



Everyday boundaries, borders and post-conflict societies

by Renata Summa, Cham, Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, 272 pp., EUR 59.99 (Paperback), ISBN 978-3030558192

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BOOK REVIEWS

Everyday boundaries, borders and post-conflict societies, by Renata Summa, Cham, Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, 272 pp., EUR 59.99 (Paperback), ISBN 978-3030558192

This book is about the post-conflict settlement of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It contributes to critical insight into the post-Dayton ethnonational boundaries (ranging from 1995/1996 to 2018). Focused on the everyday practices in two major cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely, Sarajevo and Mostar, the book skilfully provides a different narrative of the post-Dayton period derived from alternative practices in the lived space of the everyday and its contradictions. The author goes beyond the traditional understanding of boundaries based on the territorial definition by exploring ‘invisible yet performative boundaries’ enacted in the everyday practices than 20 years after the Dayton Peace (1995) set the IEBL (the Inter-Entity Boundary Line). The book successfully illustrates in many cases how public spaces, universities, schools, squares, and cafes became the places of segregated politics not limited to high politics.

The book defines boundaries as ‘practices of spatiotemporal demarcation and differentiation which may or may not entail geographical delimitations’ (p.22). The argument is evolved through the critical concept of boundary enactment, which is formulated as a process of production, reproduction, subversion, and destabilization of post-conflict demarcations and differentiation. In contrast to the rigid narratives based on the territorialized definitions of borders, the author captures both the limitations of these definitions and possibilities of new forms of relations, connections, encounters, and political dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. For instance, in Chapter 4, the author points to how a hairdressing salon in the boundary zone between Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo (Istočno Sarajevo) has become a place wherein ignoring the ethnonational narratives introduced by Dayton and ‘silencing controversial topics’ illustrates boundary-challenging everyday practices (p.129).

Methodologically, the book employs the research technique of fieldwork, and its reference point for researching is everyday places. The chosen ones in the book are a coach station, an avenue and square, a pub, and a shopping mall. The research technique has two implications for the analyses of boundaries. First, places are where relations, connections, and encounters occur and are articulated in narratives and stories. Since everyday places are not naturally bounded but constantly enacted, they are very relevant to the everyday practices of boundary enactment and help the author use multiple sources and perspectives, which show the heterogeneity of the everyday. Second, the author does denaturalize not only ‘places’ but also ‘everyday.’ Thus, rather than taken as a pacified, non-conflictual, private realm, the everyday is a site of connections between ‘private-public, mundane practices-high politics, the routine-exceptional, ordinary people-the elites’ (p. 70), and these connections also show how politics and international politics works.

The book is divided into six parts. In addition to the Introduction, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 focus on the conceptualization of key terms and the methodological framework of the everyday practices used in the book, respectively. The following three parts illustrate the book’s arguments on boundary enactments. Chapter 4 shows how both the lack of public transportation between Sarajevo and its eastern part (Istočno Sarajevo) and the building of infrastructure, such as a coach station, schools, and universities as a form of direct boundary-

making practice shape the everyday in terms of limiting encounters and reproducing ethnonational demarcations. In some forms, these direct boundary-making practices create alternative everyday practices, such as practices of crossing (from Eastern to central Sarajevo) or the case of Saint Joseph Catholic School Center that accepts students coming from all ethnonational backgrounds. Chapter 5 focuses on Mostar ('divided city' between East-Muslims and West-Croatians) and considers boundaries in terms of their spatial and temporal capacity. The author shows how different groups in different meanings changing in time have enacted boundaries through the Bulevar. Chapter 6 again investigates the city of Sarajevo but now points to the shopping mall BBI centre and its square as intersections, connections, encounters between the local and the international, which is shaped by the presence of thousands of 'peacebuilders' in the city, and investments from Arab Gulf during the post-conflict settlement period. The book concludes with the implications for understanding security in challenging the conventional accounts of security that consolidate post-Dayton ethnonational demarcations and differentiation. The book's structure helps grasp various forms of everyday enactments. Visual materials such as photographs and maps enhance the appeal of this book. In addition to the interviews with local people, the author uses novels, short stories, documentaries, and TV shows about Bosnia and Herzegovina to make readers familiar with the region's culture, history, and geography and helps the reader grasp the local narratives and stories of the everyday.

This book is an original and comprehensive study on different aspects of boundary-making practices going beyond the dichotomies between public-private, past-present, the local-the international. For instance, in Chapter 5, the author indicates not only spatial but also temporal aspects of boundary-making everyday practices concerning the Bulevar in the 'divided city' of Mostar. While the Spanish Square located within the Bulevar has been enacted either as a 'contact place' or 'peacetime battlefield,' and thereby, a place of a dispute between Bosniaks and Croats, Boemi Kafana as an everyday place has enacted it in dispute between Natives (True Mostaris) and newcomers (after the war). It is interesting to see how the temporal displacement of Mostar has been developed as a strategic tactic, which counters the spatially articulated ethnonational lines (p.178)

This book has an interdisciplinary nature and is helpful for those interested in post-conflict settlements; critical borders study, urban sociology, the study of the everyday, and critical security studies. It is a fascinating example of countering the analyses of the Bosnian situation based on a territorialized and militarized conception of security and revealing the silenced voices and experiences of insecurities of the local people.

Notes on contributor

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