Reshaping Citizenship through Collective Action: Performative and Prefigurative Practices in the 2013–2014 Cycle of Contention in Bosnia & Hercegovina

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Reshaping Citizenship through Collective Action: Performative and Prefigurative Practices in the 2013–2014 Cycle of Contention in Bosnia & Hercegovina

CHIARA MILAN

Abstract

This essay analyses the strategic practices adopted by social movement actors during the 2013 and 2014 mobilisations in Bosnia & Hercegovina. By bridging critical citizenship studies with literature on social movements, it classifies them as belonging to the realm of activist citizenship, but also as having a performative and prefigurative dimension. While the strategies adopted during the 2013 wave had a performative dimension, as they disrupted routines and created opportunities for social change, the 2014 practices are to be considered prefigurative, as they developed modes of interaction embodying a new model of citizenship at odds with the existing one based on the institutionalisation of ethno-national categories.

IN THE LAST DECADE, THE COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA witnessed a resurgence of contentious collective action. Several street protests were undertaken with the purpose of opposing the privatisation of public and common goods such as parks, urban spaces, and public utility infrastructures (Arsenijević 2014; Bieber 2014; Jacobsson 2015). The citizens of Zagreb opposed the commercialisation of public space in Croatia in 2006 and 2014,[1] while in 2009 students protested the commodification of higher education through faculty occupations in Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Bosnia & Hercegovina (Baćević 2015). In 2011 and 2012, demonstrations in Slovenia called capitalism and austerity policies into question (Razsa & Kurnik 2012; Kraft 2015; Thomassen & Toplišek in this collection). Throughout these mobilisations, movement actors 'began to formulate a profoundly anti-capitalist and radically democratic vision of their societies', bringing radical politics back to what Horvat and Štiks have termed 'the rebel peninsula' (Horvat & Štiks 2015, p. 2).

Notwithstanding a range of unfavourable conditions for inclusive civic collective action, mass protests broke out in Bosnia & Hercegovina in 2013 and 2014. During the first wave, known as the 'Baby Revolution' or by the acronym #JMBG,[2] demonstrators called for the

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[1]See Dolenec *et al*. in this collection.
[2]After the 13-digit *Jedinstveni matični broj građana* (Unique Master Citizens Number—JMBG).

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resolution of problems with the allocation of citizen registration numbers by taking to the streets in the main urban centres of the country. The second wave that followed in 2014, the so-called 'Social Uprising', began in a violent way in the former industrial hub of Tuzla and soon spread to several cities and towns across the country. Given the novelty of popular mobilisations in Bosnia & Hercegovina, this upsurge of collective action calls for further investigation and some systematic analysis of events.

Based on a detailed exploration of protest dynamics, trajectories, and strategic practices, in this essay I take both protest waves into account as instances of activist citizenship according to Isin's (2009) classification. By bridging the debates about citizenship with the social movement literature, I argue that the 2013 protests had a performative character, meaning that they represented moments of rupture that created possibilities for social change. By contrast, the 2014 protests are noteworthy for their prefigurative orientation, as they embodied alternative social arrangements that prefigured a new model of citizenship at odds with the existing one based on the institutionalisation of ethno-national categories. Besides distinguishing between the performative and prefigurative dimension of the 2013–2014 protests, empirical analysis also reveals that the 2013 protests were a learning experience for movement actors that created the conditions for the emergence of the 2014 wave, and that the cycle of contention had an empowering effect on the participants.

The essay is organised as follows. The first section outlines the theoretical and methodological framework and the concepts on which I draw to analyse the dynamics of the two waves of protest. The second section examines the social and political background in which both waves of protests emerged and unfolded. The following section investigates the two case studies, exploring key features relevant to the analysis. In particular, this part scrutinises the repertoires of action, frames, and organisational models adopted by movement actors. The next section then presents the cases in a comparative perspective, discussing the differences among the two protest waves, along with the learning and empowering effects created throughout the cycle of contention. The final section summarises the main findings of the study.

Theoretical and methodological framework

Citizenship is acknowledged to profoundly shape individuals 'as social and political beings', because of 'the status it bestows upon them, and … the privileges and restrictions it can entail' (Štiks 2015, p. 2). According to Isin, historical actors constitute themselves as citizens by enacting 'acts or deeds by which and through which subjects become, and constitute themselves as, citizens' (Isin 2009, p. 377). However, the way in which citizenship is expressed and the practices through which 'subjects act to become citizens and claim citizenship' have considerably changed throughout the twentieth century (Isin 2009, p. 368). In analysing this evolution, Isin identifies a distinction between 'active citizenship' and 'activist citizenship'. The former, he claims, is a concept that emerged during the French Revolution and persisted for two centuries, according to which the citizen is defined as a legal subject with singular loyalty, identity, and belonging, whose acts consist of 'routinized social actions that are already instituted' (Isin 2009, p. 379). These include activities such as 'voting, taxpaying and enlisting' (Isin 2009, p. 381). By contrast, 'activist citizenship' involves acts that might break the law, as they 'are not necessarily founded on law and responsibility' (Isin 2009,

p. 382). These are collective or individual actions that make a difference, as they 'rupture socio-historical patterns' (Isin & Nielsen 2008, p. 2). According to Isin, the shift from active to activist citizenship occurs when a citizen behaves 'in a way that disrupts already defined orders, practices and statuses' (Isin 2009, p. 384). These actions include, for instance, the occupation of public spaces such as squares, universities, and parks. It follows that activist citizens produce acts of citizenship as innovative moments through which they act to assert their rights (Isin & Turner 2002).

Isin's perspective on citizenship, which entails 'making rights claims across multiple social groups and polities' (2017, p. 501), seems to disregard the prefigurative orientation of certain acts of citizenship. Appropriating the concept of 'prefigurative politics' would allow a proper understanding of the strategic practices adopted by movement actors throughout the 2013–2014 cycle of contention in Bosnia & Hercegovina. In particular, the concept of 'prefiguration' could contribute to understanding the attempts made by movement actors to transform the existing model of citizenship based on the institutionalisation of ethno-national categories by enacting an alternative one through prefigurative practices. Therefore, I draw upon Leach's definition of prefigurative politics, which he refers to as 'a political orientation based on the premise that the ends a social movement achieves are fundamentally shaped by the means it employs, and that movements should therefore do their best to choose means that embody or "prefigure" the kind of society they want to bring about' (Leach 2013, p. 1004). Essentially, continues Leach, 'a prefigurative approach seeks to create the new society "in the shell of the old" by developing counterhegemonic institutions and modes of interaction that embody the desired transformation' (Leach 2013, p. 1004). Simply put, prefigurative actions entail acts that at once envision and actualise radical change. By embodying an alternative social arrangement, these practices prefigure in themselves an alternative (Graeber 2002). Hence, prefiguration means that a movement directly implements the changes it seeks, 'rather than asking others to make the changes on one's behalf' (Leach 2013, p. 1004). Examples of prefigurative acts are, for instance, the enactment of egalitarian practices that provoke 'cracks' in the surface of capitalism (Holloway 2010). In these struggles, horizontal and direct-democratic participatory forms of decision-making are attempted and created at the same time. Thus, they can be considered as examples of prefigurative politics, as they create a different kind of society in the course of the actual struggles themselves. As Sitrin (2007) aptly noted in her analysis of the occupation and recuperation of factories by workers in Argentina, horizontalism constitutes both the end and the means to reach that end, as in prefigurative politics means and ends are aligned (Leach 2013).[3]

In this essay, the 2013–2014 protests in Bosnia & Hercegovina serve as a case in point to investigate the attempts undertaken by movement actors to reshape social reality, in particular, the existing model of citizenship, by means of concrete acts. To grasp the transformative potential of such actions, the analysis of the protest cycle is based on the in-depth analysis of three factors in particular: the repertoires of action used, meaning the 'arrays of contentious performances that are currently known and available within some set of political actors' (Tilly & Tarrow 2006, p. 11); collective action frames, 'schemata of interpretation' that movement organisers use in order to 'enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and

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[3]Recuperation is used here to refer to a process by which workers or worker cooperatives seize control and/or ownership of their factories, often in response to a bankruptcy. After occupying them, workers re-start production following the principles of self- and horizontal management, and equal employee ownership.

label events and occurrences' (Goffman 1974, p. 21); and the actors involved in the protests, as well as their model of organisation. The essay relies on in-depth interviews, participant observation, and analysis of media articles. In particular, it draws on two different data sources: over 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews, of which 28 were with activists and non-governmental organisation (NGO) practitioners,[4] and two with external observers;[5] and archival material, media articles, press releases, flyers, and the magazine of the 2014 Sarajevo plenum (discussed below), *Glas Slobode* (*The Voice of Freedom*), collected both from the websites of the initiatives and in person during field trips to the country. I have chosen not to report identifying information about interviewees, given the sensitivity of the topics treated and the potentially easy identification of the subjects in the small activist environment in Bosnia & Hercegovina.[6]

Social and political context of Bosnia & Hercegovina: difficult circumstances for civic action

Bosnia & Hercegovina represents a challenging environment for the undertaking and development of inclusive civic action. Several factors such as the legacy of socialism, a post-conflict background, and the consociational system of power-sharing discourage mobilisation. Large-scale citizen-led protests are a phenomenon that has only recently emerged in the country, as the socialist system provided little room for the active expression of opposition through confrontational means of action. Historically, Bosnia & Hercegovina does not have a solid tradition of grassroots movements, nor of mass street demonstrations. By and large, street protests are not a common occurrence, as citizens of Bosnia & Hercegovina have seldom stepped out *en masse* to oppose the authorities since the end of the 1992–1995 war. Owing to the legacy of war, the general attitude of people towards public demonstrations is commonly one of fear and distrust. In a society still scarred by recent wars, the fear that massive gatherings will turn violent continues to discourage the population from adopting protests and street actions as tools of contention.

Moreover, in Bosnia & Hercegovina society is deeply divided along ethno-national lines; national and institutional rules foster further division amongst the citizens, and members of the ruling class are perceived as detached from the citizenry. A low voter turnout reflects the mistrust towards institutional politics: in the most recent local elections, only approximately 50% of eligible voters cast a vote (Kapidžić 2016). The consociational institutional configuration of the country divides people into three different nations, specifically mentioned in the Constitution as 'constitutive people': Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Serbs, and Croats. The constitutional setting of the country was laid down in 1995 with the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), commonly known as the Dayton Peace Agreement. The agreement established Bosnia & Hercegovina as a consociational democracy and a triple power-sharing system (Bieber 2005), following the model envisioned by the political scientist

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[4]Given the overlapping role of movement activists and NGO practitioners, it is difficult to make a clear distinction amongst the two categories, as the boundaries between the two are often blurred.
[5]The interviews were conducted in Bosnia & Hercegovina in July and November 2013, and April and May 2014, in the cities of Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar and Tuzla.
[6]The interviewees have been identified as among the key actors in both waves of protests by following the snowball procedure, a technique used for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who helps to provide contacts with other relevant informants.

Lijphart (1969), applied over the years as default mode of conflict regulation in other divided contexts such as, for instance, Lebanon and the Republic of Macedonia (Nagle & Clancy 2010). By ensuring an equal share of power to all contending ethno-national groups on a permanent basis, consociational political systems aim to achieve governmental stability and maintain democracy in societies divided along ethnic or religious lines (Lijphart 1969; Touquet & Vermeersch 2008). While, on the one hand, the signing of the GFAP put an end to a four-year conflict in Bosnia & Hercegovina, on the other hand it recognised the territorial gains that the principal hostile parties had acquired through violence (Gordy 2016), legitimising the ambitions of ethno-national contenders. Consequently, what had been initially intended as a provisional arrangement became eventually the Constitution (Majstorović *et al*. 2016, p. 1). The GFAP divided the country into two distinct and almost ethnically homogeneous areas, the entities, Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation of Bosnia Hercegovina (FBiH), and a third administrative unit, the autonomous Brčko district. Following the partition of the country into two entities, the capital Sarajevo was divided in two parts, one belonging to FBiH and the other, called Eastern Sarajevo (*Istočno Sarajevo*), to RS.[7] The two entities differ in terms of internal organisation. While RS is a centralised sub-state divided into municipalities, FBiH is composed of ten administrative and largely autonomous units called cantons. As a result of the decentralisation of the country, the central institutions of the state weakened, while the regional entities (FBiH, the cantons, and RS) enjoyed wide powers (Touquet 2012). Each sub-state layer of government is endowed with its own constitution, government, and court. Similarly, every entity has its own president, parliament, government, and court, as well as jurisdiction in the areas of civil administration, education, health, police, environment, and others. In FBiH, responsibility in these matters rests with the individual cantons, which are in turn divided into municipalities. The competences of the loose Bosnian–Hercegovinian central state institutions are limited to foreign policy and trade, defence, immigration, international communications facilities, inter-entity cooperation with regard to transportation, air traffic control, and fiscal and monetary policies.

The Constitution also enshrines a three-headed presidency which collectively serves as head of state. In order to guarantee equal representation to each constituent group, every president represents his ethnic constituency in the tripartite presidency. Hence, the Presidency of Bosnia & Hercegovina includes a Serb, a Croat, and a Bosniak member. The chairmanship of the presidency rotates every eight months (Bieber 2005, p. 48). Among its provisions, the GFAP established the Office of the High Representative, and appointed to the role of the High Representative a civilian with oversight of peace operations. Since 1997, the High Representative has held so-called 'Bonn Powers', namely the authority to adopt binding decisions in case of disagreement among local parties and to remove elected or appointed officials from office if they violate the commitments envisaged in the GFAP. The High Representative is not accountable to the state parliament of Bosnia & Hercegovina, only to the Peace Implementation Council, an international body composed of 55 states and charged with overseeing the country's peace process and implementing the Dayton Agreement. The state is estimated to spend half of its GDP maintaining this overly bureaucratic structure. Concerning political representation, the Constitution does not foresee any path outside the framework of

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[7]The part of Sarajevo in RS was initially called 'Serb Sarajevo' (*Srpsko Sarajevo*) in 1992, but was renamed Eastern Sarajevo (*Istočno Sarajevo*) in 2005 after a decision of the Bosnian Constitutional Court stated that the name of this 'Serb counterpart of Sarajevo' discriminated against non-Serb returnees (Armakolas 2007, p. 80).

the three constituent peoples (Gordy 2016). The individuals who do not fall into the Serb–Croat–Bosniak ethno-national grid (Hromadžić 2015), or refuse to self-identify with one of these groups, fall into the category of 'others' (*ostali*).[8] The 'others' are prevented from holding major state posts, as they cannot be appointed either to the House of Peoples (*Dom naroda*), the state parliament's upper chamber, or the presidency. The constitutional order reinforces even further ethnic representation by recognising veto rights for each constituent people in case a vital interest of the group is threatened or endangered (literally 'it is destructive of a vital interest of the Bosniak, Croat or Serb people'). At the state level, in entities and most cantons, each community has the right to veto Parliament decisions that may negatively affect the community (Bieber 2005). Although the Constitution recognises as vital interests issues related to, for example, constitutional amendments, identity, education, and religion, veto rights can be expanded to include virtually any issue (Bieber 2005).

If, on the one hand, the Constitution institutionalises ethnic categories, the demographic changes that occurred in the aftermath of the war affected and further reshaped the country's social fabric, reinforcing segregation based on ethnic identification. The majority of the war's internally displaced persons (IDPs) did not return to the homes they inhabited in the pre-war period, while other systemic transformations such as mass emigration from the country, and massive displacement and redistribution of people within the country after 1995 reordered the sense of local belonging (Bougarel *et al.* 2007). As a result, the majority of Bosnian Serbs are now settled in RS, while Bosniaks have moved to cantons inhabited mostly by their ethnic peers in FBiH. The Bosnian Croats followed a similar pattern and now populate the Hercegovinian region and the area along the Sava River in the north (Touquet & Vermeersch 2008). In FBiH only two cantons out of ten are significantly ethnically mixed (Murtagh 2016), while the others are considered almost ethnically homogeneous. There is thus little mixing between the different communities. The alleged cultural distinctiveness between the groups is reflected in several aspects of everyday life, such as media outlets, sporting affiliations and trade unions, public holidays, and the education system. From the beginning of the war, education has been divided along ethnic lines, taking the form of segregated schools and/or school programmes throughout the country, with specific curricula studied by children according to their ethno-national category of belonging.[9]

Following a constitutional arrangement that gives 'strong preference [to the] collective rights of ethnic groups to the detriment of individual citizens' (Mujkić 2008, p. 17), even the concept of citizenship commonly overlaps with that of ethno-national belonging (Džankic 2015). As a consequence, 'the identity dimension of citizenship is considered to be more relevant than the status or rights bestowed by citizenship' (Sarajlić 2010, p. 14). There is still much to do to mould the different ethnic communities into a new, supra-ethnic group of Bosnia & Hercegovina citizenry that transcends ethno-national partitions. Ethno-national belonging intended as the primary identification with either Bosniak, Serb, or Croat ethno-national community, remains more salient than the identification with Bosnia & Hercegovina as a state. Yet the country misses a 'truly shared sense of a Bosnian identity' (Touquet 2012, p. 27). However, the complex meaning of 'citizenship' and its overlap with ethno-national

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[8]These 'others' were estimated to be around half a million in 2013, that is to say one eighth of the Bosnian population (Belloni 2013, p. 283).
[9]For an in-depth account of the effects of school segregation on youth and civil society in the divided society of Mostar, see Hromadžić (2015).

belonging must be read against the background of a country in which citizenship and national identity never corresponded in the past, since Bosnia & Hercegovina 'has never been a nation state, nor developed crucial nation-state properties' (Sarajlić 2010, p. 2). At present, a model of citizenship founded on the attribution of collective rights to ethnic groups, which I define as 'ethnic-based citizenship', dominates over an approach grounded on the predominance of individual rights, which I call 'rights-based citizenship'.

The 2013 Baby Revolution[10]

The 2013 citizen protests erupted in Sarajevo on 5 June, sparked by a seriously ill baby girl in need of urgent medical treatment abroad. She was prevented from leaving the country because the Ministry of the Interior was unable to allocate her the 13-digit *Jedinstveni matični broj građana* (Unique Master Citizens Number—JMBG) necessary to obtain identity cards and other personal documents. The stalemate originated from a disagreement among Bosnian MPs upon the amendments necessary to adopt a unified state law on identification numbers.[11]

In the evening of 5 June 2013, a group of activists and relatives of the baby organised a demonstration in the capital to raise awareness of the problem and pressure politicians to resolve the issue of registration numbers (Horvat & Štiks 2015). The demonstrators occupied the square in front of the National Parliament building, while thousands of people formed a human chain that surrounded the premises, inside which a meeting of MPs and businessmen was taking place. In the following days, protests spread from the capital to the major urban centres of FBiH. On the streets, demonstrators urged the adoption of a legal framework allowing the allocation of identification numbers at the state level, in order for newborn babies to obtain their IDs and therefore access to citizenship rights. Day and night, several thousand demonstrators peacefully occupied the square in front of the National Parliament for 25 consecutive days. During this period, demonstrators organised meetings and set up a playground for children, ironically named 'the terrorists' playground', in response to the allegations of some MPs who accused the demonstrators of constituting a threat to their safety. The movement organisers publicly declared 1 July 'Dismissal Day' (*otkaz* in the local language) and stated that all of their MPs were dismissed, since they were 'no longer credible representatives of the citizens of Bosnia & Hercegovina'.[12] The protestors eventually released a communiqué on behalf of the citizens of Bosnia & Hercegovina, encouraging the international community to 'withdraw all the previous invitations to the representatives of Bosnia & Hercegovina to meetings, conferences and other formal events' in order 'to clearly show the Bosnia & Hercegovina politicians that they finally have to take responsibility and do the job they were elected to do'.[13] The demonstrators disbanded later that day (Mujkić 2013).

[10]Throughout the essay I use the terms 'Baby Revolution', #JMBG, and *bebolucija* interchangeably to refer to the protests taking place all over the country between 6 June and 1 July 2013.
[11]'Thousands Protest over Bosnia Baby ID Row', *Al Jazeera Balkans*, 11 June 2013, available at: http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2013/06/2013611152720320390.html, accessed 20 December 2016.
[12]Interview with a self-identified independent activist, Sarajevo, 19 April 2014.
[13]'#JMBG Manifesto', *JMBG.org*, 21 June 2013, available at: http://www.jmbg.org/jmbg-manifesto/, accessed 5 July 2013.

Action repertoires

Throughout the protests, the repertoire of action was intentionally kept peaceful as movement organisers opted for a non-confrontational, collaborative stance towards the authorities. They submitted their demands to MPs; negotiated through a delegation on the second day of protest; and bargained with the High Representative, the highest authority in the country, for the 'release' of MPs and businessmen trapped inside the Parliament premises. As a matter of fact, protest organisers had publicly called for the use of non-violent methods throughout the square occupation. In a statement, they announced that dissatisfied citizens (*nezadovoljni građani* in the local language)[14] would protest by means of disobedience and other non-violent methods, since according to movement organisers the fight for children and the law on ID numbers had to be conducted with dignity and by non-violent means. Besides the occupation of the square, movement organisers also went on marches, carrying humorous effigies of the politicians from both Bosnia & Hercegovina entities with the intention to ridicule them. The choice of a formal repertoire, which envisaged the organisation of a concert as the final event, provoked criticism from many activists, who blamed the movement organisers for having turned a protest into a cheerful event, depriving it of its political meaning and contentious character,[15] which, in their opinion, 'undermine[d] the spring of a genuine movement'.[16]

Collective action frames

With the purpose of keeping the protests independent from interference by political parties and other formal organisations, movement organisers strove to frame their actions giving them a civic meaning from the beginning. Through the occupation of the square and the organisation of non-violent demonstrations, protestors claimed their rights to citizenship as granted by the Constitution. In so doing, they tried to avoid any reference to ethno-nationalism and party politics in their discourse, conscious of the risk of being discredited for 'politicising the issue'.[17] Similarly, they did not tackle the topic of constitutional changes, or other subjects that could have been labelled as having a political dimension. The terms 'politics' and 'political' have negative connotations for ordinary citizens in Bosnia & Hercegovina, implying 'ethnically driven' and 'subject to party manipulation'. Similarly, the term 'apolitical' does not mean 'without political meaning', but rather free of the influence of any political party, NGOs, or other 'partisan' subjects considered as being involved in immoral political deal-making (Helms 2007) or being unresponsive to local constituents owing to their dependence on donor funding and priorities (Pickering 2006). Therefore, during the #JMBG mobilisation, claims remained focused on human rights and the issue of ID numbers framed in civic and 'apolitical terms'. The primacy of citizenship over ethno-nationality as a unifying identity was made clear on a placard carried through the streets of Sarajevo, which read: 'Neither Serbs, Croats nor Bosniaks. Citizens above all' ('*Ni Srbi, ni Hrvati, ni Bošnjaci: Ljudska bića prije svega*').

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[14]Three official languages are recognised in Bosnia & Hercegovina: Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. Since linguistically they differ only slightly among each other, throughout the essay I refer to them using the singular term 'local language'.
[15]Interview with an activist and academic, Tuzla, 26 April 2014.
[16]Interview with an NGO practitioner participant of the #JMBG car blockade, Sarajevo, 29 October 2013.
[17]Interview with a self-identified independent activist, Sarajevo, 19 April 2013.

Actors and organisational models

The network among the actors on the square appeared quite loose throughout the month of occupation. At the start of the demonstrations, a press release was circulated, inviting official organisations, such as labour unions and youth associations, to support the protesters by sharing their spaces and resources, but on the condition that they only join the demonstrations on an individual basis. Although officially not participating in the protests as representatives or spokespersons of their organisations, NGO members were present on the square, acting as intermediaries between the demonstrators and politicians and the media.[18] Many informants blamed these protest leaders, many of which were employed in local and international NGOs, for participating with the intent of trying to divert popular dissatisfaction to their own goals. Such behaviour is said to have prevented the development of horizontal networks and coalitions necessary to trigger broader solidarity and build new subjectivities, and the adoption of a more radical repertoire. According to some informants, no room was left for open and participatory debate during the protests, and young people were denied full participation in the assemblies, as the leadership-centred organisation model adopted by several actors lacked elements of horizontality.[19] This also indicates a generational gap existing between an older generation employed in the third sector since the end of the war, and younger people who, although seldom politically active, were pushing to gain more space and opportunities for involvement.

The 2014 'social uprising'

Eight months after the 'Baby Revolution', in February 2014, a workers' demonstration in the north-eastern city of Tuzla triggered a wave of mobilisation that some scholars defined as 'the most significant bottom-up challenge to ethnically constituted disorder, bypassing ethnic division in favour of a proto-civic sense of common citizenship and class solidarity' (Majstorović *et al.* 2016, p. 3).

The protests started when redundant workers of recently privatised factories in the industrial hub of Tuzla organised a demonstration in front of the cantonal government building. The disenfranchised workers demanded the revision of the privatisation process of their factories, as well as their wage arrears and the unpaid benefits to which they were entitled but unable to collect (Milan 2014b). In fact, the companies went bankrupt after the owners became heavily indebted with bank loans. As a consequence, the owners stopped paying wages and pension funds to the workers. On 5 February 2014, riot police violently cracked down on the demonstrations, which sparked solidarity rallies all over the country, and the protests soon spread nationwide (Milan 2014a). The workers' strike of Tuzla had a domino effect: their rage transformed into a general upheaval, known as the 'Social Uprising' (*Socijalni bunt*) or 'Bosnian Spring' (*Bosansko proljeće*). In spite of the violent turn that the rallies initially took in Sarajevo, Zenica, and Mostar, these riots ended three days later, while street actions and protests continued until mid-May 2014.

[18]Interview with an activist who participated in the #JMBG car blockade in 2013 and the plenum of Sarajevo in 2014, Sarajevo, 20 October 2013.
[19]Interviews with an activist who participated in the #JMBG car blockade in 2013 and the plenum of Sarajevo in 2014, Sarajevo, 20 October 2013; a student who participated in both waves of protests, Sarajevo, 15 April 2014; and a human right activist, Sarajevo, 23 April 2014.

Action repertoires

The repertoire of action changed dramatically from the previous wave. The demonstrators shifted from the adoption of a conventional type of action, such as peaceful street demonstrations and the occupation of city squares, to a more confrontational and disruptive one, which included violent tactics. At first, groups of individuals stormed institutional buildings associated with political authority, targeting in particular the premises of cantons and municipal governments, as well as the headquarters of political parties. Although it is not clear yet whether violence was planned or spontaneous, during the first days of violent protests it was mostly young high school students and football fans who were seen in the main urban centres storming public buildings and creating havoc in the city centres. The media referred to them as 'hooligans' thereby depriving the protestors of any political legitimacy. In Mostar the headquarters of both nationalist parties, Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije—*SDA) and the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia & Hercegovina (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica BiH—*HDZ BIH) became the target of the enraged crowd, while in Tuzla and Sarajevo groups of people entered the offices of the municipal and canton authorities, throwing outside fittings and furnishings. They set fire to private cars parked near the premises and ransacked the main urban centres, burning kiosks and hurling eggs and stones. After almost three days of riots, the situation calmed down. Local activists gathered together and began to organise peaceful street marches on a regular basis. Rallies and sit-ins took place in front of buildings associated with political authority.

After the turmoil, hundreds of Bosnia & Hercegovina citizens gathered to constitute participatory, leaderless assemblies called 'plenums'. The first plenum was organised in Tuzla a few days after the protest began. In the plenums, citizens articulated demands and grievances in a coherent way, and their demands were sent to politicians (Arsenijević 2014). The plenum model drew on the occupation of the Faculty of Philosophy in Tuzla in 2009 (Eminagić & Vujović 2013), during which horizontal assemblies were organised in order to discuss the demands of the students. In turn, the students of Tuzla followed the repertoire adopted during the student protests in Croatia the same year. In Bosnia & Hercegovina, plenums were set up between February and March 2014 in more than 20 different places across the country— although most of them were concentrated in FBiH.

Confronted by internal divisions between the faction wishing plenums to be recognised as a sort of citizen council, and the group who stressed their emancipatory potential as places to exercise direct democracy (Marković 2015), and weakened by concrete issues such as the lack of free space available for gathering, the majority of the plenums ceased their activities in May 2014.[20] During the floods that affected Bosnia & Hercegovina (and other parts of Southeast Europe) in mid-May 2014, the plenums that had not ceased their activities were converted into cells which served to coordinate the volunteers providing assistance to the victims of the flood through food and primary supplies distribution. In practice, the people active in the plenums and the volunteers joining them after the flood arranged transportation to drive people and aid material from the main towns to the villages hit by the inundation.

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[20]'Why Bosnia's Protest Movement Ran out of Steam', *Balkan Insight*, 18 April 2014, available at: http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/why-bosnia-s-protest-movement-ran-out-of-steam, accessed 8 August 2015.

Furthermore, they promoted financial donations in support of the victims, hence creating a network of solidarity.

Collective action frames

During the #JMBG in June 2013, movement organisers elaborated a discourse that maintained a narrow focus on rights-based citizenship, setting aside any other economic and political concern, as well as any attempt to elaborate a critique of the existing constitutional setting of the country. By contrast, on the occasion of the February 2014 uprising socio-economic issues assumed a central importance, becoming the binding force that held together different social groups. The demands of the demonstrators tackled different topics, from the reform of the educational system to the improvement of economic policies, as well as calls for transparency and to fight corruption. Activists on the streets and in the plenums framed their grievances as socio-economic ones and blamed the unaccountable and irresponsible political class. This triggered a sense of injustice among the population that sparked solidarity across ethnic lines, boosting mobilisation across the ethno-national divide. Hence, the socio-economic frame resonated with diverse social groups and the general populace.

Actors and organisational models

The 2014 protests appropriated, to a certain extent, the form of the Occupy movement. This international movement has spread throughout the world since 2011, gaining popularity as a model of direct action democracy (Razsa & Kurnik 2012) and for embracing a non-representational and non-hierarchical structure as a reaction to a perceived crisis of representative politics (Sitrin & Azzellini 2014; Della Porta 2015). The adoption of direct democratic forms of decision-making was the main novelty of the movement, as opposed to previous international movements that made use of different types of organisational forms, developing alliances with formal actors such as voluntary organisations and trade unions alongside grassroots groups.[21] Formal actors such as NGOs, trade unions, and political parties were not allowed in the plenums, which were conceived as arenas with neither leadership nor representation. Every individual had the right to express an opinion and to vote regardless of ethno-national belonging. Citizens participated in the plenums as 'normal people in a normal country'.[22] This call for normality recurred throughout the plenum activities. To give one example, a moderator addressed the audience in Tuzla as 'normal citizens in a normal country'.[23] The reform proposals elaborated by the thematic working groups—on the basis of the demands that emerged collectively during the plenary sessions—were voted on by plenum participants following a direct-democratic method of decision-making, 'one person, one vote'. Thus, participants voted as individuals, rather than as members of a certain ethno-national group. Many NGO practitioners and public figures from cultural and political life often acted as moderators during the discussions, which included people from different social backgrounds. The moderators, who rotated at every session, were chosen to perform this role at the end of each plenum meeting and by means of public vote. As one activist put it,

[21]See for instance the study of the Global Justice Movement of the early 2000s (Della Porta 2007).
[22]Skype interview with an activist participating to the Social Uprising in Bihać, 13 July 2015.
[23]Ninth plenum in Tuzla, 22 February 2014.

I am involved in an NGO, like others: most of us come from an academic and NGO background. But there are also students, the unemployed, workers, it is pretty diverse. It is a heterogeneous group of people participating, nothing really fixed and categorised. We are there as ourselves, not representing anybody.[24]

In the plenums, representation was rejected in favour of an alternative model of direct democracy. The assemblies were allegedly leaderless; nobody was entitled to represent anybody else, nor to speak on his/her behalf.

Performative and prefigurative practices of citizenship

In the light of the factors analysed above, both waves of protest can be classified as constituting instances of activist citizenship. The acts of the demonstrators during the 2013 and 2014 protests went in fact beyond routinised social actions, typical of active citizenship, to break routines and practices (Isin 2009). The #JMBG mobilisation corresponded to a moment of rupture in which individuals expressed and enacted citizenship by occupying public space and calling for the right of Bosnia & Hercegovina citizens, and in particular babies, to a normal life. The occupation of the square in front of the Parliament can be classified as an act moving beyond formally designated spaces for citizenship, which define 'active citizenship'. I classify these strategic actions as performative, as movement actors limited themselves to demanding that the ruling elite fulfil their duties, without creating or forming a new socio-political model of citizenship. Similarly, the claims of movement actors focused narrowly on the respect for human rights and the rights of citizenship as established by the Constitution, without prefiguring another type of system opposed to the existing one, which had made such a political stalemate possible. Furthermore, the protest lacked a horizontal orientation, as a small group of NGO practitioners and activists tended to prevail and lead the demonstrations to the detriment of wider participation.

By contrast, during the 2014 'Social Uprising', demonstrators at first adopted a more radical and violent repertoire, which physically defied the dominant order. Movement actors embraced strategic practices that at once challenged the traditional, hierarchal way of organising, typical of the previous wave of protest. Through the plenums, movement actors enacted a new socio-political model of citizenship based on direct democratic means of organisation and decision-making, which radically called into question the existing constitutional arrangement envisioning citizenship as grounded in ethnic partition. The plenums followed a more horizontal and participatory path, insofar as individuals took part and voted exclusively on an individual basis. The practices emerged throughout the 2014 mobilisation, and in particular the plenums, directly implemented the societal and institutional changes that movement actors sought. Thus, I qualify these strategic practices as prefigurative, because they aimed to transform the democratic politics of the country by enacting 'an alternative world in the present' (Yates 2015, p. 4). Specifically, the model of plenums reinforced a rights-based approach to citizenship, which to date still faces deep social and political challenges to establishing a foothold in the country owing to the salience of the ethnic-based model of citizenship. Furthermore, the demands elaborated in the plenums shifted the focus from the respect for and observance of human rights enshrined in the Constitution (as was the case in the 2013 protests) to a

[24]Interview with an activist, Tuzla, 26 April 2014.

radical change in the whole political system; a change that the citizens themselves enacted through the practice of plenums. Constituting new subjectivities, the plenums prefigured the creation of a different democratic model, based on participatory assemblies, working groups, and participation on an individual basis, regardless of ethno-national categorisation. Essentially, in the plenums movement actors did not limit themselves to submitting proposals that, if accepted by the ruling elite, would be implemented within the existing institutional and political framework in which citizens and the elite were embedded. Plenums did not only constitute acts of resistance that disrupted routines, as did the 2013 protests and the simultaneous occupation of the square in front of the National Parliament building, but also represented acts that prefigured a new socio-political paradigm that challenged the existing one established by the Dayton arrangement. In the words of Graeber, plenums performed a society 'as it has to be' (Graeber 2002), as the strategies and practices adopted by movement actors reflected their ends.

Learning and empowerment between 2013 and 2014

Besides prefiguring a new model of citizenship, the analysis also reveals that the 2013–2014 cycle of protests constituted a learning experience for movement actors. Several interviewees recount that the *bebolucija* represented an important occasion in which movement organisers 'learnt an important lesson'.[25] One informed observer claimed that the 2014 uprising would never have happened had the 2013 #JMBG protests not taken place,[26] as the 2013 events created the preconditions for the following wave to occur. Similarly, some demonstrators have suggested that the 2013 wave paved the way for further and more contentious mobilisations to occur since, by maintaining a peaceful mass protest and marginalising the violent fringes, movement actors contributed to normalising the practice of street demonstrations in a high-risk environment for contentious action.[27] From the interviews, it emerged that the #JMBG mobilisation had proved that civil disobedience and resistance could be accepted as conventional democratic tools of expressing citizenship in Bosnia & Hercegovina. In this regard, a movement leader commented that the 2013 *bebolucija* in Sarajevo broke 'the mental barricades of fear among the inhabitants of Sarajevo' which had so far prevented the citizens of the capital from taking to the streets (Arnautović 2013). Both activists and movement organisers stressed the significance of previous experience: they had learned from their participation in—and consequent reflection upon—the previous waves, and transferred this knowledge and experience from one to another.

This learning process that activists and movement organisers mentioned in the interviews seems to have begun earlier than 2013, though, and to not be limited to national experience. Protest leaders were inspired by similar events in the region and beyond. As mentioned above, the practice of the plenums drew on the model adopted during the student protests and occupations across the region, and also on the practices of the Occupy Wall Street protest movement that had begun in 2011 in the US, and the Spanish *indignados* the same year (Della Porta 2015). Additionally, the discourse identifying a cleavage opposing the majority of

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[25]Interview with a self-identified independent activist, Sarajevo, 19 April 2013.
[26]Interview with a journalist who participated in both waves of protests, Sarajevo, 1 December 2014.
[27]Interviews with a student who participated in both waves of protests, Sarajevo, 15 April 2014; an activist of plenum Sarajevo, 20 April 2014; and a human right activist, Sarajevo, 23 April 2014.

citizens ('losers', ordinary people excluded from the decision-making process) to the 'winners' (corrupt politicians) invokes the slogan of those previous movements, 'We are the 99%'.

Amongst the interviewees, it emerged that participation in the cycle of mobilisation had empowered the demonstrators, some of whom perceived themselves as having gained political leverage over the ruling elite.[28] The resignation of multiple cantonal governments in the aftermath of the 2014 riots, as well as the (provisional) suppression of some benefits for state employees as demanded by the demonstrators, such as the abolition of the 'white bread' allowance,[29] contributed to fuelling this feeling of empowerment. As a young participant said: '[In 2014] power holders felt threatened even physically [by the violent turn the demonstrations took]. It is a fact, and it is the first time I saw the system was scared, that there was the possibility to change a bit the state of affairs'.[30] The protest wave also strengthened the activist network upon which the 2014 mobilisation was based. The oppositional front grew over the course of the protest cycle, as the networking process that had begun during the 2013 wave of mobilisation continued throughout and following the events of 2014.

Conclusions

By using the concept of 'prefigurative politics', this essay set out to demonstrate that acts of citizenship can have a performative orientation, breaking routines and challenging power relations, as well as a prefigurative dimension, aimed at transforming social reality by means of concrete acts. Specifically, analysis of the 2013–2014 cycle of protests in Bosnia & Hercegovina serves as a case in point to demonstrate the use of strategic actions to perform and embody a concept of citizenship at odds with the status quo. In both waves of protests, growing criticism of a model of citizenship grounded on ethnic divisions emerged and became evident in the practices and slogans voiced on the streets, which called for citizenship based on respect for individual rights. Reclaimed through street marches and the occupation of the square in front of the National Parliament during the 2013 protests, this civic model of citizenship was enacted in 2014 through the plenums, participatory assemblies that prefigured a transformed model of citizenship in which every person has the right to vote and can participate actively and in a horizontal way in the decision-making process. Instead of attempting to influence legislative and political decisions affecting their lives by urging the ruling elite to make the changes on their behalf, citizens enacted the change through the practice of plenums.

To conclude, this analysis has revealed that a prefigurative orientation of 'acts of citizenship' could help to grasp the transformative potential of the movements such as those that emerged in Bosnia & Hercegovina throughout the 2013–2014 cycle of protests. Moreover, it offers an alternative perspective on the development of such practices and the goals they envisioned and mirrored at the same time. Although one might claim that the 2013–2014 cycle of protests did not bring about any concrete change in terms of how citizenship is articulated at the institutional level, the transformative orientation embodied by the movement's strategic

[28]Interviews with a student who participated in both waves of protests, Sarajevo, 15 April 2014; an activist of plenum Tuzla, *via* Skype, 8 September 2014; and an activist of plenum Zenica, Zenica, 13 July 2015.

[29]According to the Law on Salaries and Allowances of FBiH, elected officials and holders of executive functions have the right to receive salaries for a whole year after their mandates end, of the same amount as they had while in office. Such an allowance is called 'white bread' (*bijeli hljeb*).

[30]Interview with a journalist, informed observer, who participated in both waves of protests, Sarajevo, 1 December 2014.

practices cannot be disregarded. Notwithstanding the presence of political and cultural hurdles to the affirmation of a rights-based citizenship in Bosnia & Hercegovina, citizens participated in the plenums as owners of certain rights rather than as members of a particular ethno-national group, prefiguring a new socio-political model that moves beyond the realm of activist citizenship and radically calls into question the existing constitutional arrangement based on ethnic partitions in practice.

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