

YOUNG PEOPLE, HIP-HOP, AND THE MAKING OF A 'STREET UNPOLITICS' IN
SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

by

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ABSTRACT

In Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, a growing community of young people are using hip-hop music and the culture surrounding it as a grammar with which to evade the ethno-political fixity imposed upon them equally by projects of political nationalism and of reconciliation. Insofar as they respond to the legally and socially imposed regime of fixed ethnic identity and the precarious economic conditions they are faced with, they do so by imagining, playing, and working within the city as an archipelago of cosmopolitan spaces. In doing so, they also make urbanity and urban belonging an alternative pathway to political belonging, one that is premised in opposition to the country's ethno-national regime. Within these archipelagic spaces, young people develop a “grammar of politics” deeply influenced by local and global hip-hop by which to narrate and understand their own lives and mark their resistance to the status quo and the project of Bosnian state-making in which they are inevitably entangled. Following Rys Farthing, I argue that this set of discourses and practices represents a “youthful unpolitics”--a form of politics replete with nihilism and contradiction, that fades in and out of legibility, and that offers a political alternative precisely by not offering an alternative. In order to do so, I visit the spaces in which these young hip-hop fans circulate, and show how their construction of a culture around both 'local' and 'global' hip-hop provides a site in which alternative futures are imagined and the 'meantime' present is policed in order to effect such futures.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Biti ovdje podoban znači ne bit' slobodan. It all started with a lyric—a phrase that suggests not only resistance, but a radical rejection of the epistemological state of *being* “Bosniak,” “Bosnian Croat,” or “Bosnian Serb” in the fractured polity of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

Biti ovdje podoban
Being well-behaved in this country
means being in chains in this country
znači ne bit' slobodan

In Kontra’s 2012 song “Izagsi” (“Put it out”), the Sarajevo rapper is laying out a framework for resistance that challenges nothing less than the totality of social and political life in BiH, a status quo that is largely a result of the violence undertaken over the course of 1992-1995 war and the peace-building and reconciliation efforts that have followed since. Under that broad umbrella are the political power-sharing agreement that now forms the basis for the country’s constitution, the ethnically-segregated reterritorialization of the country, the ethnically-specific biopolitical bureaucracies (including vital records and education), and the mass of graft and corruption that is experienced both through personal negotiations with the state bureaucracy and in popular discourse.

In his song, Kontra identifies a malaise—totalized, overdetermined, and fixed so-called “ethnic identities”—and a cause of that malaise: being *podoban*, a word that gestures towards conformism, compliance, good behavior, and normativity. To him, silence is not just complicity: silence has actively (re)produced the divisive politics and culture of corruption that came to the fore as Bosnia and Herzegovina reconstituted itself as a sovereign state. What is implied in his song is a radically alter path—one that rejects the values and ideas of his parents’ generation, a generation many young people see as having failed them. Kontra claims his place as the voice of

Young Bosnia, emphasizing his youth by telling listeners he is 22 years old, rejects the “facts” peddled by those offering him unsolicited advice, and takes aim at what he sees as a ludicrous and contradictory construct of “tolerance.” The beats that form the background of the song pound loud and aggressive, complementing the belligerent, masculine register of his sharp delivery.

For many of the young people in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina I spent time with over the course of June and July 2016, this song was nothing less than an anthem. Yet, perhaps paradoxically, they still went about their everyday lives normally, or *podobno*, as Kontra might say—well-behaved. This thesis concerns itself with these young people—largely middle class and male—and in particular how they mobilize hip-hop as an identity, a set of social and spatial practices, and a particular form of solidarity and care in order to make do in a geography that is simultaneously replete with hopelessness and shot through with possibilities. The major finding of this thesis is realized in an original research paper (Appendix A), which argues that young people’s everyday political attitudes constitute a kind of ‘street unpolitics’ in which an active turning away from political institutions and a particular discursive public sphere serves to delegitimize those institutions while creating alternative political spaces. In the section that follows, I lend some greater context to this project. Then, in the next chapter, I trace out the project in greater detail.

Between being free and being stuck: Liminal lives in post-socialist space

This project began with the choice between being *podoban* and being *slobodan* (free), but the space in between is a wide berth. In BiH today, young people are actively managing a crisis of youth and adulthood sandwiched between ongoing economic crisis, complete and utter political illegitimacy, and an uncertain future. It is for this reason that youth are the subject of

this study: their negotiation of this post-conflict, post-socialist space has much to say about the ways in which political power is extended and contested across spaces. Different young people have managed in different ways. For many—particularly those in urban, middle class families—the path to being *slobodan* leads straight through the international border, taking young Bosnian doctors and engineers to Germany, Austria, and elsewhere in the developed world to work and earn respectable pay checks. Yet, this is a narrow and precarious path: between earning a degree, accumulating work experience and language skills, securing a job elsewhere on the continent, and finally passing through the lengthy process of obtaining a work visa, many find themselves far away from what they considered their youth. Others commit themselves to the project of moving up in—and improving—BiH, which often results in a move to one of the country’s three major cities: Sarajevo, Banja Luka, or Mostar. These moves themselves are politically inflected, suggesting loyalty to (or at the very least a feeling of relative safety with) one of the country’s three constituent ethnic groups over another—Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats respectively. It also means mobilizing one’s *štele*, or connections—a concept that has come to stand in for the complex process of navigating and negotiating the country’s economic and political bureaucracies (Koutkova 2015). That one must be well-connected to economic and social privilege in order to accumulate it is an idea that is often taken for granted, so commonsensical it is.

Between these two broad groupings of young people is a mass suspended in liminality—those who have not yet achieved a winning formula for sustenance in the country or elsewhere. I make no distinction here between people who might consider themselves to have “failed” and those who are merely in the process of achievement, e.g. those who are studying for a medical degree with plans to leave the country. In the hip-hop cultures I observed, the line between being

stuck and moving shifted significantly and shifted often, as when a college degree that had been on hold for years was quickly finished in just one year or a business idea came to fruition after years of trying. In any case, the young people I observed engaging in this hip-hop culture generally fit squarely in the remit of this liminality, though some held jobs or were out of school.

It is crucial here to observe that the everyday motions of studying for exams, trying to find a job, or *ganjati* (chasing after) government documents or services are not activities that are neatly and simply divorced from practices such as listening to music or engaging in hip-hop related social activities. Neither can we fully extricate seemingly unrelated activities, such as the hours my interlocutors spent playing video games, smoking cigarettes, and drinking coffee. That is not to somehow pathologize all activities these young people did as “hip-hop” activities. Rather, these everyday practices constitute both a contrast to the recreational rhythms of hip-hop culture as well as a chance for hip-hop to intercede. For the young people I observed, hip-hop culture was one way of confronting the frustrating lived experience of what Čelebičić (2017) calls “stuckedness,” a way to dream of (and riot for) a better Bosnia, and a way of escaping whatever it was they were dealing with at home, in school, or at work. It was also whatever happened to be on, and something to do on a Friday night. In other words, hip-hop was the soundtrack to a life lived in the in-between spaces.

Thus, this thesis concerns itself with one approach to living and dealing with that liminality that may be used in conjunction with other strategies or exclusively, one that is sometimes pursued as a pastime and other times as a career: the consumption and production of hip-hop music and culture. Hip-hop music became popular in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early aughts, and its democratic nature, conversational style, and the expansion of accessible technology quickly made it a viable way for young people to communicate their beliefs and desires. Insofar as it has

been a means of communication, it has also been a means of *assertion*—assertions of control over space, assertions of particular histories, and assertions of particular linguistic stylings, to name a few. As Saldanha (2002, 348) argues, “the space of music is produced and produces identity and politics through its corporealization.” In other words, speakers are not the only way in which music is enacted in space. The embodiment of music—from dancing to clothing and beyond—is intimately enrolled in the production of space. To understand how this functions in political space, this thesis asks: in what ways do young people in Sarajevo mobilize their hip-hop culture(s) to produce particular identities, and what are those identities? Specifically, what sort of political subjectivity emerges out of the set of ideas, practices, and socialities developed in and through the consumption and production of hip-hop in BiH? In order to examine hip-hop identities in Sarajevo, I will draw on two months of ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in 2016 with two small groups of young people, primarily men, in Sarajevo, along with the texts of hip-hop culture: music, graffiti, interviews, music videos, etc.

This research is situated at the crossroads of youth geographies, music geographies, and feminist geopolitics. Drawing particularly on feminist theories of geopolitics as lived and enacted on an everyday basis—if sometimes implicitly—I argue that hip-hop identities are mobilized to counter Bosnia and Herzegovina’s prevailing political ethno-nationalism through a nostalgic cosmopolitanism that champions certain forms of inclusion (e.g. of sexual orientation) while simultaneously performing certain acts of exclusion (e.g. along the lines of gender and class). These acts of exclusion speak to the limits of this subversive identity as it is taken up and (re)shaped by its publics; but it also points out the ways in which the political project itself is deeply gendered and mired in a nostalgia for Yugoslav times characteristic of the urban middle class. I conclude by exploring the possibilities presented by these subversive identities as the

1995 Dayton Agreement rounds out its twenty-second year and contemporary politics in BiH seem more intractable than ever.

CHAPTER TWO: PRESENT STUDY

“Remaking” Bosnia: Nostalgic publics and social transformation

Zala Volčič’s (2007, 21) clever rework of Karl Marx’s old adage seems particularly appropriate at this juncture: “all world historical personages appear twice... first as tragedy... [then] as advertising.” In Sarajevo, objects and imagery from the pre-war era—the era of Josef Broz Tito, Yugoslavia’s iconic leader from the victory of socialist partisan forces over Axis occupiers until his death in 1980—looms large in tourist trinket stores and cafes. Much of my fieldwork took place at Caffè Tito, an outdoor café/bar that peddles this nostalgia along with strong coffee and lagers. Bright, socialist red is the café’s motif color, and imagery of socialist Yugoslavia pervades the space. Arrive at the correct entrance and you will even see a banner that reads “*Tito je naš*”—“Tito is ours,” where the term “ours” indexes not only abstract belonging but also a situated national belonging.¹ It is also surrounded by vestiges and recreations of the past: the country’s historical museum, a building that appears as if it has not been touched since the end of the war, the country’s national museum, and the steadfast (if shallow) River Miljacka. But the area around Caffè Tito also portends much change: it is adjacent to the Importanne Centar, a decidedly modern shopping mall and business complex, complete with an exercise center. In the lot around the café are trees and an open area, and since it is immediately north of the popular Vilsonovo Šetalište (President Wilson’s Promenade), this area is often replete with families with children playing, groups of young people, and elderly people out and about with their own social groups. Also in this lot is a satirical piece of art called the “Monument for the International Community,” a tall, Warholesque recreation of Ikar canned beef, a wartime

¹ Hromadžić (2015, 15) helpfully describes the moniker of “ours” (*naš, naša*) as indexing both tensions and commonalities.

humanitarian aid staple. This piece, by artist Nebojša Šerić Šoba, suggests the inadequacy of international aid in the country by memorializing a piece of “aid” universally recognized as disgusting, resembling dog food, and often delivered expired (Reuters 2007). In this space, then, we can see a polyvocality of temporalities that sit together and occasionally clash in this small space—one could throw a rock at the United Nations Development Programme office from the canned beef monument.

But it is not only objects that materialize and radiate competing visions of the past and future—it was, after all, (young) people that led me to Caffè Tito. They were the public assembled around this space and the nostalgic imaginary it conveys through its décor and name. It is worth taking a moment here to explore the concept of a “public”—in particular what it means, and how it might help us make sense of youth cultures in post-conflict, post-socialist space. A broader notion of public might be the one that we use in the sense of the democratic or political public, which seems somewhat common sense: the “public” is the group of people who constitute the nation and lend legitimacy (“sovereignty”) to the state. Here already we are getting bound up in messy questions—the nation, after all, implicates some regime of inclusion/exclusion that is based on different forms of belonging (state-sponsored, racial/ethnic, class, etc.). Indeed, as Staeheli and Mitchell (2007, 792) observe, nearly thirty years of scholarship has worked to “[pry] open the meanings of ‘the public’, ‘publicity’, and ‘publicness’” and has as a result greatly complicated the meaning of those concepts.

German theorist Jürgen Habermas’s conception of the public sphere has been highly influential in academic discourses. In his 1962 book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (translated into English in 1989), Habermas traces the development of the “bourgeois public sphere” as a space of public opinion and self-reflection structured around (homo)social

groups and texts. It is not within the scope of this section to closely examine Habermas's work; rather, it is sufficient here to note that this notion of a public represents, in his eyes, an inclusive space for the formulation of public opinion through rational discourse. This interpretation of publics reaches for a universality it can never fully attain: the reasoned sphere of discourse that Habermas describes is always already exclusive of certain people based on the racialized, gendered, and classed structures of the polity in question.

Yet, conceptualizing publics remains useful to scholars examining political space because it allows us to examine how people are organized and mobilized around certain ideas, goals, and aspirations. To escape the trap of the bourgeois public sphere, we might turn to the work of queer theorist Michael Warner. In his seminal work *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002), Warner tries to trace what exactly *a* public is—in contrast with the public—and explore how they come to be, how we understand and historicize a public as a collectivity, and what they can do. For Warner, *a* public is in some fundamental sense an audience—in contrast with a national public, “the” public, a public is self-organized around some text which serves as a provocation for a public discourse. It is also distinct from an audience in this way: one might write an article in *Field and Stream* with a clear audience in mind, but that does not limit the actual readership. It may be that this prolific journalist of *Field and Stream* writes something profoundly misogynist, prompting a public debate; or it may be that they write a polemic against the racially exclusive space of game sports and draw a diverse group of people into that conversation. Because publics are self-organized, they are unpredictable and exist as much in the imagination as they do as a concrete organization of people in space (Warner 2002, 74). He also argues that they are fundamentally premised on attention, circulation, and reflexivity; “no single text can create a public” (Warner 2002, 90). From a geographical perspective, we might say that publics constitute a particular

production of discursive space, and circulations of text and discourse serve to remake that space. Finally, publics are engaged in act of “poetic world-making,” as Warner calls it, through the production of this public space of discourse. Public speech serves to perform a certain world by realizing (or not) the dominant ideological schemes that hold together language and sociality, and in many cases the goal might be to produce and represent a public that, in Warner’s words, stands in for *the* public. Street protests are a useful example: by gathering people in physical space around a set of goals and representing a set of demands or beliefs, protestors are engaged in the act of trying to assume their place as the public to which the state is accountable.

Warner (2002, 117) smartly asks: “But what of the publics that make no attempt to represent themselves this way?” Borrowing from Nancy Fraser, he calls these *counterpublics*, an alternative space for public discourse for those who are excluded from it. He distinguishes this from the *Field and Stream* audience, for example: those reading in specialized fields probably do not have strong reason to think of themselves as excluded from public discourse because of their specialized interests. We have already seen how publics offer a space for worldmaking; but as an alternative space for marginalized people, they make another world possible. As Blaustein (2004, 172) remarks, “if publics are not merely reflective of pre-given social forms, but rather constitutive of sociality itself, then there are no better tools for generating new social forms.” These discursive spheres become spaces in which the structures of society are played with and remade, and not just through discourse. The production of a counterpublic sphere also holds the promise for new shared meanings, a new political language, and novel affective worlds.

For the purposes of this study, I treat Sarajevo youth and their peers in the rest of the country more generally as a kind of marginalized population that can form a counterpublic. This is not an easy or neat classification: no one in BiH will be harassed on the street for being young,

nor do they face state violence for their youth. Indeed, it is easy to find youth socializing in cafes, working in offices, and sitting in university classes all over Sarajevo. But this masks another reality. As a political and economic entity, Bosnia and Herzegovina is in crisis, and this crisis has had acute effects on the country's youth. First, it is useful to sketch out what this crisis looks. To do so, I will briefly turn to the assessment of the country's economic situation offered by a campaign called *Skinimo okove* (SO, "Let's take off our chains!"), which was launched by the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) government and funded by the United Kingdom. The campaign sought to garner public support for an economic reform agenda which was itself crafted in consultation with international community, and targeted a number of publics, including young people. SO calls young people aged 15-24 *krizna generacija*, or "the crisis generation." This is because the country's youth unemployment rate in 2015 was 62%, and of those, 33% were neither engaged in any formal or informal education nor looking for work. According to the Institute for Youth Development – KULT, an estimated 80,000 young people left BiH in the period from 2013-2015 (Džaferović and Bender 2017), a staggering number for a relatively elderly country with a population of just 3.5 million.² Furthermore, a study by the institute found that 80% of young people would gladly leave the country given the chance. Even a healthy level of skepticism in approaching these figures leaves a dire reality, one in which youth live in a state of uncertainty for the future, a feeling of disconnection from their country and society, and a feeling of emptiness at multiple levels (see, for example, Hromadžić 2015). As Čelebičić (2016, 131) explains, this is part of a broader field of unpredictable social relations: her young informants were rarely certain of even the most basic events in their short term futures,

² This figure has been oft-cited in the media and in political campaigns. Because no official estimates exist and it is such a difficult figure to measure, it merits skepticism.

such as whether their professor would “show up” to administer a test the next day, whether they would be called into work, or whether they would be able to enroll in university courses.

Furthermore, the country’s political system—what we might call the Dayton status quo—is actively engaged in de-politicizing the country’s myriad issues and reabsorbing them into the vocabulary of a biologically essential ethno-religious identity (Mujanović 2018).

The many young artists currently producing rap music in BiH have been some of the most skeptical, incisive, and loud critics of this economic, social, and political predicament. They raise these questions not just in their music, but also in television interviews, at concerts, and through activism with NGOs. And it is these very artists who return us to the concept of Yugo-nostalgia. In their music and beyond it, artists refer to the Yugoslav times, often (but not always) remarking on how much better things were. So too did my informants, who would often preface their statements with caveats such as “I know that things were not ideal then either” and proceed to describe the schemes that decentralized redistributed wealth and power to ordinary people in Yugoslav times. Such nostalgia was a loaded act of memory: this act of remembrance not only indexed an aspiration for a country with a more just economic system, but also imagined a BiH in which the Yugoslav project had never come apart and the war had never happened.

In the section that follows, I begin to explore how scholars might think about hip-hop culture, and why the activism of these artists and the responses of their publics is an important object of study.

“Conscious” rap? The politics of hip-hop space

To the extent that this research engages with what is “in rap music,” it takes the position of Krims (2000, 27) that what is found in rap music is that which is “mediated by sounds and their socially situated interpretations.” In other words, the beats, lyrics, expressions, and videos—

along with all of the other components of hip-hop cultures—can only be understood to the extent that they are interpreted, mobilized, and reproduced by their publics. Like any other artistic or popular cultural form, rap music is produced, at least in part, for circulation and for the practices that follow its consumption (from being part of popular conversations to creating markets for live concerts). As Bradley (2009, xiii) remarks, “rap is public art, and rappers are perhaps our greatest public poets.” It is this very *publicness* of this work that this thesis seeks to engage in: how it is circulated and consumed, how young people in Sarajevo use it, how rappers construct public political agendas and are embraced, attacked, or ignored. Rap is public art, and in being so it calls publics into being around its incisive critiques, sonically pleasing beats, and social popularity, among other things. Hip-hop culture contours and fills in the landscape—as rap plays in the background while young people play video games and smoke marijuana, or as they tag walls in the city, adding color to bleak concrete walls and interpellating passersby. In examining two small groups of young people, who are each themselves subsets of larger hip-hop publics, I hope to open a window through which we can examine the contemporary politics of being a young person in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Still, some ambiguity remains about what exactly hip-hop and rap are (and how they might be different). Simply put, the term hip-hop signals all of the practices and socialities that surround the form of music we call rap. Genre is a highly indeterminate form (Krimms 2000), so for the purposes of this thesis, I am inclusive of all music productions that stake a claim to the genre, or have that claim staked for them by one of my informants. Writing in an explicitly international context, Alim (2009) claims that

Hip Hop is used by practitioners to refer to a vast array of cultural practices including MCing (rappin), DJing (spinnin), writing (graffiti art), breakdancing (and other forms of streetdance), and cultural domains such as fashion, language, style, knowledge, and politics, all of which give us “Hip Hop Culture.”

This typology may strike some as dated, and expressing doubt about the contemporary connections between these practices is not unwelcome. Any hip-hop culture is not a static object—cultures (and urban cultures in particular) are vibrant assemblages of people, practices, relations, and the objects that facilitate and assemble them (Mills 2014). That means that hip-hop cultures can be (and are) assembled in diverse ways—with differing perspectives on the relevance of practices such as music production, fashion, language, graffiti, dancing, etc. The particular dynamics of hip-hop culture in BiH will be elaborated later (in chapter 4), but for now it will suffice to say that hip-hop cultures come to being as a process, through a variety of practices and relations that may include those listed by Alim (2009), but also may include some seemingly unrelated activities as well. In this thesis, it may seem at times that the terms “hip-hop” and “rap” are used interchangeably. However, I attempt to use the term hip-hop when I am signaling a broader array of practices, while I use rap when referring exclusively to the music itself and its production. These lines are not always clear, and the value of such an analytic distinction is somewhat dubious given that they are so intertwined.

Studies of hip-hop cultures have in many cases focused on marginalized, subversive, deviant, and/or transgressive groups, precisely because hip-hop is an art form bred out of marginalization (see, for example, Roth-Gordon 2009; Jaffe 2012; McCarren 2012). It is useful here to be extremely clear about the circumstances in which this particular rap culture is situated, as the concept of “marginalization” around hip-hop cultures carries very specific meanings that may not be relevant to this case. To the extent that the young people I worked with faced marginalization, they did so as subjects of an illiberal state trapped in a process of becoming European, “developed,” “reconciled,” etc. as it struggles to deal with the legacy of a war and transition to capitalism that fundamentally reconfigured notions of belonging in the newly

formed country. They grappled with bureaucrats who would not give them the papers they needed, conflicts with their peers over identity and difference, and grim job prospects. Almost universally raised by war survivors—people deeply affected by trauma—they carried pride in their parents’ survival, told stories about their troubled infancies, and had loud, difficult arguments with their families. They communicated hopelessness and despair over their future, such as when a parent lost a job or they failed to pass an exam. They were the subjects of endless attacks in news media, cafes, and apartments: why are the young people so apathetic? Why are they so lazy? Why do they listen to loud, disruptive hip-hop, or to chauvinist turbo-folk music? Many of the young people I interacted with identified explicitly as youth, and this identification came to stand in for the range of challenges they faced as they attempted to ‘transition’ from youth to adulthood. Unlike many hip-hop cultures situated in the global north, these young people were not subjects of racialization or ghettoization, nor were many of them particularly concerned about such issues, even as they were fierce partisans of American artists such as Kendrick Lamar and Tupac, who have used their music as a platform to explore such issues.

This suggests a valid criticism: why study hip-hop and not, say, LGBTQ subcultures, which are actively (and violently) suppressed in domestic and public life in Bosnia and Herzegovina? Two responses should clarify the importance of the hip-hop subculture in understanding how young people resist and reshape the dominant ethno-national status quo. First, hip-hop in Sarajevo brings together a wide community, including women, LGBTQ folks, people of differing or mixed ethnic backgrounds, and people from rural or peri-urban backgrounds. Second, hip-hop in the former Yugoslavia is also *productive* of difference: that is to say, it is produced and mobilized in a way that serves to exclude as well as to include. Within these acts of exclusion, which are often quite layered and contradictory, fissures and nuances in

Bosnian and Herzegovinian society are revealed. In observing how hip-hop culture in Sarajevo functions as both a means of producing new socialities beyond the ethno-national problematic, and how these new socialities are inextricably bound up in socio-historical formations of identity and notions of belonging, we can think about identity and belonging in a post-conflict context in a way that does not privilege any particular “original sin” of division.

Finally, this particular case is worth studying because we already know that global hip-hop culture has enormous power, and therefore has much to say about how the politics of resistance are circulated and taken up in diverse contexts. Hip-hop, as a commercial industry, is a multi-billion-dollar business that enriches record labels, merchandisers, artists, venues, equipment operators, etc. Meanwhile, hip-hop artists are often commercially associated with clothing brands, beverages, automobile companies, and luxury items. The diverse forms of consumption associated with this particular global hip-hop status quo are historically tied to a specific geography of consumption: through the digital world. Since the early 2000s, the production and consumption of hip-hop in private spaces has largely taken place in and through the internet. The emergence of YouTube, which became enormously popular in 2006, led to the creation of a multi-national, multi-lingual public sphere for the production, consumption, and discussion of hip-hop and related activities.

The semi-democratic, semi-public spaces of the internet, which offer low-cost means of engaging large groups of people, became the center of hip-hop activity. In BiH, the use of digital space to cultivate hip-hop allowed artists and boosters to overcome the time- and distribution-limited medium of radio shows, which had previously been a primary means of distribution. FMJam, which began as a radio show in Tuzla but became a sort of collective commercial enterprise and record label active country-wide, launched a website in 2001. From the beginning,

this site offered a “forum” space where listeners could engage with each other, and offered an array of graffiti-inspired imagery that listeners could identify with and adopt. Hip-hop culture in BiH was formed in this crucible—and it is hard to believe that marginalized young people did not see a bit of themselves as they listened to American hip-hop artists take on race, poverty, addiction, and other social issues in their own contexts.

It is thus not lightly that Fredericks (2014, 138) claims that “rap music and its followers reconstitute the democratic public sphere... through producing alternative representations of space through their conjured imaginaries and material practices.” Hip-hop culture cannot be understood simply as an insurgent public art form: fundamentally, it is an institution, even in places where it lacks the social and material foundations of an institution. The alternative representations and embodiments of space offered by hip-hop are undergirded by a global hip-hop culture industry, so to speak. This is not to demonize it; rather, any honest analysis should recognize that hip-hop culture is as much scrappy and democratic as it is a corporate, distributed product. Those two realities do not sit in tension with each other—they rely on each other. More to the point, the political nature of these alternative imaginaries are deeply embedded in a global subaltern politics grounded in the experience of young black men growing up in the margins in the United States (Forman 2002).

Thus, when we ask what hip-hop culture can do, we must be cognizant of this embeddedness in a broader global culture. That does not make hip-hop at the local level any less “authentic” or “indigenous.” It does mean, however, that scholarly approaches to the politics of hip-hop culture must recognize its embeddedness in global hierarchies and, most importantly, how the reproduction of hip-hop cultures in novel geographies also carries the fraught and complex history of American hip-hop. It is not necessary here to invent or to speculate as to what

people in BiH thought about American hip-hop when the local scene was developing in the early 2000s, nor is it now: a look at FMJam's website in 2001 shows that they were fixated with personalities such as Foxy Brown, Ja Rule, Bow Wow, Ghostface Killa, and Slick Rick. Their fixation on the history of rap music and on the construct of the "ol' school" reflects an interest in the politics of race in the United States. Meanwhile, my interlocutors were all too happy to provide critiques of contemporary American hip-hop, neoliberalism, and American culture writ large.

Beyond well-behaved: Young people in contemporary Sarajevo

This section takes up a question that I have touched on briefly in the previous two sections: why young people? In a country so clearly dominated by political elites, business magnates, and war profiteers, what role could young people (and their counter/cultures) possibly play in the business of politics? Indeed, who cares what they think? The focus of this study on young people has two important foundations. First, young people are important to the multi-million dollar non-governmental organization (NGO) industry³ in BiH, which has focused much of its attention on young people since the early 2000s (Micinski 2016). Their focus on effecting reforms on government and society in Bosnia and Herzegovina by changing the way young people think and act suggests that they are worth studying. Second, as Jeffrey (2012) argues, studies of young people are important precisely because the realm civil society is not limited to the operations and discourses of incorporated non-profit groups; young people constitute, at the

³ It should be noted that although the name NGO implies non-involvement of government(s), such organizations in BiH are most often funded by the United Nations, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the European Union, which are all governmental or at the very least inter-governmental (Micinski 2016).

very least, a part of civil discourse. This is not to romanticize the role that they play in society, but rather to recognize that political discourse and change happens both within and without the realm of electoral campaigns and voting. Moreover, feminist scholars and activists have been asserting, analyzing, and acting based on the notion that “the personal is political” for more than fifty years (Cahill 2007). Many children and young people, not incidentally, face the violence of masculinity and the pressure to acculturate to a masculine habitus (or a feminine one that accords with masculine expectations about women’s behavior) on an everyday basis.

So too are state politics and broader geopolitical issues enacted on and through children and young people’s lives and bodies (Smith 2012). In other words, children and young people are actively enrolled in state and non-state political projects, particularly but not exclusively through their subject formation. Studying young people’s subject formation at the site of these projects—in the case of BiH, a place where competing actors are alternately engaged in projects of state-making, the building of civil society, and the undoing of those processes—can help us understand what those projects are and what they do.

Following the conclusion of the war in the mid-1990s, stakeholders involved in the resolution of the conflict in BiH began investing money into local interventions aimed at rebuilding, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. The strategy for post-war intervention in BiH marked a shift “to more robust and open-ended peacebuilding and statebuilding projects” (Moore 2013, 24). These interventions, then, were concerned with issues larger than the implementation of the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (referred to hereafter as the “Dayton Agreement” or simply “Dayton”). By offering grants to NGOs run both locally and internationally, governments and inter-governmental agencies aimed to enable and secure long-term peace and development by strengthening civil society. The means by which

these broad, abstract endpoints may be achieved are neither given nor uncontested; still, as one young Bosnian observed, they are most often pursued through “nonviolent conflict resolution” and “inter-ethnic mixing” (Micinski 2016, 101).⁴ This is all to say that the international actors who serve as stakeholders in the peace process believe that influencing young people’s political subjectivities can contribute to peace in the long run.

The second reason young people’s politics form a key part of the present study is precisely as a result of a critique of the above model. In particular, Jeffrey (2011) uses empirical work on children and young people to critique

the notion that ‘civil society’ – in the sense of deliberative, non-violent politics that acts as a positive check on state power – occurs principally through formal organizations representing a generalized public interest. (Jeffrey 2011, 145)

For Jeffrey and the wealth of scholars in the field of children’s and youth geographies, young people offer one way of understanding politics outside of the conventionally understood “political realm,” comprising political parties, politicians and functionaries, electoral campaigns, and the work of governance. It is not that there is something naturally rebellious (or apathetic) about young people; rather, like any collectivity or public, young people may organize, find common goals, and work to achieve them. Moreover, though this can take the form of actively organizing to stake claims and make demands of the government, e.g. the Serbian youth movement Otpor (Greenberg 2014), politics also happens on and in everyday life.

The under-appreciation of the texture and complexity of children and young people’s engagement in politics in general but in geopolitics especially has led to the growth of the field of children and youth’s critical geopolitics in recent years. As Benwell and Hopkins (2016)

⁴ It should be noted that the “international community” is not a behemoth; as Hromadžic (2015, 19) observes, it is composed of “dynamic, complicated, overlapping, uncoordinated, and conflicting bundle of simultaneously converging and diverging people, projects, interests, agendas, and practices.”

relate, the notion that children and young people might encounter and live geopolitics on an everyday basis is not necessarily new—indeed, state- and empire-building projects of the 20th century reproduced their imperialism through geopolitical education. Rather, the last twenty or so years have seen particular attention paid to “the lived experiences of children and young people alongside the role, form and scope of politics enacted at the local, national, and global scales” (Benwell and Hopkins 2016, 3). The contribution of this thesis to our broader understanding of youth political geographies will be along the line of Cahill and Katz’s (2008, 2810) assertion that “focusing on the quotidian [can] demonstrate how our subjectivities are inextricably connected with global processes such as economic restructuring and immigration.” As I have already made clear, the hip-hop counterculture in BiH is and has historically been embedded in a global hip-hop culture with its center in the United States. Yet, the alternative vision they offer is deeply rooted in local histories of cosmopolitanism, Yugoslavism, and Bosnian Muslim identity. As I will demonstrate, these connections are thrown in relief through everyday talk and practices. In the section that follows, I aim to frame this focus on young people in a more specific way by addressing how I approach the realm of the “political.”

En(act)ments: Towards a feminist political geography of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Many contemporary writers on Bosnia and Herzegovina have focused their attention on the country’s structures of government and the people who inhabit or influence them in order to explore the country’s politics (see, for example, Campbell 1998; Chandler 2000; Hayden 2005; Mujkić 2007). This scholarship has sometimes had an eye towards policy, as with Gilbert and Mujanović’s (2015) commentary on the legacy of the Dayton Agreement twenty years on; and has other times worked to explore theoretical issues, such as the limits of discourse analysis, as with Toal’s (2013) treatment of referenda in the *Republika Srpska*. Yet, recent scholarship has

suggested that a view “from the ground” may prove helpful in understanding the kind of politics that emerge on the other side of the social and political transformation provided by the fall of Yugoslav socialism and nationality policy, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the violence of wartime and beyond (Jansen, Brković, and Čelebičić 2016). Electoral politics, after all, is neither the end nor the beginning of conflict—ethnic, religious, territorial, or otherwise.

How exactly, then, do scholars approach the fractured politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina? One key feature that scholarship from the ground in general shares is a focus on processes of being and becoming in place/context. Hromadžić (2015), for instance, examines contradictory and fraught processes of state-making and peacebuilding not by sitting in parliament or canton councils, but through an ethnography of the Mostar Gymnasium, that city’s first (semi-)integrated school. Education, a form of state-sponsored becoming, is a site in which the conflicting and contradictory ideologies of ethno-nationalist politicians, reconciliation-focused NGOs, and the students themselves all converge and are spatialized and materialized in mundane and sometimes surprising ways. (In the case of this particular school, inter-ethnic mixing that otherwise would not be socially tolerated occurred in the space of the bathroom, which became students’ smoke/break room during recesses from class.) Jašarević (2017, 235) on the other hand approaches issues of being and becoming without focusing explicitly on the ethno-identitarian problematic, instead tracing the growing informal economies around health and wellness as a means of “troubling phenomenological and conventional notions about proximity.” In that way, she is also showing how the economic precarity effected following the collapse of socialism and the double articulation of transitions (from social and material destruction and from one economic system to another) had profound consequences on the Bosnian and Herzegovinian psyche. Economic anxieties know no ethno-territorial boundaries,

and neither, consequently, do spaces of informal healing. Her work resonates with fellow anthropologist Jansen's (2015) focus on time, or more specifically on the ways in which "waiting" for "normal lives," as a sort of everyday understanding of self and polity, has emerged in response to the dismantling of the socialist past and the constantly on-hold "European," "modern" future. In each case, these from-the-ground approaches inform our understanding of how Bosnia has been remade, to use Toal and Dahlman's (2011) words, following the end of the war. Wrapped up in this "remaking" are questions about how the state and its imaginary 'nation' or 'people' is produced, and as a result we are left to grapple with identity, temporality, and hope. These analyses work to understand those processes as they are spatialized and materialized in everyday life.

These approaches, primarily anthropological, use the experiences of people who might conventionally be thought of as politically insignificant—bakers, bus-riders, unemployed youth—to make broader claims about how the state functions and reproduces itself, how ethnic divisions are produced and cemented in real life, or how certain social phenomena like informal healing speak to broader social-political issues. Under the broad remit of critical geopolitics, but also in reaction to it, feminist geographers have developed just such an approach: feminist geopolitics.⁵ As Massaro and Williams (2013) relate, academic work on geopolitics has a

⁵ It is worth mentioning here that feminist analyses (and women writers) have not only been long marginalized, but indeed continue to be so. Staeheli (2001, 177) responded to the question "Is a feminist geopolitics possible?" thusly: "it is possible, but not probable," which is to say that she was doubtful that feminist political geography/geopolitics would emerge from the margins of academic inquiry. Today, although feminist analyses have become very much influential in political geography, there is a noticeable lack of recognition. For example, neither the *Encyclopedia of Geography* (SAGE, 2010), the AAG-sponsored *International Encyclopedia of Geography* (Wiley, 2017), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (2009, Elsevier), nor the *Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (SAGE, 2006) contain an entry on feminist geopolitics (though each has one for critical geopolitics). Therefore, while it could be said that this study takes a critical geopolitical approach, I enthusiastically adopt "feminist geopolitics" and "feminist political geography" in recognition of those contributions.

troubled history, emerging from a “classical geopolitics” based on an extrapolated social Darwinism and scientific racism and serving as a means to legitimize colonial interventions. Poststructuralism and postcolonial developments in the field led to the emergence of a critical geopolitics, which uses those theoretical developments to challenge power as it is spatialized and enacted. Based largely on the work of French political philosopher Michel Foucault, in particular his understanding of power and knowledge as inextricably tied together, scholars like Gerard Toal and Simon Dalby work to understand how the state produces and embodies geopolitical power. These approaches are critical in the sense that they do not assume that the state is a natural form of human organization. Yet, they remain largely focused on the state and its organs, rather than recognizing how that power is enacted only through the acquiescence of normal people.

But according to Massaro and Williams (2013), this critical geopolitics too often reproduced masculine tropes in the classical geopolitics scholars were purportedly working to deconstruct, both in their analyses and in the way they minimized women’s important contributions. As a result, feminist scholars developed a scholarly tradition focused on “how geopolitical processes shaped and were shaped by everyday experiences and interactions,” (Massaro and Williams 2013, 569). Put in other words, a feminist geopolitical analysis “foregrounds, as an entry point for analysis, the bodies of those at the ‘sharp end’ of various forms of international activity” (Dixon and Marston 2011, 445).

The notion that a feminist geopolitical approach might be in some way “bodily” merits elaboration, though it is important to underscore that feminist geopolitics contains a “theoretically diverse ensemble of knowledges and practices” (Dixon and Marston 2011, 445). The body is a useful starting point for feminist political geographers because it is a—or indeed,

the—site of “struggle and contestation” —where identities, difference, pain, pleasure, health, illness, and everything else is *lived* (Johnston 2009, 326). In other words, bodies are not simply the canvas upon which geopolitics are painted; rather, as Smith (2012, 1513) smartly observes, bodies make territory. Bodies *enact* geopolitical realities. To say that feminist geopolitics attend to the sharp end of international activity, then, is to say that it pays close attention to the ways in which power relations are materialized and spatialized through, within, across and between bodies.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an interesting context in which to study how a particular kind of ethno-national geopolitics is enacted in space because it takes place in a way that is counterintuitive to dominant understandings of geopolitics. Rather than occurring between two bounded entities, everyday geopolitical tensions happen out in the street in Sarajevo, as when a survivor of a concentration camp walks past her former captor and rapist on the street. And as Mujanović (2018) argues, BiH’s ethno-nationalist politicians and the state more broadly are actively engaged in an anti-political project in which disputes that might otherwise be political are subsumed into ethno-nationalist geopolitics as a means of evading any possible resolutions. In the section that follows, I review how I approached the politics I encountered.

Methodology

Fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in June and July of 2016, and has been supplemented by ongoing conversations, examination of media coverage and hip-hop self-promotion (e.g. interviews, releases) since. This study took an ethnographic approach: as a researcher, my goal was to embed myself into the everyday struggles, victories, and banalities of being a young hip-hop fan in Sarajevo. My research subjects were largely in their late teens, but some were in their early twenties. As someone in roughly the same age range and a diaspora

Bosnian, I was largely welcomed into this community (even as my diaspora status proved somewhat tense). As Watson and Till (2010, 121) explain, “ethnography is an intersubjective form of qualitative research through which the relationships of researcher and researched, insider and outsider, self and other, body and environment, and field and home are negotiated.” That is to say, this way of approaching a context is, or at least should be, reflexive, contingent, and deeply personal. The pitfalls of ethnographic work are significant and should trouble researchers: even when done ethically, ethnographic research may end up offending or even hurting communities. Yet, ethnographic engagement is a powerful way to capture and represent the ways in which people in a particular context navigate and negotiate spatial processes (Watson and Till 2010). Such on-the-ground engagement can tell us about the bodily registers of knowing and feeling (Paterson 2009), the sensations that follow life in a divided city (Laketa 2016), and can be extended in participatory work that allows research subjects to dictate, to some extent, how they are represented (Marshall et al. 2017).

One thing made clear by a brief review of ethnographic work in geography is that it is diverse and polyvocal: there are many ways of doing ethnography. For the purposes of this study, I relied primarily on participant observation, which was supplemented by ongoing, informal, semi-structured interviews. Participant observers embed themselves in a particular social context in order to explore social phenomena, and hope to understand those phenomena by seeing how they unfold in everyday life. This work, then, requires attention to the researcher’s position, as well as to the situated knowledges, feelings, bodily movements, and spatialities of the everyday lives of the researched. As a participant observer, I joined young people in public spaces such as cafés, bars, and parks, as well as in the more private spaces of their homes. As I was led into new spaces, I made an effort to understand the history, context, and uses of those

spaces, as they often went unsaid. For example, one common meeting point for one group of young people I spent time with was also one of very few safe spaces for LGBT and gender non-conforming youth in the city. This outside knowledge was useful in directing my questions. The ethical requirements of participant observation, as well as my own desire to be perceived as an insider for research purposes, pushed me to truly participate as I observed. This meant, for example, that I spent many hours playing Pokemon Go, a wildly popular augmented reality mobile phone game that had just been released when I arrived in Sarajevo. Being read as a fellow player ensured that I would continue to be invited to social events, and it opened my work up to a range of novel encounters with people and things in the city even as my research subjects (re)encountered those same people and things.

My observations and reflections were recorded on an ongoing basis, primarily on my cell phone. As it is common for young people to spend much of their social time using their mobile phones, this was an unobtrusive and convenient way of documenting my observations. This research was approved by and followed guidelines for human subjects research laid out by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Arizona.

APPENDIX A: Young people, hip-hop, and the making of a youthful ‘unpolitics’ in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Introduction

In the waning days of the summer of 2016, two hundred or so young people converged on an attractive music venue abutting the River Miljacka in Sarajevo. They were there to see hip-hop artists Frenkie and Kontra, members of the FMJam collective, and the ever-irreverent radio show duo Helem Nejse. I arrived early with some of my interlocutors and occupied a standing table toward the back. The scene was ethnographically rich, as young people poured in saturated in fashionable brands and sporting images of American hip-hop icons. As they waited for the concert to begin, they chatted with friends, stared deeply into their mobile phones, and danced to the rhythm of the music that backgrounded the event. In one unexpected moment, it was this very background music that produced the tensest moment of the night, throwing the spatial politics of youth hip-hop culture in the city into relief.

After Helem Nejse finished their opening set, they retreated behind the stage. Meanwhile, the lights went up and that background music returned. The playlist on offer was an engaging mix of music from the Balkans and elsewhere, and no one seemed to notice as it switched from the Serbian hip-hop group Beogradski Sindikat (Belgrade Syndicate) to the American rapper Nas to the Bosnian rock-rap group Dubioza Kolektiv (Dubious Collective). These transitions seemed to strike the attendees as utterly banal—at least, until one particularly jarring change took place. As an upbeat song came on, the audience’s rhythmic movements slowed and then stopped. As bodies broke free from the crowd, angry expressions and heated words began to emerge, and some sought a space to make their demands. Those who were not approaching bartenders and staff to demand a change of song were chattering loudly at their tables, dismissing the music or

merely focusing attention elsewhere; meanwhile, those who did not seem to be 'in' on the outrage appeared uncomfortable. Within a minute, the song was changed, and the affective atmosphere of the venue calmed considerably. A momentary blip of rage wrote itself into the space, marking out the boundaries between belonging and not, before disappearing forever.

Mujanović (2017, 28) argues that hip-hop in Bosnia and Herzegovina “represents one of the few youthful, militant, politicized voices of critique, protest, and resistance” in the country (and region). Indeed, the cutting, incisive lyrical acrobatics offered by the music is matched only by its fans’ extensive knowledge of local and global politics and searing critiques of the government's graft and the fixed ethno-national regime offered by the country's ethnic power-sharing regime. This article, based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in June and July of 2016, explores the ways in which these discourses were reproduced and retooled on the ground in service of a broader turning away from politics led by youth, what I call a youthful “street unpolitics” following Farthing (2010). In contrast to the forms of political participation available to young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this unpolitics represents an illegible, irreverent, and perhaps even spiteful kind of participation. Moreover, I will show how this turning away in fact engenders certain positive notions around relating and belonging that form the basis for the anti-nationalist unpolitics that young hip-hop fans are actively assembling.

Situating an impossible politics: Bosnia and Herzegovina

The ‘impossible politics’ alluded to above is largely a reference to the electoral and party politics brought about by the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, commonly referred to as the Dayton Agreement, which served to end the 1992-1995 war and to usher in peace through provisional mechanisms for governing through ethnic

power-sharing. In order to understand these provisional mechanisms for governing through power-sharing, however, it is necessary to understand who exactly is doing the power-sharing, and why. Common knowledge of the conflict in BiH is typically couched in the frame of ethnic nationalism(s) (hereafter abbreviated as ethno-nationalism) which “erupted” suddenly in the early 1990s into violent conflict. In reality, the management of national interests was a key tension from the early days of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), founded officially in 1943 and solidified following the liberation of the region from Germany by a militia led by Josip Broz Tito and largely composed of communists. Comprising six entities—Croatia, Serbia (itself with two autonomous provinces), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia—and speaking three official languages (Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, and Macedonian), the SFR Yugoslavia was always an ambitious project of socialist cooperation.

In order to manage the tensions presented by economically and politically unifying regions with dramatically differing levels of development and troubling histories,⁶ the burgeoning socialist country’s political leaders first pursued a policy of suppression, discouraging nationalism and imprisoning nationalists. As an alternative—and via the cult of leadership that surrounded the country’s president, Josip Broz Tito—they offered *bratstvo i jedinstvo*, brotherhood and unity. This ambiguous approach matched conditions at the time: rather than having a number of clearly defined, easily bounded nationalities or ethnicities, these definitions were often geographically and culturally ambiguous. The Independent State of Croatia (NDH), a German puppet state during the Second World War, serves as a useful

6 The Independent State of Croatia, the German puppet state that existed from 1941-45, engaged in systematic killing of Orthodox Serbs as part of a broader project of race ideology founded in both German National Socialist race ideology and existing conceptions of identity and difference (Levy 2009).

example, as it blended German National Socialist race ideology with local conceptions of identity and pre-existing tensions. Part of their race project was creating a “pure” (Catholic) Croatia, which justified the massacre, deportation, and conversion of Christian Orthodox residents of the country, who they keyed as “Serbs” (Levy 2009). Yet, Muslim residents of what had once been the Ottoman Vilayet of Bosnia and then the Austro-Hungarian Condominium of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and what was now part of the NDH, were considered to be privileged parts of a pure future Croatia (Levy 2009).

Even as it was suppressed as a grounds for contestation and identity-building, identity based on ‘national’ origin, religion, and ethnicity developed in Yugoslavia. This strategy involved federalization and devolution/decentralization of powers. Indeed, already in 1985, one scholar argued that the Yugoslav system represented a "coalescing of relatively coequal oligarchs into a power cartel in which each member clearly represents a significant segment of the plural society he comes from (whether ethnic or ideological in identity)” (Goldman 1985, 245). Clearly, then, this was one basis for the fracturing of Yugoslavia, and the significant violence undertaken to appropriate territory and solidify identity.

Yet, the 1991-95 war in BiH was neither simply nor the sum of national aspirations for territory and power. One could say that the war was fought through the ideological frame of ethnic belonging, but this would deceive the reality that this very ideological frame was (re)made by the violence undertaken in the war. In the words of Toal and Dahmann (2011, 2), the violence was given meaning through a series of "sociobiological and politicogeographic propositions,” and those propositions were in turn shaped by the violence. Toal and Dahmann’s (2011) analysis is instructive: for them, the “ethnic cleansing” undertaken during the war

represents the logical conclusion of the “new order of space” engendered by the Serbian and Bosnian Serb vision of an ethnically pure Serbian statelet.

In its attempt to bring about peace, the 1995 Dayton Agreement also served to fix some of the social relations produced through the violence of the war. Merging some of the power-sharing models that existed in Yugoslavia with conceptions of ethno-national belonging produced through the war, the signatories assented to a Bosnian and Herzegovinian state split into two territorial-political entities (the largely Bosnian-Muslim and Bosnian-Croat Federation and the largely Bosnian-Serb *Republika Srpska*) and split the executive into three ethnically determined presidencies. Meanwhile, the very same nationalist political parties that produced the grounds for conflict would participate in free and fair elections. With this system in place, it is no wonder that among scholars and residents alike, the status quo enacted by Dayton is widely dismissed as failing—but hopelessly stuck. As Mujkić (2007), Hromadžić (2013), and Mujanović (2018) have argued, the forms of political participation offered by Dayton-era politics are myopic, founded on partition, and render it impossible to escape the ethno-national problematic.

Where are the youth politics?

Since the international community launched an ambitious project of peacebuilding and reconciliation as part of the implementation of the Dayton Accords, and particularly since around 2006, children and young people’s lives’ in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been a key site of development and study. As political aspirants, reconciliation professionals, and diplomats have sought to enact their political visions, “schools and youth [have become] a prolific site for imagining (ethno)national identities and [are] prioritized as means to unify or dispute the postwar

state” (Hromadžić 2015, 3). In other words, young people’s lives and the spaces they produce have become an important site for the making of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian (multi)ethno-state. Yet, young people are not merely objects of this kind of political imagination; as scholarship throughout the region demonstrates, youth are actively engaged in reproducing and rethinking ethno-national identities, the politics of waiting, migration, and other important contemporary issues (Helms 2008; Hromadžić 2015; Kurtović 2015; Laketa 2016; Čelebičić 2017; Gilbert 2017; Jeffrey et al. 2017).

If young people are, as Laketa (2016, 154) argues, geopolitical subjects who are always already “fully immersed in power relations operating within a society,” how can we begin to consider the ways in which they imagine and enact their own political realities? Implicit even in this question is that this political agency is spatial, and that we can thus make sense of it by understanding how it operates in space. This is a good starting point; yet, as Staeheli (2012) provocatively argues, we as geographers are often unable to plainly articulate spatiality’s significance. One particularly influential attempt to make such an articulation since comes in Swyngedouw’s (2014) appropriately titled article, “Where is the political?” In it, Swyngedouw draws on a wide array of theoreticians (but particularly Jacques Rancière and Alain Badiou) to argue for a reconceptualization of politics and the political, with the former representing policing and social ordering and the latter acting as “a procedure that disrupts any given socio-spatial order by staging equality and exposing a ‘wrong’” (Swyngedouw 2014, 128). While he is primarily concerned with the most spectacular forms of protest, in which the masses take to the street to reclaim social space in the name of a newly constituted “the people,” Swyngedouw does acknowledge that “the process of transformation requires the slow but unstoppable production of new forms of spatialisation quilted around materialising the claims of equality, freedom and

solidarity” (Swyngedouw 2014, 134). Certainly such forms of spatialization exist in street protests, but might they be elsewhere—maybe even on the street already? Perhaps one of the unrecognized voices, the part-of-no-part that Swyngedouw alludes to, may be the young people who are negotiating political realities in their lives on an everyday basis.

Spacing children and youth geographies

Geographers have written extensively on children and young people’s politics, and the topic has been an important area of scholarly concern since the 2003 publication of a special issue on the subject in *Space and Polity*. In the interest of theoretical and conceptual transparency and consistency (see Kallio and Häkli 2013), here I would like to make clear that the young people who form the object of analysis in this article had all reached the age of 18 at the time of my fieldwork. (Most were in their late teens, and all were under 25.) As other scholars have firmly asserted, age is a relational concept, and reaching the age of majority does not fully assert one into the world of adulthood; rather, much like childhood, youth is a transitional period, and one that is never fully realized (Valentine 2003; Jeffrey 2012). Rooted in that relationality, this study finds much to be learned from scholarship on children, adolescents, and young people of alike age, despite the clear differences that arise in different contexts.

As Skelton (2010, 145) relates, scholarship on children and young people’s politics has been a project of “opening the borders of political geography” beyond conventional understandings of politics and political actors, and conventional, state- and “big men”-focused geographies. One of the key tools in this analytical work has been the effort to spatialize youth politics, particularly through ethnographic and/or participatory engagement with young people. The language developed to mark this spatialization has often taken the form of the identification

and distinction of what many scholars identify as P/politics, the upper-case “P” signifying “state-centered, formal, and institutional politics, while little ‘p’ politics includes the more mundane, personal, and micro-politics of everyday life” (Bartos 2016, 113). In this mode of analysis, young people are understood as excluded, for the most part, from Politics, which is mostly the realm of powerful adults. As they still exist in society and space, however, they engage in politics as they navigate institutions and negotiate fraught, complex social relations in their everyday lives (Philo and Smith 2003). These interactions also often framed in terms of the various transitions, structural transformations, and becomings that young lives may become entangled in (Valentine 2003).

Rather than think of young people’s politics as happening in the small ‘p’ zone, I argue that young hip-hop fans’ everyday politics in Sarajevo are impactful to institutional politics. Here I draw on Farthing’s (2010) notion of “radically unpolitical young people,” which she conceptualizes in conversation with Beck’s (1992; 2001) writings on young people and risk society. In this piece, Farthing is responding specifically to two dominant modes of representing young people—as either “as the apolitical harbingers of an incipient ‘crisis of democracy’” or “the authors of sophisticated new forms of politics” (Farthing 2010, 181). Writing in response to these same paradigms, Jeffrey (2012, 150) argues that “[w]e somehow require a new political vocabulary to describe the sometimes spontaneous and typically complex politics of age and generation.” By unwinding what exactly is meant by political participation, Farthing’s notion of “radically unpolitical young people” accomplishes just that.

With Beck, Farthing argues that contemporary youthful politics are emerging from an entirely unprecedented sense of freedom, or “internalized democracy,” and are so radically alter that they cannot be understood through present frames. These politics instead represent entirely

new agendas, characterized by their tendency to make “smaller, intensive, personal actions” as or in place of demands (Farthing 2010, 189). What’s more, these politics are articulated not in the language and frame of the nation-state, but rather with a more transnational and ambiguous character.ⁱ These young people are unpolitical, then, because they reject both the institutions in place and existing mechanisms for changing them. Implicated here is a politics of fun, too: through fun and play, they may be “depriving politics of their attention and labour, and ultimately challenging its monopoly of power” (Farthing 2010, 190; see also Mann 2014; Bayat 2007; Bayat 2012). If young people are, in fact, “fleeing political realms” (Farthing 2010, 190) as a way of both demanding and actively changing existing systems of power and governance, the stakes are enormous. As Farthing notes, the appropriate policy response would then be to allow young people to shape the dominant political agenda with questions that threaten to completely remake it. Moreover, this stance would represent the remaking of Politics, i.e. the workings of the state as it attempts to mold a generation of acquiescent citizens, through politics (or “micro-politics”), disrupting the distinction between the two.

Framing youthful unpolitics

The work of molding that a new generation of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina has unique political importance, in that young people’s lives constitute an especially fertile ground of state-making in BiH. Much depends on young people’s acquiescence to this state, rather than their rejection, which may facilitate out-migration or the literal destruction of symbols and spaces of government, as occurred in the 2014 protests (Arsenijević 2014). And contrary to the traditional interpretation of the P/politics binary, namely that young people exercise politics in the absence of the ability to exercise Politics, it is precisely the kind of “micro-politics” described earlier that become extraordinarily important to disrupting state-

making. As Hromadžić (2015, 73) demonstrates in her ethnography of an ethnically mixed high school in Mostar, small symbolic acts of border-crossing can seem to disrupt socio-spatial paradigms (i.e. a border) while in fact reifying them as they perform a particular kind of reconciliation to an outside audience. To turn, then, to unpolitics—to reject this state-making out of hand, to refuse to become a subject of what Hromadžić calls an “empty nation” and Mujkić (2007) calls “ethnopolis,” has profound implications. Indeed, it is a counter-project of producing subjectivity in its own right.

Youthful unpolitics do not merely constitute an intersection of macro-politics and micro-politics; young people’s (in)actions serve to disrupt Politics and the institutions that support it by actively turning away from them even as they are interpellated by those institutions in a variety of ways. Farthing (2010) gestures towards some conceptual tools for approaching such unpolitics, and here I endeavor to expand those tools to better understand this case, and possibly others too. She suggests that “new *agendas* for youthful politics, new *spheres* of power and novel *forms* of action” (Farthing 2010, 188; emphasis in original) are largely the basis for youthful unpolitics, and that they particularly demand attention to how young people live (“self-actualize”) or—crucially—choose not to live their politics. For her, his attention necessarily points us towards where and when youthful unpolitics takes place, and the ways in which they are spatially designed to evade and withdraw from institutional politics. Finally, she implicates a politics of fun, suggesting with Beck that “young people have regrouped in a ‘colourful rebellion against (unfathomable) tedium and obligations that are (given to them)’” (Farthing 2010, 190; quoting Beck 2001, 159). The enactment of a politics of fun, in other words, serves to destabilize projects of state-making by calling their very legitimacy and relevance into question.

In order to expand these tools into a more substantial conceptual framework, it is necessary to consider youthful unpolitics as a particular subjectivity produced in and through the spaces of young people's lives. First, I propose that the emphasis on intentionality evinced in scholarship on youth political geographies be subordinated—not because intention is not useful, but because it is itself a shifting and contested political terrain that researchers are only able to access through particular discursive performances. Indeed, in the case of unpolitics, the demand for evidence of intention would bring these politics right into the political sphere that they oppose through abstention and avoidance. Second, and building upon Farthing's (2010) notion that youth politics is carving out new spheres of action, I call for increased attention to the spatiality of youth unpolitics. Here, I am inspired by Bayat's (2013, 19) formulation of a "social nonmovement," which he describes as the "collective actions of noncollective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change." In contrast with Bayat's focus on the ways in which ordinary people encroach on the powerful, however, I suggest that a nonmovement might have yet another dimension of non-movement to it. That is to say, one need not be moving to have a nonmovement; nor must one, like Melville's *Bartleby*, forcefully assert one's nonmovement. Third, following the extensive debates on scale in geography in general and feminist and youth geographies in particular (see Marston, et al. 2005; Moore 2008; Ansell 2008; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Pain 2015), I argue that we must understand youthful unpolitics as rooted in, constitutive of, and reacting to the projects of becoming, transition, and structural transformation that young people are entangled in. In the section that follows, I will reintroduce my case and begin to trace out how young people imagine and enact a youthful unpolitics.

Locating an urban ‘traitor’ in the city

Here I return to the ethnographic scene that opened this article. As the crowd of young people roared, the nature of the disruption was thrown into relief. While the song that seemed to have caused madness sounded closer to the growing genre of hybrid electronica-rap music, it was by no means out of the ordinary. Nor was the artist an ethnic other; like most of my informants and the city of Sarajevo proper more generally, he is a Bosnian Muslim. But it was something about the artist, a bearded man from Sarajevo whose stage name is Jala Brat, that caused this rage—something that Jala describes succinctly as his attitude of “if you can’t beat them, join them.”

It was Jala’s willingness to join “the other side” that caused his mere presence on a playlist to be an intolerable outrage at the music venue that night. For those young people, “the other side” in question referred not simply to a different genre of music, called *narodnjaci*, but something they would refer to as a distinct lifestyle. *Narodnjaci*’s meaning is something akin to folk songs, literally meaning “the people’s” music, but is commonly translated as turbofolk. From a musicological perspective, turbofolk is indistinct from other pop-folk stylings that hybridize elements of contemporary synthetic pop music and traditional or pseudo-traditional sounds, lyrics, and stories (Archer 2012). For this reason, Baker (2010) calls this genre of music “newly composed folk music,” alluding to the fact that perhaps the one characteristic that defines this music is its willingness to identify with a “folk” identity. One characteristic that can be difficult to identify in contemporary turbofolk itself, but was repeated to me by many nevertheless, was an incipient nationalism. In other words, turbofolk songs championed ethnic nationalism and what many of my informants referred to by the shorthand of a “backwards mentality.” Jala had not even become a turbofolk star—he merely collaborated with a number of

turbofolk artists, including the Bosnian Maya Berović and the young Serbian pop singer Elena. Nevertheless, his music had been banished from this space.

In this section, I will explore the (un)politics being produced by and through hip-hop music in Sarajevo by examining how this affectively charged moment came to be. I draw on ethnographic data gathered during fieldwork in the summer of 2016. As a participant observer among two small groups of young Sarajevo hip-hop fans aged 18-25, I paid close attention to the rhythms of everyday life, the ways in which bodies were presented and represented, and the particular ways in which young people narrated themselves, their lives, and their political context. My fieldwork took place in many public and semi-public places, such as concerts, cafés, and community events, but also in deeply private scenes, such as small gatherings of friends and arguments between young men and their parents. In this way, I was able to identify slippages that emerged between different and sometimes contradictory performances of self. As Watson and Till (2010) argue, “[e]thnographic observations of, and interactions with, others highlight how bodies interact, meld, and constitute social spaces, and thereby create inclusions and exclusions.” My observations across a variety of social spaces allowed me to understand how youth unpolitics unfolded as a distinct phenomenon, but one still very much in conversation with the politics practiced by adults and politicians.

Making urban identity in Sarajevo

My youthful interlocutors in Sarajevo did not share a common background. Some had been born to refugee parents in Western Europe, only to return as children; others had returned with their parents after a longer exile; still others moved to the city after the war from elsewhere in BiH and the region. (Given the circumstances, few had no history of exile to their family’s name.) Yet, they seemed to agree on the exceptionality of Sarajevo as a city. This came through

as they narrated the spaces of the city and their lives. Initially, as I was perceived as a foreigner, young people narrated and demonstrated the cosmopolitan nature of the city. I was repeatedly told of the presence of a mosque, cathedral, synagogue, and Orthodox church “right next to each other” near the city’s *Baščaršija* (the old town), a romantic idea of encounter that has worked its way into scholarly forums as well (see, for example, Donia 2006; Markowitz 2010). This narrative was important because it materialized Sarajevo’s interfaith tolerance: these well-worn institutions testified to the city’s history as a cosmopolitan center. When I asked another young man, Faruk, why he loved his city, he answered by showing me a bespoke music video, made by a fan, for a hip-hop song by the artist Kontra called “Opaska autora” (Author’s Note). The emotionally-loaded song is a tribute to Sarajevo, but one that recognizes its circumstances, as when Kontra narrates: “we [Sarajevans] find a rose in a thicket of thorns / where some only see desolation.”⁷ I was somewhat puzzled by this choice, as the song’s narration was somewhat gritty. The notion that Sarajevo was a thicket of thorns is echoed in the song when he raps “at least the city isn’t just western plastic,” before suggesting that might come to the end in the final two lines of the song: “Maybe only gravestones and wreaths will be all that’s left of the city, but the spirits [*duhovi*] of Sarajevo will stay forever.”

While musical artists have long included the darker sides of their city even as they narrate its greatness, this song—and Faruk’s enthusiasm in showing it to me—evinced a feeling that the city is slipping away, one that was mirrored as I talked to young hip-hop fans of diverse backgrounds. While this song does not explicitly reference to whom the city is being lost (except, perhaps, western plastic), there is something profound suggested by the artist’s

⁷ This translation, along with all others, are mine.

suggestion that “*Sarajevska raja*” might remain only as spirits. *Raja* is a word that merits unpacking. Brković (2017, 51) explains the term thusly:

raja is a group of friends, as well as a subaltern "cultural milieu"... in Sarajevo that links certain people together via reciprocity into a seemingly apolitical relationship that requires its participants to lay aside their mutual ethnic, national, religious, class, and many other social differences in order to relate to one another on egalitarian grounds.

The stakes here, then, are clear: something is threatening to relegate this spirit of the city into history. The notion of *raja* asserts a culture of cooperation and reciprocity, one not particularly concerned with ethnic identity so much as one’s place in an urban mutuality.

What—or who—is delivering this threat? The notion that rural outsiders are threatening to eviscerate urban people and their ideas, practices, and beliefs is not a novel one, here or elsewhere. To the contrary, Jansen (2005), Stefansson (2007), and Hromadžić (forthcoming) have each written on the ways in which Bosnians and Herzegovinians of all stripes participate in mainstream discourses of urbanity and civility as a way of positioning themselves as 'modern' and European, in contrast to the rural *mentalitet* (mentality) that they narrate as giving rise to the war. The rage I described at the beginning of this article arises directly out of this conception of *raja*: by giving credibility to folk artists, seen by many young people as peddlers of ethno-nationalism, Jala had used his privileged status as *Sarajevska raja* for ill. He had picked a side.

It may seem at this point that these young hip-hop fans’ orientation towards urban belonging simply reproduces the *raja* of their parents’ generation. Indeed, it is their parents who are lamenting the *loss* of the city—first through the wartime “urbicide” (Coward 2007) of Sarajevo, which also drove many urbanites out, and then through postwar migration as many forcibly displaced peoples found themselves in cities. Young people born in the mid-to-late 1990s, after the war ended, would have no experience of a pre-war city or polity. It is for this reason that I argue that this is a politics wholly distinct, beginning from precisely the fact that

these visions of the city emerge from very different referents. The Sarajevo they imagine is aspirational, one they never experienced; but it is also one that they experience on an everyday basis, in an archipelago of cosmopolitan urban spaces. Moreover, these aspirations are articulated in a particular way: one that rejects any sort of political or ideological framing derides and critiques politics as is, expresses itself through references to “social values” and “mentalities,” and/or turns its back on this set of issues outright. Borrowing a phrase from Laski (1925), I argue that hip-hop music and culture (both in national and international context) provides a grammar of (un)politics, which is developed in the aforementioned archipelagic spaces. This grammar of unpolitics works to unravel the project of state-making to which young people are subject to as they move through the education system and then attempt to transition into the “adult” world. In the subsections that follow, I trace these archipelagic spaces and the grammar of unpolitics that develops within them.

A grammar for unpolitics. When I use the term “grammar for unpolitics,” I mean that young hip-hop fans in Sarajevo, in conversation with hip-hop artists, have developed a language with which to understand, interpret, discuss, and perform politics. I consciously borrow the term grammar, rather than language, from Laski (1925) because it conveys the ways in which this language is more than textual: it is embodied, affective, and spatial. It is a grammar precisely because it is much more than a vocabulary: it is a structure through which young people can articulate their (political) ‘attitude’ [*stav*] in a way that is mutually intelligible and articulates a stance to a broader set of publics. It is embodied because it shapes and is shaped by bodily practices, like the episode of rage discussed throughout this article. It is affective because it works through an “emotive domain” (Navaro 2012, 167) that is more than subjective: it works through and across bodies, objects, and sounds. Finally, it is spatial because it produced by and produces spaces of

hip-hop cosmopolitanism in the city. The ways in which this grammar is spatial will be further explored in the following subsection.

The bodily grammar for unpolitics articulated in hip-hop culture is practiced in different ways depending on the space that it is part of. In hip-hop spaces, this grammar guides the ways in which bodies intimately interact, as cigarettes wave furiously in conversation and alcohol is consumed. It sets the terms for such encounters, as well: there were some venues in which it was perfectly fine to meet with others who were not actively part of hip-hop culture, particularly hookah bars. Yet, it was largely unthinkable to go to a hookah bar with someone engaged in hip-hop culture, particularly as those spaces held certain resonances of Bosnian Muslim identity and in many cases did not serve alcoholic drinks during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, or at all. Instead, hip-hop fans might find themselves somewhere like Café Tito, a bright red outdoor bar that proudly presents images of Yugoslavia's iconic leader and waxes nostalgic about the socialist cosmopolitan past. In external encounters, unpolitics also provided a grammar for interaction. This was evident in a series of arguments between one of my interlocutors, Edi, and his parents over his performance in university. In addition to what they viewed as his inadequate performance, his parents criticized his choice of area of study, arguing that he could not get a job with it in Sarajevo or—more importantly—anywhere else. In such situations, the young man would physically reposition himself, turning or moving away, and attempt to close the conversation. The prospect of migration was not one he was prepared to address in any way, at least not with his parents and about his own life. This resonated with the larger fraught ambiguity of migration in hip-hop circles, where migration represented both an abandonment of one's country and a move in one's life-stage that put one beyond the youthful vitality of hip-hop culture.

Hip-hop culture's grammar for unpolitics is also deeply affective: that is to say, it is transmitted in extra-textual ways through bodies and objects, "producing a continually changing distribution of intensities which prefigure encounters, which set up encounters, and which have to be worked on in these encounters" (Thrift 2008, 116). It is not within the scope of this article to adequately address debates on affective theory. Yet this aspect of the grammar must be acknowledged because the embodied practices discussed above are not individual, nor are they merely intersubjective. The archipelagic spaces this article goes on to explore do not come to pass only through the assembling of people, but very explicitly through the assembling of people and objects. To wit, certain objects and bodily practices signaled the opening or closure of cosmopolitan space. Graffiti, erroneously parked cars, and marijuana cigarettes were never just agglomerations of material. Rather, each acted on subjects and the environment in different ways. These affective dimensions will be further explored in the subsection that follows.

Finally, this grammar of unpolitics was spatially constituted and in that way continuously emergent. That is to say, these spaces were always fragmented and momentary, often only accessible to some, and formed a repeated point of reference for young people. It is for this reason that I call them archipelagic spaces of cosmopolitanism. In the subsection that follows, I will more deeply explore the intimacy of these spaces of cosmopolitanism, but first I turn to the ways in which they are projected throughout the city: through graffiti. Young people asserted their belonging in space through graffiti in various ways, including by tagging their names or mural-like birthday messages. But the practice of using some particular graffiti stencils served to project unpolitical young people's politics out into the world, and to confront viewers in serious and intentful ways. Many of the young hip-hop fans I spoke with lamented what they viewed as BiH's uniquely virulent homophobia, which they narrated through events like an attack on an

LGBT-friendly cinema and bar that they frequented (Toe 2016). That summer, I began to encounter graffiti stencils with messages like “*i hodža i gej*,” (a boss [lit. Islamic teacher] and gay too) and “*Lezbe šetaju gradom*,” (lesbians are walking the city) as well as older non-stencil graffiti with messages like “Queer revolt” and “*On voli njega*” (he loves him). The former two stencils were unique in their claim to space, as they were stenciled onto sidewalks and asphalt on Wilson’s Promenade, an extremely popular public space where families and young people gathered, ate street food, rode rollerskates and bikes, and had intimate time with partners later in the evening. Thus this graffiti directly targeted a heterosocial space and did so by spray-painting onto one of the few surfaces in the city that was not an ongoing palimpsest of graffiti, the sidewalk.

Archipelagic spaces of cosmopolitanism. The Sarajevo that these young people aspire to belong to already exists—though that might be difficult to pinpoint in everyday discourse. Doom and gloom is the order of the day, as when a young man named Jasmin explained to me that the poor habits of parking around his apartment block spelled the demise of his neighborhood and the city. “It’s not that the people who park like that are assholes [*šupci*]” he said, explaining how one man (whom he had confronted) had parked illegally in front of a curb ramp. “It’s just doesn’t even occur to them that they could be bothering someone else.” It makes sense that the parking lot in front of Jasmin’s apartment block would also clearly be a site of politics: always full and filled with opulent cars, ancient ruins, and everything in between, the navigation of automotive space in front of the tower was a site in which bouts of everyday frustration were often translated into language around class, urban hygiene, and belonging. Yet as much as there existed space in which the rural other had already materialized spatial dominance, e.g. by blocking wheelchair users and bicycle riders with their cars, there also existed moments of cosmopolitan opening,

which together formed what I am calling an archipelago of cosmopolitan spaces, inspired by Weizman's (2007) spatial analysis of settler-colonialism in the occupied West Bank. In contrast to the spatial domination exercised by settler-colonialists, however, I suggest that these spatial politics cohere through a set of practices that make certain forms of inclusion and belonging possible.

Even as it was a site of doom and gloom, the rural other's parking mishap also spelled hope. On the one hand, Jasmin did not even need to describe the man's appearance or way of speaking to suggest that he was an outsider. This was already encapsulated in the suggestion that he had the wrong "mentality," that he could not even conceptualize his own urban transgression. Yet, this incident ends in quite a different way, as Jasmin narrates: "I asked him calmly to move, and he got all angry at me, something like 'how dare you talk to me like that?' But I came back later and he had moved his car." Here a generational divide, among other things, stands as a barrier against communication. Jasmin, who asserts himself as a defender of urban hygiene in contravention of his young age, is not socially positioned to order an older man to move. And yet his "calm" explanation proves persuasive in the end, as he explains it, and he explicitly investigates to make sure it is so. Jasmin tells me he is not interested in politics—and indeed, teases me for my interest in Bosnian politics—but is a staunch defender of an urban way of life against what he, his friends, and some hip-hop artists called "inverted values [*izvrnute vrijednosti*]." In reconfiguring those relations, even for a moment, even a distant moment that is accessible only through further investigation, Jasmin materializes his cosmopolitan vision for Sarajevo.

The islands that emerge in Sarajevo's archipelago of cosmopolitan spaces are necessarily momentary bursts, and manifest both as social and physical space. At the concert that opened

this article, cosmopolitan space was produced through an array of representational and discursive practices. This included sartorial practices such as fashionable clothes I described, but also more active practices. For example, a man who used a wheelchair found himself unable to enter the music venue, as it was only accessible via stairs. A group of young men carried him up the steep set of stairs, and he was later recognized during the show, even delivering a brief comedic routine on stage. This enabled the group of young people to not only practice their cosmopolitan vision of the city, but to perform it as well. As the crowd roared in laughter in response to the young man's jokes—"Usually, people are getting carried out of bars... I'm the only person they carry in!"—they affirmed their collective commitment to an inclusive city. As throngs left the venue, the stairs reverberated in their conversations as they were descended, as some discussed their steepness and others the barriers to life as a person with disabilities in the country.

Understanding these young people's politics as spatial helps to explain why the eruption I detail happened. What was at stake was not merely having to listen to a relatively generic song by a distasteful artist, but a fundamental threat to that island in that moment of time. To have permitted the song to continue would have destabilized that cosmopolitan space. Crucially, it would have also demonstrated a level of ignorance or knowledge on the part of any given individual based on their reaction: to lash out and react was a performance of cosmopolitan space intended for others as much as one's own desire to not listen to the song. And it was precisely this kind of collective action in the public sphere that adults (and many young people) mourned the absence of. In this way, just one cosmopolitan space offered many different ways of relating to one another, not inclusion and its affirmations. It offered the pleasure of enjoying a song together, the exhilaration of chanting the chorus of American hip-hop group NWA's protest anthem "Fuck the Police," and the adrenaline of identifying and attempting to expunge the

presence of a dangerous other in the space. Through these practices of relating, new subjectivities emerged: another narrative of disability shaped minds, some young men found a way of articulating their masculinity through the space, and each experience provided an opportunity to perform and subsequently recognize oneself and one's body in different ways. At the same time, objects took on new meanings, and these meanings in turn shaped how the attendees went on to relate in the world.

Thus this cosmopolitanism was as much an affective, bodily practice as a discursive one: the ways in which bodies presented, moved, and related to each other served to constitute both the basis and the mutual recognition of the space. This materialized in different ways, particularly with regard to whether the space was (semi-)public, like a concert venue, or private, like a young man's bedroom. In private spaces, cosmopolitan space came about through the intimacies like sharing and physical exposure. The apartment of one young man in particular, whose father had relocated to his home in the suburbs of Sarajevo [*vikendica*, literally the one for the weekend], served as a space in which this cosmopolitan intimacy was enacted. On the occasions of visiting this young man, a close interlocutor and I would find him in various states of undress. This was never explicitly mentioned, and yet it worked on the space in important ways. First, it was part of a broader ethos of sharing that extended from food to marijuana to A/V equipment. Second, it changed the way in which politics were discussed. In larger groups, particularly ones in which unfamiliar people were involved, many of the young people I observed tended to bring up political issues in order to perform both their extensive knowledge of current events and their outrage. Yet, in this private space, politics took on new affective registers as it circulated primarily around its intersections with one's everyday life. Often, this meant arguments with parents about one's present choices and how they might become a middle-

class future—which inevitably meant migration to another European country for some period of time. The tensions, frustrations, and contradictions engendered by such prospects—wanting to leave but not being able to achieve the grades to do so, fear of accommodating to a foreign country, feelings that it was too late to learn a foreign language, and so on—were thick in the air in these conversations. That it required this deep level of intimacy to engage in such conversations speaks to the power of young people’s unpolitics. To confront the intimate ways in which the precarious politics of BiH were lived and enacted took an environment of trust and privacy. It also explains why some of these conversations were accessible to the researcher: as a relative outsider, I was not expected to intervene with bombastic unpolitical performances. In this way, the archipelagic spaces of cosmopolitanism were themselves fragmented and uneven, each serving particular purposes in their respective social environments.

In policing politics, young people were effectively negotiating the state’s presence in their lives in collective ways. This effort was one oriented towards the opening up of new spaces of relating, ones that were explicitly cosmopolitan and anti-nationalist. In a polity in which national belonging is inescapable, these spaces were explicitly marked and policed. That policing also meant that boundaries were drawn; these boundaries, in turn, reflected not just an anti-nationalist politics but also one that achieves its allure by drawing on an idea that escapes the nation, urbanity. For these young people, urban cosmopolitanism explicitly meant leaving rural subjects behind, and clearly demarcating that line in everyday practice. Such openings and closures allowed, then, for an exercise in politics that was, at its heart, a response to state projects of making subjects, but in a way that allowed those young people to turn away from those projects altogether. Instead of workshops, they had concerts and video games. Instead of reconciliation, they had a politics of fun. Instead of politics, they had unpolitics.

Conclusions

In confronting young people's politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina spatially, this article endeavors to understand young people's political agency beyond both romantic notions of street protest and popular narratives of apathetic youth. Young hip-hop fans' choice to actively turn away from the state and its ethno-politics was not a passive one: in constructing an unpolitics oriented away from the state, they simultaneously produced, exchanged, and enacted a politics of urban belonging that allowed them to exercise political agency in the absence of other pathways. They re-made space not necessarily through explicit claims-making, but through retreats from or active encroachments of state space. In that way, parks became sites for illegal drug use and bedrooms became sites of intimate, vulnerable—political—discourse. That things were this way was never explicitly discussed: the boundaries around what could be said appeared natural, *felt* natural, as they were produced through the spaces young people inhabited and primed through those affective atmospheres. At the same time, the performance of particular, and I would argue political, states of being, such as outrage, became crucial to reaffirm those spaces' status and bring newcomers into hip-hop culture's unpolitics.

The unpolitics practiced by these young people poses serious challenges to the state, already an entity in ongoing crisis; and this article's analysis offers scholars a way into these young people's politics without marginalizing them from the start. A multiplicity of possibilities sit within this politics of turning away. Might the archipelagic spaces I describe not offer a young person hope against hope, a sense of belonging, and perhaps even a means to make a living? The aggressive polemics of BiH hip-hop might also be the next stone thrown during a protest, a pen and paper for yet another frustrated critique, or the impetus for a turn to fun, to substance, to escape. Regardless, young people in Sarajevo's hip-hop culture are actively negotiating this future for themselves, in contravention of others' desires for them.

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ⁱ I stipulate here that this is not unique to youth politics; as Appadurai (2014) notes, political aspirations are inevitably paradoxical as they champion universalistic principles (e.g. liberty, equality) even as they are limited by their particularistic context (i.e. limited sovereignty).