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Linking active and activist citizens: electoral change and the Bosnian plenums

Abstract: This article will examine whether the demands for social justice during the citizen-led assemblies (“plenums”) in February 2014 in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) triggered electoral change in cantonal elections in the Bosniak-Croat entity (the Federation of BiH, or FBiH). Extant analyses underline the perennial weakness of Bosnian civil society, and the stasis in the ethnified political party system, even in the wake of the protests in 2014. However, these studies only look at the aggregate level and do not differentiate between places where plenums were established and those where they were not. To address this gap, the present article will differentiate, following Engin Isin, between “active citizenship” and “activist citizenship” as the basis for the conceptual framework. A difference-in-differences analysis will be employed using municipal-level FBiH cantonal election results from 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2018. There are two main questions in the study. First, was there a significant electoral change in municipalities with plenums compared with places without a plenum? Relatedly, did the change differ amongst the main parties? The article will thus link active and activist citizenship in the post-conflict and post-socialist setting of BiH.

Keywords: citizenship; activism; protest; elections; Bosnia-Herzegovina

Introduction

The closure of privatised factories in February 2014 in the north-eastern Bosnian town of Tuzla first triggered protests, and then the establishment of citizen assemblies (called “plenums”) in nearly two dozen locations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). The events in BiH were the first occurrences of post-war citizen-led mobilisations in the country not focused solely in the capital city Sarajevo. Moreover, given the deep entrenchment of ethno-national politics, intensified by political elites stoking inter-ethnic distrust by invoking the wars of the 1990s, it is especially surprising that the mobilisations in 2014 were framed in universalist, non-ethnic terms.

The events in BiH can also be placed in a slightly broader context of progressive, non-nationalist citizen-led mobilisations across post-socialist Europe. Beissinger et al (2014) refer to the upsurge of citizen dissent in the region over the past decade as the “end of patience”, as an end to a quiescent population that was willing to endure political, social, and economic hardship in pursuit of the transformation to a liberal-democratic (market-economy) polity. This applied to those countries that experienced: non-violent popular revolutions in 1989 (Central and Eastern Europe); post-conflict internationally-led reconstruction and reform (former Yugoslavia); and elite-led dissolution (former Soviet Union). This stands in contrast to the extant literature positing that Eastern Europe suffers from a weak civil society (Howard 2003).

That is not to say that BiH and other cases of protest and direct-democratic citizen assemblies are simply cases of hitherto disengaged populations catching up with modes of Western activism. On the contrary, the mobilisations that have occurred in BiH, elsewhere in Southeast Europe (SEE) (Fagan and Sircar 2017), and other parts of post-socialist Europe are local manifestations of global phenomena evident since the Global Recession in 2008 (Dolenec, Doolan, and Tomašević 2017, 1402). The modes of political organisation in SEE did not solely emulate or gain inspiration from protest movements during the Arab Spring and the Indignant protests in Southern Europe, but also from student occupations in Serbia before the Global Recession of 2008 (Reinprecht 2017).

Most importantly, the cases of BiH and other parts of post-socialist Europe are on the frontline of that which activists and other citizens protested around the world since 2008 – the rapid marketisation / privatisation of public goods and spaces, predatory elites who benefit unfairly from the status quo, and increasing poverty and precarity. The rapid transformation to market economies in Eastern Europe (at the

behest of the European Union and other international institutions), especially in urban areas, has made the consequences and feelings of grievance more intense than in other parts of Europe (Jacobsson 2015).

At the core of the demands of citizens in post-2008 are appeals to justice underlining aspects of recognition and redistribution, in line with the conceptualisation by Fraser and Honneth (2003). The aspects of *redistribution* are clear: citizens sought to highlight and propose remedies for exploitation by the political elite (“1%”) at the expense of the public (“99%”). Crucially, participants in these mobilisations are not seeking *recognition* as “citizens” by the existing political and economic elite. They are making a radical claim whereby they are citizens who are themselves the legitimate “insiders” and agenda-setters, with the elite as “outsiders”. It is this rupture in the *status quo*, this tension of justice and legitimacy outside legality, that is the basis for Engin Isin’s (2009) “activist citizenship” that will form the conceptual foundation in this article.

The article will next examine how citizenship is broadly understood, how it is linked to conventional political participation (“active citizenship”), and the radical critique by Isin (“activist citizenship”). The relationship between active and activist citizenship will be used to provide an exploratory framework for the subsequent analysis. The third section will provide background to electoral politics in BiH, and the protests in 2014. The subsequent section will summarise the electoral and demographic data used, link these to the differentiation between active and activist citizenship, and justify why the analysis is limited to the Bosniak- and Croat-predominant entity in BiH. Importantly, the analysis will use a difference-in-differences framework that allows for a causal interpretation of the link between the “treatment” (citizen assemblies) and outcomes in subsequent elections, that is, whether electoral change is an effect of the

2014 plenums. Most importantly, the approach not only establishes whether citizen-led mobilisation in BiH had an effect on cantonal elections, but also the type of electoral change (i.e., which outcomes were affected), and whether the electoral change persisted beyond 2014. In short, the article explores whether *activist* citizenship affected *active* citizenship.

From Active to Activist Citizenship

The modern conceptualisation of liberal-democratic citizenship rests on the oft-cited distinction made by Marshall (1950, 10-1), between social, political, and civil elements. Social citizenship connotes the right to economic security and a standard of living similar to fellow citizens. The education system and social services are linked to social citizenship. Political citizenship implies two related rights, that of being able to partake in decision-making (i.e., political authority) as well as having opportunities to select those in political power. These are manifested in the institutions of electoral democracy and political representation. Finally, and most relevant for this study, civil citizenship is tied to rights guaranteeing individual freedoms, including liberty / autonomy of the individual, the right to private property, and right to justice. The right to justice is key to civil citizenship, and is central to this article.

The concept of the “active citizen” is evident in the thinking of the Conservative government in Britain in the 1980s. In a series of commentaries, Douglas Hurd, then Home Secretary, attempted to reconcile the liberal commitment from the Right for a receding state with the Left commitment for forms of solidarity. For the Conservatives, the “active citizen” was one who became active in the running of their communities through voluntarism, thus having individual responsibility and voice instead of leaving this to the state. Schemes such as Care in the Community and Neighbourhood Watch were launched, which were designed to replace state-led mental / physical disability

care and policing, respectively (Bellamy and Greenaway 1995, 474). Thus, the shift is away from the elements or rights of the citizen to one where the conditions of actual participation are emphasised.

On the face of it, the notion of the “active citizen”, with its emphasis on local empowerment and social inclusion, seems compatible with social-democratic or left-leaning perspectives of solidarity. However, this “active citizen” is, in fact, passive and often tasked with responsibilities in the private sphere encouraged top-down by the state, which Turner (1990) terms *conservative* citizenship in contrast with more bottom-up, public manifestations of *revolutionary* citizenship. Crucially, passive citizenship is where “the citizen is a mere subject rather than an active bearer of effective claims” (Turner 1990, 200).

For example, informal caring responsibilities for children and elderly relatives in this conservative configuration fall disproportionately on women, leading to exclusion from full social citizenship (Lister 1990). Walby (1994, 386) posits that Marshall’s social citizenship requires being a paid worker, so “[w]omen’s caring work in the family is a major barrier to women’s full social citizenship” (391). Moreover, this erosion of social citizenship is deleterious to civil citizenship (which is the focus of this article), that is, exclusion due to the burden of informal caring also negatively affects a woman’s autonomy. “Active citizenship” is thus a misnomer for passivity and disempowerment.

Attempts to provide quantitative measures of active citizenship tend to assume that a good citizen is one who upholds the prevailing socio-political order rather than transform it. Hoskins and Mascherini (2009, 468) operationalise active citizenship along four axes: democratic values; representative democracy; community life; and protest and change. The first three dimensions have an obvious link to a perpetuation of the

status quo. Adherence to democratic values is measured by respondents feeling it is important: to develop an independent (read: individualistic) opinion, vote, obey laws, and be active in conventional politics. Community life is akin to membership in community organisations and voluntarism. Supporting representative democracy is closely aligned with Marshall's notion of political citizenship, with individuals' commitment to: engaging with political parties, women's political participation, and voting. The final dimension, protest and social change, leaves room for citizenship tied to "unconventional forms of participation", including "protests, boycotts and political strikes" that are part and parcel of established democracies (Hoskins and Mascherini 2009, 465). However, in measuring protest and social change, Hoskins and Mascherini (2009, 465) use cross-national survey data on respondents' commitment to "improve things", boycott products for ethical reasons, or take part in a *lawful* demonstration.

This assumes that citizenship contains elements that remain behind closed doors. Hence, part of citizenship is encapsulated by what Scott (1990) calls "infra-politics", which are the "hidden transcripts" of private rebellion and resistance. The other significant feature assumed in this measure of social change is that even in the act of protesting, demands for justice invoke, in Marshall's words above, "the due process of law".

Such a conceptualisation of the link between citizenship and citizen-led dissent fails to capture the crucial function of performativity (that is, citizenship not behind closed doors), and the possibility that it can seek fundamental socio-political transformation. It is here that the notion of activist citizenship provides a conceptual framework to connect the "citizen" to social change.

Isin (2008) starts with Foucault's notion of subjectivation, which is how an entity constitutes itself as a moral / ethical being and thus becomes a "subject". Isin

(2012, 109) posited that Foucault, Deleuze, and other moral philosophers did not appreciate the revolutionary potential of citizen-making, and “were rarely, if at all, interested in political subjectivity as a performative force that breaks habits or ways of doing things and throws the subject into uncertainty, indeterminacy and the unknown”.

Thus, rather than hidden micro-rebellions, constituting the citizen is performative (Isin 2017, 502-8), and problematizes the status quo by invoking prevailing conventions (e.g., “rights”) whilst exceeding or breaking conventions (e.g., “legality”).

To address the misnomer of the passivity of the so-called “active citizen”, Isin (2008, 38) distinguishes between the *active* and *activist* citizen: “[w]hile activist citizens engage in writing scripts and creating the scene, active citizens follow scripts and participate in scenes that are already created”. This process of a re-constitution of the political subject is done through performative “acts of citizenship”, which bring into being (“actualise”) citizens and not vice versa.

Events across the globe since 2008 can be viewed as instances of activist citizenship, and through creative and visible acts, political subjects came into being and in particular, sought to re-constitute citizenship. At the organisational level, the mobilisations crystallised through horizontal, direct-democratic decision-making in occupied spaces or *acampadas* (della Porta 2015), which eschewed representatives from governmental, non-governmental, and partisan bodies, and instead emphasised individual access to a “shared space” (Ishkanian, Glasius, and Ali 2013).

What is largely neglected in the extant literature is evidence of the connections between activist citizenship challenging the socio-political order, and active citizenship through voting. It is here that the current study is situated, as an exploratory

investigation of the connection between active and activist citizenship at the municipal level.

This distinction between active and activist citizenship allows for a critical assessment of the connections between the citizen, sites, and the duration of 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2012, 131-5). The act in question, the constitution of plenums, asserts citizens' authority to shape rights claims. Crucially, although the event of the plenum is temporally and spatially bounded, acts of citizenship are not. In other words, the effects and significance of the plenums extends beyond their duration (i.e., until May 2014) and location (e.g, National Theatre, Tuzla). The performance of mobilisation and direct democracy is not only for the immediate audience, but rather for all local citizens.

In particular, if active citizenship is related to electoral engagement, then this can be observed through changes in turnout. Activist citizenship could also affect, on average, how citizens vote for ruling parties in subsequent elections, with or without concomitant changes in turnout. Thus, there are four combinations of average behaviours related to electoral disengagement and vote for ruling parties after an episode of activist citizenship (e.g., plenums):

- Null: there is no change in turnout or in vote for ruling parties
- Alienation: there is change in turnout, but not in ruling party support. In other words, those who do not vote for ruling parties stop voting.
- Substitution: there is no change in turnout, but less support for ruling parties. In other words, citizens continue to vote, but for non-ruling parties.
- Transformation: there is a change in turnout and ruling party support. In other words, those who had supported ruling parties no longer do so and no longer vote.

For alienation and transformation, citizens will seek to pursue politics by other means – and there will be a clear demarcation between active (electoral) and activist (non-electoral) citizen participation.

The four possibilities are displayed in Table 1.

The analysis below will examine which of these four scenarios is suggested by the aggregate municipal results in cantonal elections. Before proceeding to the analysis, it is instructive to provide background to politics in BiH.

Politics, parties, and protests in BiH

The complex institutions of BiH are due to its piecemeal creation as a result of the devastating wars of the 1990s. The Washington Agreement (1994) ceased hostilities between Bosniaks and Croats, and created a loose federation of ten ethnic-majority cantons (the Federation of BiH, or FBiH) co-ordinated by a power-sharing Bosniak / Croat executive, with Zagreb as guarantors. After sustained North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air operations, parties to the conflict signed the US-brokered Dayton Agreement (1995) with Zagreb and Belgrade as guarantors, which secured the end of armed conflict amongst the belligerents. The state of BiH that was created consists of FBiH and Republika Srpska (RS), the latter a Serb-predominant territory. The resulting central governmental institutions have been weak, with little co-ordinating power, and “exist largely on paper” (ICG 1999, 3).

Primary governing power is thus devolved to FBiH and RS, where Bosniaks have a numerical majority in the former and Serbs in the latter. The aforementioned cantons within FBiH, which are the focus of this article, enjoy far-reaching powers and have separate constitutions, governments, judiciaries, and extensive budgetary autonomy over key public services such as health and education. The lowest level of governance are municipalities. Additionally, the district of Brčko was disputed, and

ruled by an international tribunal to be part of both RS and FBiH yet have independent local institutions. The governance of BiH is further complicated by the presence of the international community in the form of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), led by the High Representative. The High Representative largely had a monitoring role until 1997, but was given the so-called “Bonn Powers” to unilaterally remove elected officials and ratify legislation.¹

The constitution also contains safeguards to guarantee representation in elected office for the three constituent peoples of BiH – Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. Since the constitution was an annex to the Dayton Agreement and not negotiated by local stakeholders, it is sometimes seen as a case of “imposed federalism” (Keil 2013). Politics in BiH continues to be dictated by politicians promoting an “archetypal ethnocracy” (Hulsey and Stjepanović 2017) instead of a multi-ethnic democracy, since many of the leaders (or their parties) active during the wars of the 1990s are still pivotal in electoral politics. Electoral politics remains highly segmented along ethnic lines (Hulsey 2015), since ethno-nationalist leaders espouse a politics of fear, whereby voters are faced with an “ethnopolitical prisoners’ dilemma” (Hulsey and Mujkić 2010) or “strait-jacket” (Perry 2014) preventing a vote for civic or multi-ethnic parties.

¹ An analysis of High Representative decisions 1997-2009 showed that the Bonn Powers were used 895 times, with removal / suspension from office (20%) and imposition of legislation related to judicial reform (20%) most frequent (Szewczyk 2010). However, between 2010 and 2014, the High Representative only issued 48 decisions, 39 of which were to reverse the unilateral bans to hold public office issued by his predecessors (author’s own calculations), with no decisions at all 2015-2018.

The main Serb party in BiH is the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) led by Milorad Dodik. Although it was oriented initially as a social-democratic party, Dodik and SNSD have opted for a more nationalist trajectory in recent years.

Alija Izetbegović, the wartime President of BiH, founded the Party for Democratic Action (SDA) in 1990. SDA remains the main Bosniak party in FBiH, though a series of splits have made it less powerful over the years. For example, Haris Silajdžić, the wartime Prime Minister of BiH, broke with Izetbegović in 1996 and founded the Party for BiH (Stranka za BiH, SzBiH). More recently, new parties or blocs led by ex-SDA members contested the 2018 elections, such as Nezavisni blok and Narod i Pravda (Andjelić 2018).

The Croatian Democratic Union in Bosnia-Herzegovina (HDZ BiH), also established in 1990, is the main Bosnian Croat political party and linked to HDZ in Croatia, particularly during the rule of Franjo Tuđman, the first President of Croatia (Manning 2008, 85). HDZ BiH splintered in 2006, with the establishment of HDZ 1990 which resisted constitutional reform. Although HDZ 1990 portrays itself sometimes as more nationalist and other times as reformist than HDZ BiH, the two parties are ideologically similar (Subotić 2016, 130), and even signed a recent cooperative agreement (N1 2019).

The Social Democratic Party of BiH (SDP) was the successor party to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. SDP represents the only “multi-ethnic” alternative for Bosniaks and Croats with a credible chance of securing office in many parts of FBiH.

Although different parties have gained and lost support over the years, such as the decline of SzBiH and local successes of the small, multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan Naša Stranka, the focus of the analysis below is on the predominant cantonal parties in FBiH

in 2010, which were SDA, SDP, and HDZ, to chart their electoral fortunes before and after the 2014 protests.

Despite the ethno-territorial fragmentation of post-war politics in FBiH described above, there have been occasional episodes of citizen-led mobilisation across ethnic boundaries. In February 2008, 17-year-old Denis Mrnjavac was stabbed and killed by three other youths on a Sarajevo tram. Since there were insufficient correctional facilities, the three suspects were released (Latal 2009). This led to a number of public demonstrations mainly in Sarajevo focused on the juvenile justice system and societal violence more generally. The mobilisation initially organised by NGOs Dosta! (“Enough!”) and Grozd (“Grape”) - though a majority of the participants were ordinary citizens - called for the resignation of the cantonal government. The protestors co-ordinated through a “loose collective” called Građani Sarajeva (“Citizens of Sarajevo”), which later became Akcija Građana (“Citizens’ Action”). What is important is that not only was this the first notable non-ethnic mobilisation in post-war BiH, but also the importance of framing and empowering the “citizen” (Touquet 2015).

The 2013 protests around unique ID numbers for Bosnian citizens (Jedinstveni matični broj građana or JMBG) originated in 2011 with a Bosnian Supreme Court decision that required state-level lawmakers to amend the current legislation within six months. JMBG is necessary to obtain important administrative documents, including a passport. However, the state-level parliament could not agree on the amended legislation, since politicians from RS wanted JMBG numbers to reflect the entity-level division of BiH whilst those from FBiH did not. In 2013, the law on JMBG lapsed due to the continued impasse, and as a result, the BiH Constitutional Court suspended the issuing of new registration numbers after February 2013. This decision had real, human consequences. Citizen mobilisation (dubbed the “Baby Revolution”) urging legislators

to pass the ID legislation crystallised in June 2013 around the case of Belmina Ibrišević, whose parents sent an urgent appeal since their infant daughter needed specialist care in Germany but was unable to obtain a passport (Štiks 2013). Crucially, the mobilisation provided an opportunity for people to constitute a common non-ethnic identity, since the dispute centred around RS attempts for JMBG to reflect the country's ethno-territorial division. Ethno-national leaders thus "inadvertently gave a political meaning to what they strived to destroy, namely the *common citizenship* [emphasis added] of all Bosnians and Herzegovinians" (Štiks 2013).

The February 2014 mobilisation, which is the focus of this article, was triggered after the closure of five privatised factories in the city of Tuzla: Dita, Konjuh, Polihem, Poliochem, and Resod Guming. The redundant workers, joined by other local citizens, protested in front of local government buildings demanding wages owed and pension payments (Jukic 2014). Through social media and personal networks, news of the mobilisation spread and a number of protests began across the country. Although the protests were initially around specific economic grievances regarding factory closures one north-eastern Bosnian city, the scope of the protests began to encompass broader socio-political grievances, particularly a powerful critique of a corrupt political class (Lai 2016, 371).

Some of these demonstrations became violent, but eventually, direct-democratic citizen assemblies (called "plenums") were established in 22 towns and cities. The decision-making of these plenums relied on one-person-one-vote, and eschewed associational affiliation, much like the Indignant movements in Southern Europe (della Porta 2015). The primary objective of the plenums was to deliver a number of citizen demands to the local government. Under pressure from this mobilisation, the SDA Prime Ministers of the Tuzla, Una-Sana, Sarajevo, and Zenica-Doboj Cantons resigned

(Klix.ba 2014). In the analysis below, cantonal election results are used, since plenum demands were directed at elites at this tier of governance. Since this study focuses on cantons, which are only in FBiH, the parties analysed below will be the predominant parties in the entity in the 2010 election: SDA, HDZ, and SDP.

Some commentators reacted to the events in BiH as representing “new politics” (Arsenijević 2015; Gilbert and Mujanović 2015), a civic “counter-power” (Mujkić 2015), or a “Bosnian Spring” (Mujanović 2014).

At the heart of the protests and resulting plenums was, as mentioned above, economic grievance that ceded to political critique and calls for social justice (Kurtović 2015; Lai 2016). Echoing the framing of earlier civic protests in BiH, the subject of the good active citizen who votes and is law-abiding, was transformed into the activist citizen who protests and is empowered to claim rights. For example, in Tuzla, the demands were “put forward by the workers and citizens of the Tuzla Canton, for the good of all of us”.² The plenum demands contained calls for both retributive and distributive justice. Almost all plenums urged the resignation of their respective cantonal governments, such as the demand in Bihać: “Resignation and replacement of the Una-Sana Canton (USC) government and all directors of public institutions and public enterprises”.³ Plenums also included demands more closely related to

² English translation of Tuzla Workers’ and Citizens’ Declaration, BiH Protest Files, 7 February 2014. Available at: <https://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com/2014/02/07/declaration-of-citizens-and-workers-in-tuzla-1/>

³ English translation of Bihać Citizen Demands, BiH Protest Files, 10 February 2014. Available at: <https://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com/2014/02/10/bihac-citizens-demands-bihac-1/>

redistribution, for example, the establishment of a public kitchen in Bugojno to feed poor people.⁴

Despite the first instance of geographically widespread citizen-led mobilisation in post-war BiH and the resignations, the plenums ceased their activities within months. Moreover, it was unclear whether the events of early 2014 left any activist legacy (Keil and Perry 2015, 3). In the cantonal elections in October 2014, the predominant ethno-national parties, HDZ and SDA, won the most seats in Croat-majority and Bosniak-majority cantons respectively, with SDP losing votes (Bieber 2014). The predominance of the main ethnic parties was repeated in the 2018 elections, though the aforementioned splintering of SDA impeded the party's ability to build coalitions (Andjelić 2018). In sum, these results demonstrated “that Bosnian politics remains dominated by elite-centred parties, which often have little if any ideological profile” (Keil and Perry 2015). However, these analyses did not take into account existing electoral trends within locales to examine whether the plenums affected the trajectory of electoral outcomes in cantonal elections. This is the focus of the present analysis.

Data and modelling

Using the official results published on the BiH Electoral Commission website, municipal-level vote-shares for all political parties, as well as the number of registered voters and invalid votes, were collected for the FBiH Cantonal Assembly elections in 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2018. Cantonal assembly elections are held every four years,

⁴ English translation of Second Bugojno Citizens' Plenum: Declaration, BiH Protest Files, 13 February 2014. Available at: <https://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com/2014/02/13/second-bugojno-citizens-plenum-declaration/>

concurrently with entity-level and state-level elections.⁵ As with other Bosnian legislative elections, seat allocation is based on an open-list proportional representation system. The data are disaggregated to the municipal level, since it is the lowest level at which electoral and demographic data, as well locations of citizen mobilisations, are all readily available.

The electoral data were merged with the information from Karamehmedovic (2014), who compiled a list of the citizen initiatives that issued demands to political elites. Banja Luka, Prijedor, and Srebrenica are in RS, and Brčko has its own local governance structures, and they are thus excluded from the analysis since they are not municipalities within a canton (i.e., there are cantonal assemblies only in FBiH). Furthermore, since Sarajevo is comprised of four municipalities that are close together, it was assumed that electoral results in Centar Sarajevo, Novo Sarajevo, Novi Grad Sarajevo, and Stari Grad Sarajevo would potentially be affected by the Sarajevo plenum. Thus, there are 21 municipalities included in this study.⁶

To explore whether there is evidence of a causal link between the 2014 plenums (“activist citizenship”) and voting behaviour in cantonal elections (“active citizenship”), a difference-in-differences approach (DID) will be used. Crucial to DID is the “parallel trends” assumption. That is, in the absence of the treatment, the difference in the outcome between the two groups (i.e., municipalities that did and did not have plenums

⁵ Local elections for municipal / city councils and mayors are also every four years, but shifted by two years (i.e., 2008, 2012, and 2016).

⁶ Bihać; Bugojno; Cazin; Fojnica; Goražde; Gračanica; Kalesija; Konjic; Lukavac; Mostar; Novi Travnik; Odžak; Orašje; Travnik; Tuzla; Zavidovići; Zenica; Stari Grad Sarajevo; Novo Sarajevo; Novi Grad Sarajevo; and Centar Sarajevo.

in 2014) is the same before “treatment” and would remain the same in the absence of treatment. Since there have been two elections since the plenums, the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with robust standard errors will use the form used by Autor (2003) to estimate the expected difference in outcomes for each election, between municipalities with and without plenums:

$$y_{st} = \gamma_s + \lambda_t + \delta D_s + \theta D_s * \lambda_t + X'_{st} \beta + \varepsilon_{st} \quad (1)$$

where s is the unit of interest (that is, municipalities in FBiH), t is the period (that is, 2006, 2010, 2014, or 2018), and ε is the error term. The response variable y is the outcome of interest, which will either be related to the vote-shares for political parties, excluded (i.e., invalid or blank) votes, or turnout. The outcome variables are all interval-level variables. The parameter λ combines the unobserved across-municipality year effects, and will be included in the models as year dummy variables. Time-invariant municipal-level characteristics are included in the parameter γ . This allows us to account for cross-municipality variation, and thus isolate within-municipality variation in interpreting the results. Although the parameter γ accounts for time-invariant traits at the municipality level, the analysis may still be confounded by municipal-level factors that vary over time, denoted by the vector $X'\beta$ in the regression equation above.

To control for possible time-varying confounders, municipal-level data were collected from the annual reports by the FBiH Institute for Development Programming (FZZPR) for 2007, 2010, 2014, and 2017 (FZZPR 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018). There are no FZZPR data for 2006 and 2018, so the closest years were used as a proxy. Since the initial trigger for the protests were linked to economic grievances, that is, the closure of the privatised factories and worker redundancies, it is important to try to capture

changes in levels of economic grievance within a municipality, which could in turn affect voting behaviour.

Unfortunately, there is no direct measure of grievance at the municipal level amongst available data sources, such as repeated cross-section / panel public opinion surveys. Two variables are included as proxies for economic grievance in the analysis below: unemployment rate and average salary. The former variable is measured by including all individuals who are unemployed or employed as the denominator (“economically active”). The salary variable is included to capture under-employment. That is, individuals could be employed, but the average pay in a municipality could be low, which may trigger economic grievances. However, the absolute salary does not capture the differences in cost of living across FBiH. Hence, the FZZPR also uses a measure of salary relative to the FBiH average as a way of measuring relative change in mean salaries, which will be used below.

It could be argued that using individual-level data are preferable to aggregated municipal-level data. Micro-level analyses can specifically examine whether individuals’ electoral behaviours are significantly affected on average due to participation in activist citizenship. However, extant micro-level quantitative studies are constrained in that they often collect data from those participating in demonstrations in real-time, and thus there is no data on non-participants (e.g., Rüdig and Karyotis 2014). Other authors have attempted to use the timing of general surveys to capture the differences between protestors and non-protestors during waves of protests, for example, using the 2012 of the European Social Survey (ESS) (e.g., Tătar 2015). However, ESS asked whether respondents have been involved in *lawful* public demonstrations. However, this definition is at odds with activist citizenship, in which legality is not the guiding principle, but rather justice: the occupations of the squares in

Greece, Spain, and other public spaces around the world were not pre-approved “legal” demonstrations. On a more practical level, it is far less demanding for resources to collect publicly available electoral data rather than conduct large repeated surveys. The latter cannot reliably collect information about past electoral behaviour (unlike the use of aggregated municipal-level data).

The “treatment” in the current study is denoted with the dummy variable D , which is the existence of a plenum. D takes the value of 1 for municipalities that had plenums in 2014, and is set to 0 for all other municipalities. Plenums are treated as an experimental stimulus, since they were established and disbanded at nearly the same time in 2014. Moreover, according to contemporary accounts, the mobilisation of the protests and organisation of the plenums was unexpected, so there would not be anticipatory changes in voting behaviour.

For the analysis below, the parameter of central interest is θ , for the interaction between year and whether there was a plenum in 2014. The last election before the plenums, 2010, is used as a baseline, so the resulting coefficients are interpreted as the expected difference in the outcome variable between plenum and non-plenum municipalities in a given year compared with 2010. Thus, for the parallel trends assumption to hold, this expected difference in 2006 should be the same as for 2010, that is, $\theta_{2006} = 0$. In other words, to establish causal evidence, the expected difference between plenum and non-plenum municipalities should not change *before* the plenums were established in 2014. Moreover, if the plenums did have an electoral effect, it would be expected that at least one of the other coefficients (i.e., θ_{2014} or θ_{2018}) are non-zero. This modelling setup allows us to examine whether there is evidence of an electoral effect in 2014, and also whether evidence of electoral change persisted in

2018. This will be analysed in the next section for each of the outcome variables of interest.

The descriptive statistics by year, depending on whether there was a plenum in 2014, are included in Table A1 in Appendix A.

Results and discussion

The regression results for SDP, SDA, and HDZ votes shares, along with turnout and percentage of excluded votes, are presented in Table 2. The coefficients for SDA shows that, *ceteris paribus*, the vote share is lower in 2010 than in 2006, that is, before the plenums. By including data from the local elections in 2008 and 2012, and running a year and municipal fixed-effects model, it is evident that the difference in SDA vote share between plenum and non-plenum municipalities has remained stable, with a dip in 2010 compared with other years (see Figure A2 in the appendix). One reason for this dip was the splintering of SDA, with the newly formed centrist Union for a Better Future BiH (SBB) polling well in urban Bosniak areas – which is also the profile of where most of the plenums were established. The coefficients for 2006 are not significantly different from zero for HDZ and SDP, so there is evidence parallel trends assumption is satisfied for these outcome variables but not for the SDA.

The coefficients for turnout and excluded votes remain close to zero across years and not statistically significant at the 5% level, which suggests that the difference between plenum and non-plenum municipalities has stayed, *ceteris paribus*, constant across election years and there is little evidence of an effect. Turning to the vote share for the parties, for HDZ, the coefficients are negative and significant (at the 5% level) in 2014 and 2018, meaning eroding support in plenum compared with non-plenum municipalities. HDZ performed 2.68 points worse in in 2014 in plenum versus non-plenum municipalities, and 3.79 points worse in 2018, compared with 2010. In other

words, HDZ fared even worse in plenum municipalities versus non-plenum municipalities in 2014 and 2018, compared with 2010 (before the protests).

There is also evidence of a statistically significant negative electoral effect for SDP in 2014, which persisted in 2018 (see Table 2). The difference between SDP vote share in plenum and non-plenum municipalities was 7.78 points lower in 2014 and 5.59 points lower in 2018, meaning that the party has done relatively worse in plenum municipalities compared to 2010. Although the effect attenuated in 2018, it remained significant. As with the above discussion on the SDA, these results could be confounded by a party split. Željko Komšić split from the SDP in 2012 and established the Democratic Front (DF), which ran on a non-ethnic platform and appealed to moderate Croats and Bosniaks who might otherwise vote SDP. To check this, the analysis was rerun combining DF and SDP vote shares for 2014 and 2018 (see Table 2, Model SDP-DF). Though the coefficients change, the conclusions remain the same.

In terms of the conceptual framework developed above, there is evidence of *substitution* for both SDP and HDZ. That is, neither turnout nor excluded votes changed due to the plenums, but SDP and HDZ voters opted for other electoral choices. In other words, voters continued to be “active citizens” by remaining engaged with the electoral process and voted for non-SDP and non-HDZ alternatives. Although it was not possible to conduct DID for SDA, Figure A2 suggests that, with the exception of 2010, the difference between plenum and non-plenum municipalities in party vote share was quite stable 2006-2018. In other words, there seems to be a *null* effect for SDA.

The results for both SDA and HDZ are intriguing. The extant literature concludes that though the framing of the mobilisation was “non-ethnic”, plenums flourished in Bosniak-predominant locales either due to less commitment to the institutions by Croats and Serbs (who have kin-states through which they can become

dual citizens) (Kostovicova 2014), as well as internal repression by Croat elites in Croat-dominant areas in FBiH like Mostar (Murtagh 2016). However, SDA vote share seemed to be unaffected whilst there was a decrease on average in HDZ support after the plenums.

Given that the 2014 protests and subsequent plenums are seen as the first instance of widespread non-ethnic citizen-led mobilisation since the end of the 1990s wars, it is also surprising that support decreased for the SDP. That is, the protests / plenums critiqued ethno-national partisan politics, yet seem linked to an average electoral punishment for the main multi-ethnic party in BiH. This is all the more unexpected given that a similar analysis of post-protest municipal elections found that the Bosniak SDA vote share was reduced in places where plenums were established, and increased for Naša Stranka (Sircar 2017).

One possible explanation for the SDP result is that on average, citizens sought justice not by specifically punishing ethno-national political parties, but rather parties with the highest support in the previous pre-plenum election. Using 2013 census data (BHAS 2016), it is evident that in FBiH, municipalities that established plenums occurred primarily in places with a comfortable Bosniak majority. Only Odžak and Orašje have Croat majorities, whilst Mostar and Novi Travnik have similar numbers of Bosniaks and Croats. The other municipalities that established plenums were more than 60% Bosniak. Thus, for citizens in municipalities with plenums, Bosniaks were more likely to have voted SDP in 2010, particularly in the five Bosniak-majority cantons where SDP had the highest vote share (see Table 3). On the other hand Croat voters tended to seek alternatives to HDZ in places with plenums.

Conclusion

The above analysis shows how the wave of protests and subsequent direct-democratic

activity in FBiH with citizens framed and empowered as claimants of rights and justice, i.e., activist citizenship, affected certain electoral outcomes in cantonal elections, i.e., active citizenship. The case of cantonal elections are relevant to the study of Bosnian politics, since they are the responsible level of governance in FBiH for housing, education, and other sectors linked to distributive justice.

The citizen-led mobilisation in FBiH articulated demands for distributive justice and empowered the political subject of the citizen, not unlike occurrences in other countries in the wake of the 2008 global recession. What is important is that these events did not represent a shift towards anti-political behaviour, of disengagement or undermining of electoral processes. Rather, political participation in conventional and unconventional ways are linked, and citizen assemblies demanding wholesale systemic changes did not lead to citizens sacrificing their electoral voices.

Of course, it is necessary to interpret these results cautiously, since aggregate-level differences are not tantamount to findings related to individual behaviour. The tentative conclusion from the above analysis is that places in which citizens issued demands through direct-democratic methods were those that, on average, electorally punished SDP and HDZ, the leading vote-getters amongst Bosniaks and Croats, respectively, in 2010.

Most importantly, the above study shows that, contrary to contemporary and subsequent analyses, the plenums have had a persistent negative electoral effect on certain parties in FBiH. Methodologically, the DID framework allows for an estimate of whether there is an electoral effect and whether it lasted beyond one electoral cycle. This article shows that even under the most difficult circumstances, such as the post-authoritarian and post-conflict setting of BiH, where elites wield substantial formal and

informal power and citizens rarely protest, it is still possible for citizen-led mobilisation to trigger electoral change.

This begs the question whether this type of electoral effect after episodes of activist citizenship can be estimated in other contexts, particularly where extant analyses have (wrongly) concluded that there was no lasting effect. For example, similar investigations can be conducted in other places to see whether the types of multi-site mobilisations with calls for systemic (distributive) justice, such as those after 2008 in Spain, Portugal, and Greece, are linked to significant electoral effects. This would help reassess the true long-term electoral impact of citizen-led mobilisations in these places, and provide insights more generally regarding citizens' attempts to fundamentally transform politics through activism.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Descriptive statistics by year and whether plenum established

	non-plenum					plenum				
	N	mean	sd	min	max	N	mean	sd	min	max
<u>2006</u>										
% unemp.	58	54.34	12.51	26.00	90.40	21	48.74	13.39	15.70	77.60
Salary pct.	58	86.48	10.81	63.90	122.00	21	95.22	21.22	65.80	140.50
Turnout %	58	56.04	8.78	36.52	75.48	21	55.23	4.91	46.36	63.68
Excluded %	58	9.01	3.57	1.61	18.65	21	8.65	2.24	2.50	12.36
SDP %	58	9.18	7.19	0.00	29.32	21	17.82	9.51	2.14	37.03
HDZ %	47	16.21	16.85	0.00	53.43	16	9.26	11.44	0.11	40.06
SDA %	54	24.24	16.22	0.00	66.19	21	26.15	10.33	2.24	51.01
<u>2010</u>										
% unemp.	58	52.74	12.59	26.53	81.65	21	47.27	13.05	15.64	75.29
Salary pct.	58	88.56	13.66	68.20	133.00	21	95.02	19.54	66.10	141.20
Turnout %	58	57.28	9.32	33.80	79.48	21	56.89	4.36	47.40	68.06
Excluded %	58	6.07	1.88	1.60	10.94	21	6.29	0.58	5.02	7.86
SDP %	58	14.66	11.88	0.00	46.02	21	25.40	9.32	1.87	39.56
HDZ %	58	17.87	21.16	0.00	62.13	21	8.82	12.77	0.00	46.82
SDA %	58	19.56	16.27	0.00	64.65	21	19.03	6.31	5.84	30.66
<u>2014</u>										
% unemp.	58	54.46	12.17	27.40	81.40	21	47.81	13.45	16.00	72.40
Salary pct.	58	88.55	14.92	62.90	131.70	21	93.78	21.57	62.90	147.70
Turnout %	58	53.17	11.12	18.67	78.73	21	53.55	5.51	41.41	64.15
Excluded %	58	7.47	2.28	2.72	13.67	21	7.64	1.08	6.09	10.74
SDP %	58	8.75	7.69	0.00	35.20	21	11.86	5.76	1.76	21.70
HDZ %	58	20.03	23.68	0.00	75.99	21	8.41	12.33	0.00	44.32
SDA %	58	23.37	17.55	0.00	76.84	21	25.55	7.42	7.85	36.99
<u>DF %</u>	58	7.10	6.46	0.00	22.55	21	10.84	5.26	1.64	19.31
<u>2018</u>										
% unemp.	58	50.27	12.08	25.48	79.56	21	44.03	12.29	15.05	67.17
Salary pct.	58	89.98	16.42	63.00	149.00	21	95.90	20.75	68.00	141.00
Turnout %	58	52.47	11.14	29.55	77.68	21	52.69	6.90	39.03	66.48
Excluded %	58	7.27	2.49	1.65	13.94	21	7.10	1.46	4.79	10.86
SDP %	58	10.80	11.19	0.00	53.04	21	16.03	9.48	0.88	35.93
HDZ %	56	24.72	29.26	0.00	89.73	20	11.75	17.34	0.04	61.05
SDA %	54	24.70	15.52	0.00	62.24	21	24.65	9.23	9.41	42.04
<u>DF %</u>	54	4.59	3.64	0.00	15.83	21	5.95	2.13	0.83	10.77

Figure A2. Coefficients for plenum x year for SDA vote share 2006-2018 with 95% confidence intervals (baseline: 2010)

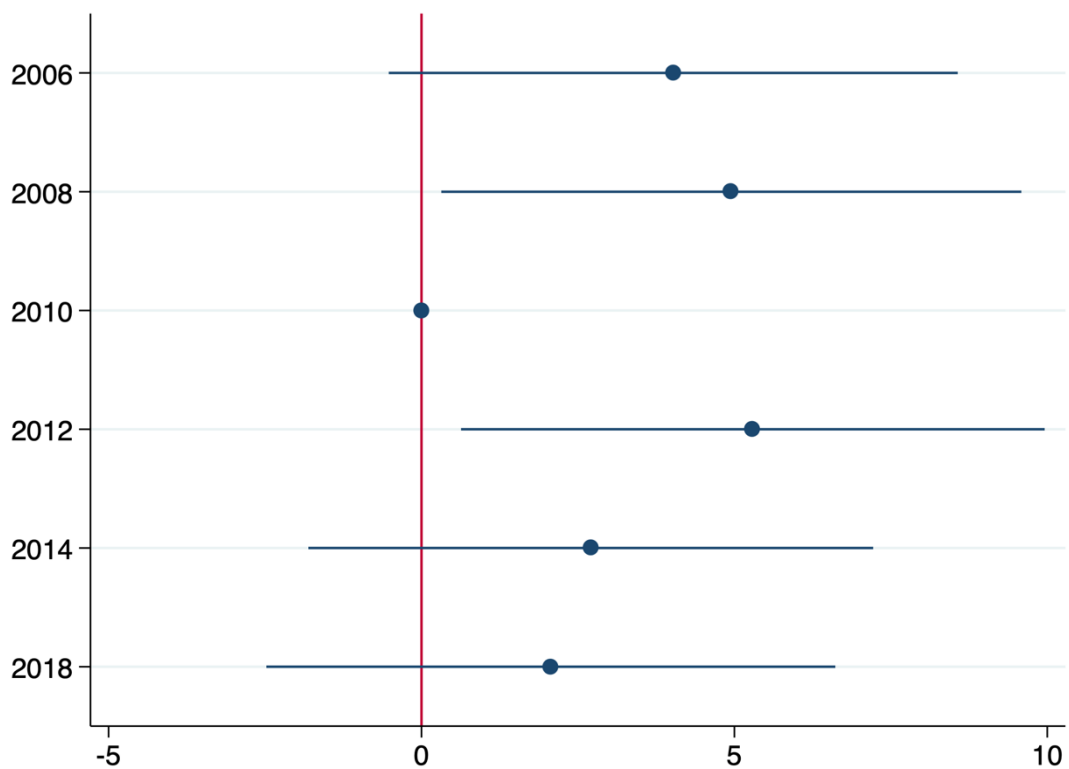


Table 1. Observable electoral changes linking active and activist citizenship.

		<i>Ruling party support</i>	
		<i>No change</i>	<i>Change</i>
<i>Lower turnout</i>	<i>No change</i>	null	substitution
	<i>Change</i>	alienation	transformation

Table 2. Coefficients for plenum x year for party vote shares, turnout, and excluded votes (baseline: 2010)

Variable	Turnout	Excluded	SDA	HDZ	SDP	SDP-DF
<u>plenum x year</u>						
Yes x 2006	-0.320	-0.537	4.084	3.030	-1.938	-1.878
	1.078	0.667	1.911	1.851	1.898	1.796
	0.767	0.421	0.034	0.103	0.308	0.297
Yes x 2014	0.641	-0.017	2.461	-2.678	-7.782	-4.035
	0.874	0.395	1.459	1.303	1.762	1.690
	0.464	0.966	0.093	0.041	0.000	0.018
Yes x 2018	0.536	-0.356	1.958	-3.794	-5.593	-3.914
	0.946	0.442	2.318	1.784	1.820	1.796
	0.571	0.422	0.399	0.035	0.002	0.030
R ²	0.898	0.581	0.852	0.934	0.799	0.817
N	316	316	308	297	316	316
Muni. FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Time FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Unemployment	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Avg. Salary Percentile	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

The coefficient, robust standard error, and two-sided p-value (of the corresponding t-test statistic) are reported.

Table 3. Canton name, ethnic majority, and 2010 cantonal election vote shares

Canton	Majority	SDA	HDZ	SDP
Una-Sana Canton	Bosniak	22.70	0.77	23.59
Posavina Canton	Croat	11.00	40.02	5.98
Tuzla Canton	Bosniak	25.45	3.01	30.67
Zenica-Doboj Canton	Bosniak	24.81	5.12	25.60
Bosnian-Podrinje Canton	Bosniak	21.47	-	24.79
Central Bosnia Canton	Mixed	17.89	20.68	17.79
Herzegovina-Neretva Canton	Mixed	16.86	29.46	15.34
West Herzegovina Canton	Croat	-	51.42	0.82
Sarajevo Canton	Bosniak	17.94	1.05	24.17
Canton 10	Croat	5.58	26.15	4.52

Note: Hyphen (-) denotes where a party did not run