotence or paralysis. In other words, institutionalized unpredictability generated a sense that they had no power to influence the future (even if at times it created space for some possibility). Café routines, on the other hand, which were mostly about predictability, created a sense that one had something to do - in Ivana’s words it was ‘a useful task’. This meant that it allowed individuals to feel that they still had some control over their immediate future and therefore, that their lives were, to an extent, ‘normal’. Ivana’s comment and Emir’s video, mentioned at the beginning of this article, are thus very similar. It was because of the inability to engage with, or even imagine an alternative future, that Emir (and Ivana) spent his days engrossed in a routine of coffee drinking. However, running from café to café was not just Emir’s *response* to institutionalized unpredictability: crucially, by enacting café routines Emir (just like Ivana) in his video also actively *criticized* this non-spectacular, at times even frustrating, predicament of his present, whilst also *reproducing* it.

Acknowledgments

I thank anonymous reviewers for their very useful comments. While writing this article, I was financially supported by the European Research Council, project YouCitizen 295392. I am grateful for this support.

References

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2000. *Pascalian Meditations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bringa, Tone. 1995. *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way. Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village*. Princeton: University Press.
- Čelebičić, Vanja. 2016. “Čekanje i Nada: Život Mladih u Bihaću Nekad i Danas.” *Holon* 6 (1): 48-76.

- Čelebičić, Vanja. 2017. "Beyond to Vote or Not to Vote: How Youth Engage with Politics". In *Negotiating Social Relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Semiperipheral Entanglements*, eds. Stef Jansen, Čarna Brković and Vanja Čelebičić, 203-220. New York & London: Routledge.
- Farthing, Rys. 2010. "The politics of youthful antipolitics: representing the 'issue' of youth participation in politics." *Journal of Youth Studies* 13 (2): 181-195.
- Frederiksen, D. Martin. 2008. "Temporality in participation and observation perspectives from Albania and Georgia." *Anthropology Matters* 10 (2): 1-10.
- Graiouid, Said. 2007. "A Place on the Terrace: Café Culture and the Public Sphere in Morocco." *The Journal of North African Studies* 12 (4): 531-550.
- Greenberg, Jessica. 2011. "On the Road to Normal: Negotiating Agency and State Sovereignty in Postsocialist Serbia." *American Anthropologist* 113 (1): 88-100.
- Hage, Ghassan. 2009. "Waiting Out the Crisis: On Stuckedness and Governmentality". In *Waiting*, ed. Ghassan Hage, 97-106. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Helms, Elissa. 2010. "The Gender of Coffee: Women, Refugee Return, and Reconciliation Initiatives After the Bosnian War." *Focaal* 57: 17-32.
- Henig, David. 2011. "The Embers of Allah: cosmologies, knowledge, and relations in the mountains of central Bosnia." Doktorska dis., University of Durham. Available at Durham E Theses <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/915/>.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 2005. *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Jansen, Stef. 2014. "Hope For/Against the State: Gridding in a Besieged Sarajevo Suburb." *Ethnos* 79 (2): 238-260.
- Jansen, Stef. 2015. *Yearnings in the Meantime: 'Normal Lives' and the State in a Sarajevo Apartment Complex*. New York & Oxford: Berghahn.
- Jeffrey, Craig. 2010. *Timepass: Youth, Class and the Politics of Waiting in India*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Maass, Peter. 1997. *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War*. New York: Vintage.
- Maček, Ivana. 2009. *Sarajevo Under Siege. Anthropology in Wartime*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Mains, Daniel. 2012. *Hope Is Cut: Youth, Unemployment, and the Future in Urban Ethiopia*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Neuffer, Elizabeth. 2002. *The Key to My Neighbor's House: Seeking Justice in Bosnia and Rwanda*. London: Picador.
- Ralph, Michael. 2008. "Killing Time." *Social Text* 97 26 (4): 1-29.

Rapport, Nigel & Andrew Dawson, eds. 1998. *Migrants of Identity*. New York/Oxford: Berg.

Sorabji, Cornelia. 1989. "Muslim Identity and Islamic Faith in Socialist Sarajevo." Doktorska dis., University of Cambridge.

Sorabji, Cornelia. 2007. "Bosnian Neighbourhoods Revisited: Tolerance, Commitment and Komšilik in Sarajevo." In *On the margins of religion*, eds. João de Pina Cabral and Frances Pine, 97-112. Oxford: Berghahn.

Vigh, Henrik. 2012. "Critical States and Cocaine Connections." In: *African conflicts and informal power big men and networks*, ed. Mats Utas, 137-157. London: Zed Books.

Примљено / Received: 19. 01. 2017.

Прихваћено / Accepted: 21. 03. 2017.