Living on the frontline: Indeterminacy, Value and Military Waste in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Abstract

More than 5,000 people around the world are injured or killed every year by landmines and unexploded ordnance, whether in active or former zones of conflict. This article explores how the after effects of war, materialised in military waste (unexploded landmines, shrapnel and bullets), transform forms of life in a post-war polity. It elucidates how the ongoing presence of military waste radically *transforms* the environment and the very conditions of liveability for those who dwell in such spaces many years after the actual conflict has finished. Situated in impoverished rural areas of postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina, I offer an ethnographic elucidation of the social life of military waste and its entanglement in people's attempts to remake livelihoods and reengage with their environment in the aftermath of the Bosnian war (1992-1995) that has resulted in pervasive politicisation and privatisation of social redistribution, and has given rise to an unprecedented degree of precarity. My aim is to document how the ongoing presence of landmines and military waste renders the landscape and peoples' livelihoods not only radically uncertain and distressing but also often *indeterminate*, and thus open to the generation of unexpected forms of engagement, cohabitation, and value creation. By treating military waste as indeterminate, I ask what forms, practices, and potential for value creation military waste engenders in a particular spatio-temporal configuration of postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina. By tracking the emerging activities surrounding land use and value creation in timber forest contaminated by military waste, I show how this invisibly dangerous landscape gives rise to new ways of engaging with the forest's economic potential vis-à-vis economic precarity in the postwar period. Ultimately, the article suggests how the subjective experience of fear gives rise to multiple modes of valuation, for people whose lives and the surrounding environment are mediated by experiences and remainders of conflict.

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Mustafa stopped his old silver Volkswagen 2 on an empty semi-asphalted road in the Zvijezda highlands, in Central Bosnia. He turned to me and said, 'let me show you something'. We left the car and walked towards a curve in the road from where we had a spectacular view of a verdant valley surrounded by forested hills. Mustafa was a well-known local patriot, so my initial reaction was that he probably wanted me to take a few pictures of his homeland. When we reached the curve, however, he pointed to the hills, and traced the outline of the horizon from left to right with his index finger. 'You see the beauty?', he asked me, and added 'but you can't go there, otherwise you would be blown up. It's too dangerous, full of landmines. We have been assured many times that the forest would be cleared by 2019 but no one has started any de-mining clearance yet. Who could clear that anyway? It's impossible. Let me tell you something. No one can. The mines will stay there for another hundred years at least.'

This conversation took place in the early days of my fieldwork in 2008, and Mustafa was referring to the landmines that were left behind in the soil following the Bosnian war of 1992-1995. No clearing work has taken place in the area since I was first alerted by Mustafa to the presence of landmines nearly a decade ago. Since this first conversation, I have continually wondered how it is possible for someone to dwell in a place where every step could be their last. Mustafa's bitter comments about the contaminated landscape that will continue to be dangerous for at least another hundred years was a reminder that the poetics of dwelling is intricately intertwined with the politics of dwelling, and that the effects of violence can outlive generations and strike again, at any time.

In this paper I take the figure of Mustafa tracing the line of the horizon with his finger and pointing to the landmine fields as a bitter memento of 20th century warfare. The comment that 'the mines will stay there for another hundred years at least' exemplifies, as Peter Sloterdijk writes (2009: 13), how in the development of modern warfare in the 20th century the environment was drawn into battles between adversaries. This shift towards targeting assaults "on the environmental conditions of the enemy's life" marks a move away from warfare between states in favour of state-sponsored terrorism (Sloterdijk 2009:14).[1] Ultimately, as Sloterdijk's historical excursion suggests, 20th century warfare will be remembered for "targeting no longer the body, but the enemy's environment", making it unliveable for a long period of time.

Sloterdijk is concerned primarily with the development of atmoterrorism, perhaps reflecting the fact that his essay was written in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 (hence the original German title of the essay *Luftbeben* - an "airquake"). Yet he offers intriguing insights and contextualisations for our thinking about the pervasive militarisation of the world we live in today, and its impact on the transformation of the environment. By coining the term "atmoterrorism", he attempts to understand how the air and atmosphere are being targeted as "the primary media for life" and for the very conditions of being-in-the-world. In this paper, I suggest that we extend Sloterdijk's otherwise thought-provoking focus on air and atmosphere and the specific moment of the assault by bringing other "media for life" and temporalities into the equation. My starting point is that the boundaries of a conflict and its aftermath are never clear-cut, and the assault on the enemy's environment does not stop with the signing of peace agreements.

To elaborate on this proposal, in this paper I focus specifically on the ongoing presence of military remainders and discard (hereafter "military waste") — which could be radioactive, toxic, or unexploded — and which radically *transforms* the environment and the very

conditions of liveability for those who dwell in such spaces many years after the actual conflict has finished. This analytical move can thus contribute to the anthropological scholarship that focuses on ethnographic elucidation of affective, discursive and practical responses to the conditions created by large-scale socio-political transformations driven by military conflicts. Despite there being a huge body of existing scholarship on conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction, less attention has been paid to the social life of the material remains of conflict (Bryant 2014) that permeate and transform the environment in which everyday social fabric and forms of life unfold during peacetime. The form of remains that I have in mind, and which continue to threaten numerous communities across the globe, are landmines and other forms of unexploded ordnance left behind by military conflicts.

As Eleana J. Kim (2016:164) recently remarked, despite a growing literature on the anthropology of militarism, there has been only a very limited focus on mines, weapons, their materiality, and the forms of life that they produce. Yet more than 5,000 people around the world are injured or killed every year by landmines and unexploded ordnance, whether in active or former zones of conflict (Bolton 2010). Landmines, along with other (un)exploded military waste, are "the extension of war's violence into peacetime" (Bolton 2015). Unexploded ordnance blurs in particular the temporalities of wartime and peacetime creating "situations of 'radical uncertainty'" and distress (Bolton 2015:44; Gregory 2011).

Taking this observation as a point of departure, this paper embeds military waste into its specific historical, political and social configurations in order to trace its social life in peacetime. My aim is to document how the ongoing presence of landmines and military waste renders the landscape and peoples' livelihoods not only radically uncertain and distressing but also often *indeterminate* (Kim 2016:166), and thus open to the generation of unexpected forms of engagement, cohabitation, and value creation (Alexander and Sanchez, n.d.). In what follows, I shall thus distinguish between mere "uncertainty", which figures in

my ethnography as inward-oriented affect with debilitating effects on the capacity to act, and "indeterminacy" as taking an outward-oriented stance of disambiguation and attempting to co-determine particular ways of knowing and acting in a given spatio-temporal configuration. In doing so, I move away from recent engagements with the concept of "indeterminacy" as a welcome contribution to the epistemology of anthropology (e.g. Miyazaki 2004; Tsing 2015). Instead, I attend to "indeterminacy" as an ethnographic object of analysis (see Jansen 2016) in order to elucidate co-existing registers of indeterminacy in the lives of people in a specific historical configuration, and explore how, in turn, people engage with indeterminacy.

Based on long-term fieldwork in rural areas of postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina, I offer an ethnographic elucidation of the social life of military waste and its entanglement in people's attempts to remake livelihoods and reengage with their environment in the aftermaths of a conflict. "Military waste" as I employ it here, is a useful umbrella concept that includes landmines and other exploded and unexploded ordnance such as shrapnel and bullets. As I have argued elsewhere (XXXX), a study of military waste can shed light not only on the hazards that it poses in terms of explosions and other dangers, but also on the emotional distress that it provokes in people who dwell alongside it (Navaro-Yashin 2012). In this paper I move on from conceiving of military waste as merely dangerous and disempowering, and explore its entanglement with unfolding forms of life in the contaminated environment instead. Whereas for South Korean farmers living alongside the mined Korean Demilitarised Zone, the presence of landmines opened up "alternative ways of seeing and understanding movement and mobility in the border regions of South Korea" (Kim 2016:163), for villagers living in the deprived rural areas of Central Bosnia, military waste has engendered *new* forms, practices, and potential for value creation, as I shall now explore (Reno 2015: 562-563).

Fucking mushrooms

Let me begin with a story about mushroom hunting in villages in the Zvijezda highlands, in central Bosnia-Herzegovina where I have been conducting fieldwork since 2008. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, mushroom hunting is a popular activity among villagers and townspeople alike (Jasarević 2015). Yet for villagers in the highlands, mushroom hunting also evokes very concrete experiences of indeterminacy, marginality and neoliberal precarity. For the villagers these experiences are unfolding in their lives at a particular historical juncture, characterised by the adjectives "postsocialist" and "postwar". These adjectives capture the enduring conditions of life, which lacks the promise of economic, political and social stability following the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia, and the Bosnian war in 1992-1995 (Gilbert 2006; Jansen 2015; Jansen, Brković and Čelebičić 2016; Kurtović 2016). As I discuss in the following section, the postsocialist, postwar socio-political juncture has conditioned specific registers of indeterminacy, emerging from the way that the postsocialist, postwar Bosnian state operates, and how forms of redistribution, labour, and property relations have been reconfigured in the past twenty years. For the time being, let's take these adjectives at face value and return to mushroom hunting.

Mushroom hunting is a seasonal activity in the Zvijezda highlands. I first became aware of it when I overheard 'fucking mushrooms' (*jebem ti gljive*)[2] shouted repeatedly during a coffee conversation between two villagers in the neighbourhood where I was living. Sifet, the villager who kept loudly repeating it after almost every sentence, was evidently distressed. His forehead was sweating heavily. His hands were visibly shaking. His body was trembling from fear and shock, despite the fact that he was smoking one cigarette after another, and drinking sweet coffee made by his neighbour in an attempt to calm down. Although I became used to men swearing in public early on in my fieldwork, this time it was Sifet's body language that caught my attention.

In the hope of earning a little bit of cash but also for his personal pleasure and taste, Sifet had joined another villager, Biki, in a mushroom hunting expedition earlier that day. Biki has an irregular job at one of the village sawmills. Like many villagers, Biki spends his free time in the forest, collecting whatever he can sell: mushrooms, wild strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, hips, firewood, timber. Unlike in other postwar communities such as Vietnam or WWII Britain (Moshenska 2008), villagers do not harvest metal parts of military waste as such, mainly because many landmines actually have a plastic shell (PMA-2 type). The collected fruits, along with local dairy products, are subsequently sold to intermediary traders, following the commodity chain between the villages and more affluent clientele in the municipal towns, and more often in the capital, Sarajevo. What Sifet did not expect, however, was to be led by Biki to the areas around and behind the *linija*.

The linija in the vernacular refers to the frontline areas of the 1992-1995 Bosnian War[3] in the surrounding forest, and where unexploded landmines from the conflict are still buried in the soil, and shrapnel and bullets are hidden in the trunks of trees (XXXX).[4] It was in this context that I overheard Sifet swearing and lamenting the fact that 'no one can be certain when walking around the linija' He continued:

> 'I wouldn't have gone there even if they were
> giving me a million. We were told that the paths
> had been cleared, weren't we? And we all know
> what happened. A hundred times people walked on
> the nearby path, and on the hundred and first time
> Munis' bull stood on *pašteta*[5] and its legs were
> torn to pieces. It is futile to think that the paths are
> cleared.'

The dangerous linija cuts through the forest on the hill above the village, but also through the surrounding fields, meadows and paths. And it is this haunting presence of military waste - landmines, bullets and shrapnel - in the landscape and how it has an impact upon the uses and values of land, which conditions the second register of indeterminacy that I explore in this paper.

The question of the unknown and the fear it engenders are part and parcel of everyday life not only for many villagers in rural Bosnia-Herzegovina, but for numerous individuals and communities across the globe whose lives have been entangled with military waste in the aftermath of military conflict (Green 1994; Kim 2016; Kwon 2008; Navaro Yashin 2012). In this paper I focus on the two registers of indeterminacy and attend to them through ethnographic elucidation of emergent forms of knowing and living in the environment that is contaminated with military waste. I suggest that the regimes of indeterminacy co-exist, and unfolds in the lives of the villagers in two intertwined ways. First, it refers to the conditions and experiences of 'not knowing' things, and the affective registers (such as fear) that 'not knowing' things engender. No one can be certain whether they are risking their life by stepping on a landmine when entering the areas around the linija to collect mushrooms and wild fruits, or when engaging in logging. Second, it also brings about specific ways of managing conditions of economic precarity, namely, how to get by in a situation of prolonged unemployment and a loss of access to social protection and redistribution that forces more and more villagers to enter the areas behind the linija. No one can determine whether the timber extracted in the areas behind the linija will, or will not be, contaminated with shrapnel and bullets. No-one can therefore determine whether it can be sold to one of the local sawmills in order to get much-needed cash. And no-one can determine whether and when the forest patrol will be willing to extend its power to fine anyone for logging behind

8

the linija. Here, I draw on Alfred Gell's (1998) conceptual work on the art index to track how villagers evaluate and 'read' the landscape in the situations of 'not knowing' things. Specifically, I document villagers' attempts to make abductions, that is, semiotic inferences, as an emerging form of knowing in imperfect and indeterminate circumstances.

In order to ethnographically elucidate the *postwar* regimes of indeterminacy emerging from living near the linija, I shall explore how the effects of precarity and the presence of military waste *transform* the environment and the very conditions of liveability for those who dwell in such spaces by looking specifically at the regimes of land use and the activities of value creation they engender. By taking activities of value creation such as mushroom hunting, logging and other forms of collecting and selling, this paper offers an analytic and conceptual contribution to the debates on indeterminacy often characterised as "life without the promise of stability" (Tsing 2015). Instead, my attempt is to *determine*, ethnographically, what the emergence of such forms of life entails in a specific socio-historical configuration, and how villagers engage with indeterminacy (Jansen 2016).

Precarious lives: The Bosnian Way

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, conditions of indeterminacy have emerged from the unfolding effects of the postsocialist and postwar transformations (Gilbert 2006; Kurtović 2016). These effects have rendered the workings of the state somewhat dysfunctional and opaque. The reasons for this can be traced as far back as the Dayton Peace Accords,[6] mediated by the international community and led by the USA, that brought the Bosnian war of 1992-1995 to an end. The Dayton-brokered peace deal also designed complex power sharing mechanisms and new architecture for the postwar state. The effects of this top-down driven international intervention are that administrative and governmental apparatus are haphazardly distributed across multiple institutions with overlapping and unclear responsibilities, which make it hard

for its citizens to decipher and navigate them. More importantly, numerous scholars recently documented a widely-shared experience of indeterminacy in various contexts and strata of post-Dayton Bosnian society (Jansen, Brković, Čelebičić 2016). This experience is often described in everyday discourses and practices as living a life that has been put on hold (Jansen 2015). Based on research in the suburbs of Sarajevo, Stef Jansen argues that life in the postsocialist, postwar "meantime", engenders the emergence of specific modes of temporal reasoning and imaginations of hope. These modes revolve around the emic category of "normal lives". The category of "normal lives" intertwines future-oriented strivings for, and imaginings of what living "normal lives" ought to entail, with imaginations of how "normal lives" used to be lived in the pre-war Yugoslav past.

As a condition of life without the promise of stability and "normalcy", indeterminacy unfolds in various guises in postsocialist, postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina. For my Bosnian interlocutors and friends, indeterminacy have three primary manifestations.

First, indeterminacy is contained within the very constitutional and institutional design of the postsocialist, postwar Bosnian state as designed by the Dayton Peace Accords (Hromadžić 2015). Second, Bosnians' interactions with their state are routinely indeterminate and with uncertain effects, which influences the anticipation and fashioning of "normal lives" in the present. These experiences are united by the common condition of not-knowing how to effectively navigate through the complexities of indeterminate state (infra)structures and institutions. Such experiences include the everyday problems of not knowing whether public transport will operate and who should be held accountable, questioning whether one will be able to get the necessary paperwork approved in order to access welfare benefits, or whether one will ever receive a salary (e.g. Jansen op. cit.; Jansen, Brković, Čelebičić op. cit.).[7] Third, postsocialist and postwar transformations have engendered specific socio-economic consequences that have been poignantly described by Larisa Kurtović (2016).

Following David Harvey (2004), Larisa Kurtović suggests that the war and postwar political economy of the Bosnian state enabled a process of "accumulation by dispossession". This process resulted in politicisation and privatisation of social redistribution, now controlled by the local ethnonational elites and their clientelistic networks (see also Jansen 2006). As a result, the postwar model of the Bosnian state that was designed and implemented by the international community became not only politically and economically unsustainable (ibid., 5). It has also enabled, as Kurtović argues, "new forms of structural violence and created new (transethnic) surplus populations, that cannot be accommodated within the existing (and largely clientelistic) regimes of redistribution" (ibid., 3). In turn, the effects of the transformations in Bosnia-Herzegovina gave rise to an unprecedented degree of precarity, and one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe particularly among young people.[8] Focusing primarily on the industrial and mining towns that formed the economic backbone of pre-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kurtović describes the devastating effects that these transformations have had on entire sectors of production. Bosnian post-industrial decline and dispossession mirror parallel processes across the postsocialist ecumene at large (e.g. Alexander 2004; Kideckel 2008), and beyond (Bear 2015; Sanchez 2015). Although I agree with Kurtović's observations, I suggest that further attention ought to be paid to the equally devastating effects of these transformations upon small municipalities and rural areas situated in the margins of the state.

In rural areas, the socio-economic effects of postsocialist and postwar transformations are experienced and discursively framed through the ongoing process of abandonment (XXXX; see also Alexander op.cit.). This sense of abandonment is exemplified in an infrastructural decline, and in a widely shared trope that "no one cares about us", wherein villagers reflect, *inter alia*, on the deteriorating roads, increasingly difficult access to medical care, and high unemployment rates, which have not improved since the end of the war in 1995. Villagers'

responses to the pervasive effects of precarity and marginalisation oscillate between outmigration to the cities, casual labour opportunities, illegal logging, and subsistence farming and foraging. And this is the context in which the story of Sifet and mushroom hunting in the forest needs to be situated.

Villages such as Sifet's in the Zvijezda highlands are nestled in a richly-forested landscape. The forest has historically been central to the local economy, and provided protection and subsistence to local people. It was used as a shelter during the wars throughout the 20th century. The timber industry emerged in the region during the Austro-Hungarian era (1878-1918), and expanded and solidified in socialist Yugoslavia. It provided employment to the great majority of the villagers and townspeople in the Olovo municipality,[9] employing over 5,000 workers before the Bosnian war. However, the timber industry has never fully recovered after the disintegration of Yugoslavia and became a source of political contention as I shall discuss in the following section.

The forest has historically been owned and cared for by the state. Yet in the context of everyday village life there has never been a clear cut distinction over who has the right to use it. Rather, economic access to the forest has been governed by a grey zone of day-to-day negotiations. Situated at the margins of the state, villagers directly negotiate with members of the forest patrol for logging permissions, in exchange for various services and favours (XXXX). Nowadays, the forest belongs to the cantons in the Federation part of Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the early postwar years , there were several attempts to privatise the timber industry in the municipalities of my fieldwork. These were often deemed a failure, many expensive machines were stolen or re-sold, and workers were left without the promised payments of their delayed salaries. Yet in the postwar years were numerous entrepreneurial individuals in many villages who opened private sawmills. Although the sawmills tend to 'officially' employ only a handful of workers (on average, two to four persons), in reality

they provide casual employment for three to four times as many people. These conditions apply to the broad context of postsocialist, postwar transformation in rural Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to a recent article published by Radio Free Europe, between 150,000 to 200,000 people in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina work illegally in casual positions and the number is growing. In addition to the legal, economic and employment uncertainty that jobs in the forest entail, numerous illegal workers end up working in classified and unclassified landmine fields, and thus labour in the environment of *permanent* uncertainty as to whether their lives are at risk (RSE 2015). This brings me to the question of how the effects of precarity and the presence of military waste renders the landscape and peoples' livelihoods not only radically uncertain and distressing but also opened to generate unexpected forms of engagement, cohabitation, and value creation.

The social life of military waste: From minespaces to the commons?

Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina is often described as one of the most heavily-mined countries in world (www.bhmac.org).[10] The Dayton Peace Accords that ended the war, naively required all factions of the conflict "to clear all their minefields in 30 days" (Bolton 2010: 100). During the years immediately following the war, international aid actors specialising in mine action gave prominent attention to the country. In particular, the USA, which took the lead in brokering the peace-deal in 1995, gave millions of dollars to assist with postwar reconstruction. As Bolton describes (ibid., 102), in the immediate postwar years, attention was chiefly paid to "creating conditions for the return of displaced persons", since such return was a keystone of the peace deal's legitimacy as brokered by the USA (also Jansen 2006). At the same time, the International community led by the USA pushed for rapid privatisation and radical neoliberal reforms affecting social redistribution across the entire society.

However, this socio-economic transformation also led to the privatisation of security and protection including de-mining activities that started operating in "a variety of commercial tendering frameworks" (ibid., also 149ff). The shift towards tender competition gave opportunities to local criminal entrepreneurs for negotiating illicit deals and contracts to carry out de-mining actions using their government connections. As a result, about $6.7 million donated to mining actions is unaccounted for from this immediate postwar period. After the event of 9/11 and the ensuing US-led invasions, the international mine action sector directed its attention away from Bosnia-Herzegovina and towards Afghanistan and Iraq.

The areas that were not prioritised in the immediate postwar years such as the Zvijezda highlands are a case in point here.[11] Many areas in the Zvijezda highlands that villagers had accessed freely before the war, and which the war turned into "the linija", have not yet been cleared. The linija thus continues to be perceived by many villagers living in its vicinity as a no-go-zone imbued with radical uncertainty and fear, that co-creates conditions of precarity. In rural Bosnia-Herzegovina, two decades after the end of the conflict, the prospect for any socio-economic aspiration unfolding is bleak and precarity is omnipresent (XXXX). This situation transforms "the linija" from a zone of mere radical uncertainty and distress into a zone of indeterminacy that provides villages also with *new* opportunities for value creation.

During fieldwork between 2008 - 2009, instances of villagers crossing the linija for economic activities were extremely rare and fear was omnipresent. When someone decided to log behind the linija, the reason was usually that the villager did not have any means to negotiate "permission" from the forest patrol to log elsewhere in the forest (see XXXX). On my return visits in recent years (from 2012 onwards), however, I have observed an increasing number of villagers logging in the areas behind the linija. Moreover, villagers like Biki, whom I introduced earlier, have also progressively begun foraging mushrooms and wild fruits around the linija in the hope of increasing their yields as fewer villagers tend to access these areas.

My observation highlights two unfolding processes. First, as has been reported by Radio Free Europe, in newspapers and on local TV, increasing precarisation and casualisation of work are driving more individuals behind the linija as a way to get by.

Second, in recent years, the forest in Bosnia-Herzegovina has become a site of political contention and a zone of friction (Tsing 2005), where villagers, municipalities, cantonal and federal governments, local and international environmental NGOs and local and transnational businesses encounter and rub shoulders with one another. Indeed, Bosnia-Herzegovina is not only one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, but also the most forested country in Europe. After the initial failures to privatize the sawmills in the early postwar years, the municipal and cantonal governments in the areas of my fieldwork have been trying over the past decade to encourage private businesses, both local and international, to commercially log in the highlands. This also includes the areas not far from the villages, where my interlocutors have carried out logging for generations. As a response to villagers' ongoing presence and logging activities in these areas, which are now sublet for private commercial use, the cantonal and municipal governments increased their pressure on the forest patrols to catch and fine villagers for illegal logging, thus pushing the marginalized villagers further behind the linija. Forest patrols now carry out more regular checks and travel further afield, making it harder for villagers to get to know the patrol members, establish relationships, and negotiate illicit permission for logging. Yet forest patrols avoid the areas behind the linija for fear of possible injury or even death, and there are still no concrete plans with regard to de-mining actions, which is another source of contention. Furthermore, the level of contention among the villagers has been further exacerbated since 2014 when the country was hit by major floods which caused numerous landslides and triggered land erosion with disastrous consequences, as many minefields shifted. To date, these shifted minefields have remained largely undocumented in the terrain as the warning signs around the landmines were carried

away as well, and no thorough survey has been conducted by the Demining Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina due to the increasing shortage of money.[12] Put differently, villagers feel that the state has eschewed its responsibility for the linija and the territory behind it. As a result, anything behind the linija is seen as an abandoned zone. How can such zones of abandonment and ruination be reconstituted into vital, usable, common and valuable resources again (Szmagalska-Follis 2008: 348)?

In his writing on property John Locke (1984 [1690]) describes how people are equipped "to make use of it to the best advantage of life and convenience" (p. 129). It is one's own labour and work which constitutes the most important property, and via which one can appropriate, transform or create value. Locke pays particular attention to neglected and waste land, which, while still being the possession of someone else, enabled those who 'plough, sow, and reap (…) [to make] use of it" (p. 134). As he puts it, "the property of labour should be able to overbalance the community of land, for it is labour indeed that puts the difference of value on everything (…) land that is left wholly to nature, that hath no improvement of pasturage, tillage, or planting, is called, as indeed it is, waste; and we shall find the benefit of it amount to little more than nothing" (p. 136-137).

Locke's argument is useful when considering the ways in which the zones of abandonment behind the linija are being re-valued today. Abandoned land around the linija, I suggest, has been reconfigured into a quasi-commons form of property. It is the labour of those who have the nerve to try their luck, as well as those who simply have no other choice that "puts the difference of value on everything" as Locke puts it. In other words, increased foraging and logging around and behind the linija is not a mere survival strategy but a conscious way of creating value out of de-valued land contaminated with (un)exploded military waste (on the link with re-valuation of waste see Nguyen 2016; Reno 2009; Sosna n.d).

Indeed, recent debates on the social life of unexploded ordnance among political geographers highlighted the need to understand the "dynamic morphology" of war (Weizman 2012) which extends into the spaces of everyday, ordinary life as a new way of thinking about post-modern warfare (Bolton 2015: 43-44). When discussing minefields, it has been suggested that these are "architectural interventions (practices that shape space, guide people through it and produce affect) that create 'volatile landscapes'" (Bolton 2015: 41; also Unruh and Corriveau-Bourque 2011). Following these debates, Matthew Bolton in his theorisation of minefields, draws upon Derek Gregory's concept of "Everywhere War" as a way to examine how war has "become the pervasive matrix within which social life is constituted" (Gregory 2011: 239). The presence of landmines and other (un)exploded military waste, however, needs to be considered spatio-temporally. It bundles the idea of "Everywhere War" with temporal uncertainty that is "woven into the very fabric of civilian life" and extends beyond war-time (Bolton op.cit.). Indeed, my village friends often commented that the mines will be in the soil for at least a hundred years and no one can be certain anyhow. Bolton proposes the concept of "minespace" as a way to understand the violence inherently contained in the minefield and its extension into peacetime. Minespace, Bolton suggests, "traps people into specific spaces, channels them through pre-determined pathways, discursive framings and legal trickery" (2015:44). At the same time, he warns against a cynical determinism, suggesting that it is not inevitable as such radical uncertainty "can be disrupted through political and aesthetic resistance" (ibid.), or as I discuss here, through conscious and practical ways of re-valuing land that is contaminated with military waste.

The process of re-valuing the land around the linija as a Lockean quasi-commons is yet another example of an ethnographic intervention into the resistance and creativity vis-à-vis radical uncertainty that minespaces engender. However, this does not mean that the fear of being injured or killed would simply vanish. What has transformed are the ways in which the

villagers attempt to manage conditions of uncertainty and how they attempt to turn "not knowing" minespaces into effective responses and actions. Writing about fear and distress, Caroline Humphrey poignantly observers that "[i]t is not just that a specific fear may be acute for some people and weak or non-existent for others, but also that having fear (at least of certain kinds) need not be paralysing and dispiriting" (2013: 289). Indeed, fear might become a generative power of, and "an impulse to take action" (ibid.). Therefore, rather than conceiving of villagers as facing uncertainty, or being simply trapped in uncertain minespace, it is one's responses to fear that determine the level of engagement with the linija. The level of engagement with the linija, however, is considerably gendered. Working along the linija involves chiefly male villagers, old and young. Only in rare circumstance was I able to observe women harvesting along the linija, or helping men around it, in contrast to other safe areas of the forest. The ability to take action regardless one's fear often leads to transmitting the debilitating effects of fear to women – wives, mothers, and daughters - who stay at home and who often in such situations take various calming pills and remedies (see Jašarević 2017), as a result of waiting for the return of their loved ones – husbands, brothers, and sons – from the forest.[13]

In what follows I shall discuss in detail villagers' attempts to navigate the space around and behind the linija to describe this shift in re-configuring the linija as a Lockean quasi-commons form of property. Specifically, I elucidate the ensuing forms of villagers' actions - discursive and practical - to re-value and envisage the possibilities of life vis-à-vis pervasive economic precarity and the enduring presence of (un)exploded military waste.

Navigating the linija

"Don't go there", shouted Najm at his twelve-year old son who was accompanying him, his neighbour with a horse, and me on the way to get firewood from the forest near the linija.

Najm's son was running ahead rather than walking in the footsteps of his father and Najm was getting increasingly worried. Najm turned to me suggesting it might be safer if I stayed with his son where we were and waited for them. Najm promised that it would not take long as he had already been to the forest a few days earlier and cut down a tree. To find the same "safe" route to the felled tree, Najm had made barely noticeable marks on the trees with his axe. The marks were now helping him to navigate in the landscape.

After twenty minutes the men and the horse returned with the trunk. No questions were needed. Both men immediately smoked two cigarettes in turn, and were visibly reassured. The neighbour gave the horse a couple of sugar cubes while he relieved his anxiety by talking affectionately to the animal in a way that I have never witnessed on any other occasion. The neighbour's gesture towards the horse expressed visceral fear engendered by the haunting presence of the military waste in the logging areas.

How does one know where to walk around the linija? How and why did Najm decide that it would be better for his son and myself to stop and not continue further? And how did Najm know where would be the best place behind the linija to log? The villagers' actions, such as making marks with an axe or sharing war-memories from around the linija, have become ways of knowing whereby the environment contaminated with military waste is being re-engaged and re-valued once more as knowable and determinable landscape. These types of actions form the basis for villagers' capacity to make semiotic inferences in their navigation of the landscape around the linija. The villagers' ability to make semiotic inferences in evaluating and 'reading' the landscape around the linija is a local form of abduction. Abduction, as Alfred Gell describes, "covers the grey area where semiotic inference (of meanings from signs) merges with *hypothetical inferences* of a non-semiotic (or not conventionally semiotic) kind" (1998:14; italics in original). The key to this ability to anticipate, evaluate and know how to navigate the landscape around the linija is "the presence

of some index from which abductions (belonging to different species) may be made" (1998: 15). Gell and other authors (Keane 2003, although in a different way) emphasise the role of non-linguistic indexical signs, and of materiality in particular, in the process of abduction.

In the highlands, villagers' emerging capacity for abduction when "reading" and navigating in the landscape bundles discursive and non-discursive elements, including stories and memories of particular events in particular places, toponyms, and presence or absence of particular shapes and/or objects in the landscape. The ability to make abductions thus enables villagers not only to re-configure the minespace into a 'known-by-practice' landscape (Ingold 2000). It also provides villagers with opportunities to re-value the land, and thus create value more broadly.

Ways of knowing

When Najm returned from the forest to the village, several neighbours stopped by his garden where he was preparing his chainsaw. They asked him where in the forest he had cut down the tree, and whether they could help. This type of neighbourly conversation expressing engagement in the lives of one's neighbours is a common feature of social life in the villages (XXXX). Yet when Najm said that the trunk was from the linija, the conversation unfolded into a very detailed discussion, involving localisation. This was never the case when trunks were brought from other parts of the forest. In such cases a general description of the location was satisfactory. "I cut it down [the tree]", Najm explained, "where the anti-tank mine exploded and injured Alija [a neighbour], you know where, right?". The neighbours nodded, and one of them added "yes, I overheard that there shouldn't be any more anti-tank mines there", referring to the area where Najm had been logging.

This form of conversational exchange illustrates how discursive and non-discursive fragments of knowledge about the linija are formed and nuanced. Indeed, the capacity of

landscape to "store", "trigger" or "erase" memories, and re-experience events of the past in the present has been widely documented (Bloch 1998; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995). As these debates illustrate, the landscape itself needs to be understood as a "cultural process" (Hirsch and O'Hanlon op.cit.; Ingold 2000) that is produced and re-created through social practice, narratives, individual biographies, and particularly historical, social and political configurations. In the highlands, villagers exchange stories and discuss the terrain around the linija with references to personal as well as others' memories of the war in the gardens, at home over coffee between neighbours, in the municipal cafes, on the village and forest paths, on the buses, or during car rides. These stories generally refer to a specific time, place and to the person who either planted, or observed that a landmine had been planted in the given location. In case of detonation, the villagers also exchange detailed knowledge of who happened to be there and what type of injury the explosion caused. This was also the case for my close interlocutor Safet, who was approached on another occasion by a neighbour who had been planning to go logging behind the linija. The neighbour wanted to double check a few details with Safet, who himself was involved in planting landmines during the 1992-1995 conflict. "You know where the big white stone is on the hill", Safet started, and continued "so there is the tall pine tree, so from there turn left and downhill a bit, it exploded right there and injured a soldier so it should be fine now but don't go any further", he concluded.

Such stories and memories enable villagers to determine which areas around the linija are more likely to be contaminated with landmines and ought to be avoided. In particular, information about the injuries, detonations, and the areas behind the linija that were under the control of non-local soldiers who haven't left any traces of memory are of particular value to the villagers. These snippets of war memory and post-war accidental injuries and detonations co-constitute the various ways of knowing the landscape around the linija, and help villagers to establish a degree of reliability so as to avoid the mines. Nowadays, more than two

21

decades after the end of the conflict, these ways of knowing are increasingly being transmitted across generations, and serve villagers as the actions of value creation in precarious times after the war. Indeed, many of my younger interlocutors were born only after the conflict, yet they can determine which areas around and behind the linija should be avoided, or where to log. The younger generation of villagers has learned from following their older relatives in the forest as much as from the stories, and from ongoing everyday conversations such as the one Najm had with his neighbours in the garden. In turn, the discursive construction of the ways of knowing the linija is significant in the processes of reconsidering the linija as a vital and usable resource, and in value creation. By increasing villagers' capacity to make inferences in navigating the landscape around the linija, more villagers facing prolonged precarity engage, though fearfully, in logging, as well as commercial mushroom hunting and collecting forest fruits.

Ways of seeing

Activities such as mushroom hunting and collecting forest fruits behind the linija rely primarily on discursive ways of knowing so as to minimise the risk of stepping on a landmine. Logging activities, on the other hand, combine discursive and non-discursive components. As it was a frontline territory during the war, many trees around the linija contain countless bullets and grenade shrapnel. The value and saleability of trees decreases with the level of contamination. On the one hand, there is an uncertainty that if a chainsaw hits a piece of shrapnel or a bullet, there is the danger that the saw will break, and repair might be costly. On the other hand, there is a concern that sawmills might refuse to process the timber for the very same reason that they risk damaging the machines, and hence might not buy it. Logging behind the linija is therefore not only life-threatening activity, it also

renders the value of timber indeterminate. Cutting any tree behind the linija is only the first step in a complex process of valuation and subsequent negotiation.

In order to determine the value of a tree from around the linija, villagers search for what Gell described as "the presence of some index from which abductions may be made". As Najm, Safet and other villagers illustrate, they bundle together discourses on war events in the given location with other (often speculative) inferences that would point to any signs of being contaminated by shrapnel (*geler* is used in this context as a general term for trees containing exploded ammunition).

The key sign for possible contamination is the shape of the trunk. A comparison with other surrounding trees helps villagers to establish whether there is any unusual asymmetry. If there is, then villagers need to determine the likelihood as to whether the asymmetry is caused by war-related damage by referring to the discursive domain of knowing the area. Another equally important sign is the presence of unusually large resin drops. These usually signal previous wounds caused by grenade or mine shrapnel (XXXX). These signs, however, are also sought among the surrounding trees for further comparison. Resin drops help to establish with a better precision the likelihood of shelling in the given location.

Only when such abductions are made will villagers decide whether to cut the tree or search elsewhere. The next step in the process of abduction and valuing is a thorough examination of the trunk and deciding between two different regimes of value. In the first instance, villagers attempt to determine whether it could be offered to the sawmill and generate much-needed cash. Otherwise, if the trunk is contaminated, it will be used as the firewood that villagers need all year for cooking and heating and would have to purchase anyway.

Ways of selling

The emerging forms of re-valuing the land behind the linija, and the ensuing forms of abduction that would lead to value creation are primarily driven by prolonged and pervasive precarity. Indeed, villagers' activities behind the linija are aimed at generating much-needed cash. However, having been successful in mushroom hunting or finding timber of good quality does not guarantee that one will be able to sell any of them. The value of the yields from around the linija still remains indeterminate until a way is found to sell them. Knowing how and where to sell, what the current demand is or whether the local sawmills have enough of their own timber reserves is a part of villagers' activities behind the linija and the way in which abductions are made.

Only by bringing timber to the sawmill does the process of value negotiation and transformation begin. In the case of timber shortages, the sawmill owners calculate how many square meters of timber they can get from the trunk and negotiate the price with the villager. If the sawmill has enough reserves and the demand is low, the owners let the villagers use the machines to process the trunks but do not buy the timber. In return, villagers either need to pay a fee for using the machines and electricity, or give an equivalent of the fee in timber. In the latter case, this means that villagers still need to find a way of selling it or transforming it into another form of value.

The same applies for mushrooms and forest fruits harvested by the villagers. An important impetus for the rise of activities of value creation behind the linija has been the presence of traders who travel through the villages and offer immediate cash or barter exchange for supplies on demand that would need to be purchased with cash such as flour, oil or sugar. The links between the villages of my fieldwork and these peripatetic traders developed initially via the dairy trade. In recent years, however, I have observed and documented the fact that dairy products form only part of the transactions and commodity chain between villages and urban areas. Nowadays, traders also purchase garden fruits, forest fruits, home

made jams, mushrooms, honey, and timber in the villages. The increasing demand for these products has been particularly noticeable among recent migrants from the villages to the suburbs of Sarajevo. This migration trend has been caused by the very same predicaments of precarity that drive the villagers who remain in the rural areas into to the forest around the linija.

Conclusion

This paper builds on Peter Sloterdijk's writings about the pervasive militarisation of the world we live in today, whereby the assault is no longer targeted on the body as such, but rather on the enemy's environment, making it unliveable for a long period of time, and thus blurring the boundaries between war and peacetime. I have attempted to ethnographically elucidate how military waste impacts upon the way people remake their livelihoods in the aftermath of conflict in postsocialist, postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although military waste poses a high degree of risk, danger and uncertainty, this paper documented that it would be incorrect to conceive of military waste as merely disempowering, and as suspending or negating the potentiality of active forms of remaking livelihoods under such conditions. Instead, I have sought to elucidate two different but co-existing registers of indeterminacy in the lives of villagers that have emerged from this postsocialist and postwar historical configuration. The registers of indeterminacy emerge from villagers' engagement with the dysfunctional state whilst living in a dangerous environment that is contaminated with military waste. Specifically, I documented different degrees of people's engagement with indeterminacy - i.e. taking an active stance of disambiguation - by tracking the villagers' emerging forms of life with military waste, and the types of affects, regimes of knowing, and opportunities that military waste engenders for value creation. In rural postwar Bosnia-

25

Herzegovina, it is the landscape contaminated with (un)exploded military waste that is being re-configured and re-valued as a quasi-commons and a source of value vis-á-vis the prolonged economic precarity that has been exacerbated in the postsocialist, postwar years, and epitomized by privatization and subletting the forest to private logging companies. The ethnography presented above offers two further analytic and conceptual contributions to the debates on indeterminacy and waste.

Recent debates have attempted to describe indeterminacy as a *conditio humana* of late capitalism in which life is without the promise of stability (Tsing 2015), and as a way of rethinking the epistemological conditions of our discipline (Miyazaki 2004). In his reply to Hirokazu Miyazaki's use of the concept of hope as a "method of knowledge", whereby Miyazaki attempts to capture the spark of indeterminacy that he sees at work in all instances of hope(fulness), Stef Jansen (2015, 2016) suggested that instead we treat "hope" as an object of analysis. In other words, Jansen calls for the study of people's hopes and hopefulness as being situated in specific spatio-temporal configurations. Jansen's careful reading elucidates how many of the current anthropological debates on "hope" attempt to valorise indeterminacy as a welcome intervention into the epistemology of anthropology without engaging seriously with actual hopes as an "object of analysis" in order to avoid any form of determination.[14] Moreover, Jansen and other authors (Reeves 2015) re-valorise ethnography as a method enabling us to trace that which co-determines particular hopes in a given configuration. Although both positions mutually reinforce the anthropological project, I concur with Jansen and suggest that indeterminacy embedded in historical time and as a product of social and material relationships is better suited for ethnographic engagement with military waste. Thus, in this paper I have attempted to turn people's engagement with indeterminacy into an object of analysis in a particular spatio-temporal configuration (postsocialist, postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina) by paying attention to the historically- and socially-situated forms and practices

of determination that foreground the ways in which villagers engage with the productive ambiguity that indeterminacy of military waste engenders.

Finally, this paper has also sought to contribute to the debates on waste and value. The central focus of these debates has been on the ways in which the value of waste is transformed, created or revalorised (e.g. Nguyen 2016; Reno 2009, 2015), and what knowledge and skills such transformations entail (Sanchez n.d.). In the case of military waste, however, it is not waste - landmines, bullets or shrapnel - that is being transformed or revalorised. Rather, it is the *presence* of military waste that creates the conditions of indeterminacy and opportunities for value creation in its surroundings. In the presence of military waste, new value is potentially created or transformed from anything that enters into a relationship with military waste, whether that be a tree, a path or forest, or a person's capacity to make abductions in the areas around the linija. Hence, military waste mediates rather than simply restricts how the surrounding landscape, and indeed the very forms of life themselves, will be revalued in peacetime.

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[1] The latest example in the story of state-sponsored terrorism in the post 9/11 era is the use of drones, the remotely operated killing machines that undermine "the structural reciprocity that conventionally, or at least ideally, defines war" (Gusterson 2016:58).

[2] The expression "fucking mushrooms" is not a literal translation but rather the closest approximation of the meaning "jebem ti gljive".

[3] The line divided the local units of the ARBiH (the Army of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the units of the VRS (Bosnian Serb Army).

[4] In the Zvijezda highlands, "the linija" did not result in the creation of a polity border after the war as was the case in other parts of postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[5] The word pašteta refers to a meat pâté that is sold in Bosnia-Herzegovina in a metal tin. It is also used metaphorically when referring to the Yugoslav blast antipersonnel mine, the PMA-2, for its resemblance to a pâté tin.

[6] The Dayton Consociational model has become notorious for its opacity. To give the reader a glimpse, let me cite Jansen's description here: "five presidents, fourteen executive governments with over one hundred and forty ministers, and fourteen legislative assemblies with hundreds of delegates (…) the two entities each had their own president their own parliament and the or own executive, consisting of over a dozen minsters each. The ten cantons in the Federation all had their own legislative assemblies and executives consisting of up to a dozen ministers (…) Judicial institutions were also dispersed across entities, the district and, within the Federation, across cantons. This list does not include municipal organs, local communes (MZs) or in-country and external institutions of foreign supervision" (Jansen 2015: 139).

[7] For many of my interlocutors and friends it was often more important to be employed and have a regular job, than receiving their salary on time.

[8] The rate varies between 27% to 50%, depending on whether illegal work is factored in (Henig 2016; Jansen 2015; Kurtović 2016).

[9] Olovo is one of the municipalities where I have been conducting my fieldwork.

[10] According to the 2015 report of BHMAC, the total suspected area currently covers 1,176.50 km2; specifically, 9,185 defined microlocations; 19,205 minefield records; 4,500 mine action projects still to be implemented; and 120,000 mines and UXOs (unexploded ordnance) still to be found (http://www.bhmac.org/en/stream.daenet?kat=18 , last accessed 1 June 2016)

[11] The prioritisation officially follows the United Nation Mine Action Service's classification of mined areas as being i) highly affected, ii) moderately affected, and iii) minimally affected. However, in reality the prioritisation often reflects the politics of donation and particular strategic agendas (Bolton 2010).

[12] During my fieldwork I made a few trips to some of the badly affected villages. The floods made the landscape even more dangerous as no knowledge could be employed to ascertain a safe route. As a result, there has been a decrease in the number of villagers who are prepared to harvest along the linija, but there are still occasionally some who do so.

[13] I am grateful to one of the reviewers for drawing my attention to this point.

[14] Furthermore, Jansen shows how when making these attempts, many scholars often conflate the two positions while valorising only the former.