



BOOK REVIEW

Renata Summa (2021). *Everyday Boundaries, Borders and Post Conflict Societies*. Palgrave Macmillan

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Post-conflict peacebuilding often involves the need to address more complex issues than merely putting an end to hostilities and resolving the conflict. Society can remain divided, both in terms of its internal structure and external characteristics. In post-conflict situations, frequent changes in various aspects of social relations often serve as triggers for new conflicts.

In her book *Everyday Boundaries, Borders and Post Conflict Societies*, Renata Summa explores the dual nature of borders in society, considering them both as abstract and practical concepts and thus providing a fresh perspective on matters concerning territorial disputes, violence, and interethnic conflicts.

Post-conflict in this study is defined as the state of a society that has experienced conflict or war and is in the process of recovery. Therefore, post-conflict can serve as a common backdrop for numerous social processes, including democratization, economic reconstruction, social rehabilitation, resulting in the restoration of peaceful life and the reform of society.

The book begins by examining the cases of Sarajevo and Mostar (p. 6) to explore shifts in the utilization of borders in the daily lives of post-conflict societies. At this point the author argues that borders, in their essence, are linked to the practice of demarcation and are not limited solely to geographic aspects or spatial characteristics. Peace agreements caused a reorganization of borders and this process, in its turn, reshaped social structures and thus increased the significance of borders in post-conflict socio-political life (pp. 7–9).

The second part of the book explores the concepts of borders and boundaries. Borders are predominantly understood as physical demarcations, whereas boundaries are rooted in social and cultural aspects and feature more prominently in language and religion. The author argues that

boundaries can be understood as a much more fluid and dynamic category, which allows moving away from the metaphor of the line. From the metaphor of the line, we pass, with boundaries, to the metaphor of a gray zone. Although it can be instituted and backed by political authorities, boundaries are not necessarily clearly identified to interstate borders. Even though they produce, shape and organize space, they can be of multiple types: symbolic, social, linguistic, cultural, urban, spatial, etc. Being less institutionalized, their crystallization or transgression depend, to a larger extent, on a series of everyday practices. (p. 38)

Everyday boundaries possess a fundamental quality—they remain concealed and inconspicuous, yet they play a pivotal role in shaping society and shaping interactions between individuals in their everyday activities.

The third chapter examines everyday life in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Dayton peace settlement and explores the connection between boundaries and the everyday. The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina illustrates certain methodological aspects related to the concept of everyday life—it should not be regarded as a structured entity that can be subdivided into different “levels” or “layers” (p. 75). Instead, the author suggests looking at everyday life from a different perspective: as a unique set of practices used by members of society, including displacement, alienation, “denaturalization” (p. 84), and demarcation. Displacement implies the expulsion of certain groups or nationalities from specific territories or social spheres; alienation means isolating people from their society and culture; denaturalization stands for the loss of cultural identity; and demarcation reinforces the differentiation of society within the *borders and boundaries*.

The fourth chapter analyzes post-conflict social processes in the suburb of Sarajevo, where the territory is administratively divided into Sarajevo and Istočno Sarajevo by the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). Among other things, the chapter explores the remarkable example of the coach station in Istočno Sarajevo, which has turned into a “place of socialization” and thus acquired meanings that are different from those it initially had. Within this context, R. Summa investigates the intricate interplay between boundary-making practices that define life in Sarajevo and alternative practices that facilitate the crossing and transcending of these boundaries (pp. 125–141). Everyday life “smooths out” conflict situations, gradually making them less noticeable.

The central theme of the fifth chapter is the city of Mostar. After the Dayton Accords, this city became frequently associated with the concept of “division” due to the conflicts that occurred there between 1993 and 1994. The western part belonged to the Croatian Defence Council, and the eastern part to the army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following the conflict, the division in terms of political borders vanished but persisted in terms of social boundaries. However, as R. Summa argues,

these boundaries were also gradually fading away in everyday life. When we closely examine the areas of ongoing conflict in the city, we don't simply find a straightforward spatial division; instead, we observe a process of demarcation. This demarcation is defined by spatial-temporal discursive constructs that aren't immediately apparent in everyday perception but gradually take shape as boundaries in the course of the conflict's development (pp. 182–184).

The final chapter describes more complex aspects of everyday life. To this end, the focus again is made on Sarajevo and its urban space, especially the BBI shopping center and its square, where everyday life blurs the distinction between international and local. The boundaries became less distinct as various social practices converged. In this context the everyday can be understood as a kind of catalyst for social interaction: everyday practices unite people regardless of how different they may be. Thus, as discussed earlier, everyday life relegates conflicts to a secondary position, while interaction takes precedence.

R. Summa's research combines the investigation of various manifestations of borders and boundaries with an analysis of post-conflict practices. These practices can contribute to conflict mitigation, although only to a partial extent. Such divisions within society are observed universally when we consider them in the context of the term *boundaries*. Cultural boundaries, often imperceptible in everyday life, become readily apparent in the course of conflict development. The example of former Yugoslavia illustrates the ubiquity of hidden practices associated with conflicts. The main strength of this book is its emphasis on the daily, routine manifestations of a conflict, which are often taken for granted by the participants themselves and which pose significant methodological challenges for researchers. In the book, the author aims to build a methodological framework that goes beyond the spatial dimension of boundaries and emphasizes their dynamic and evolving nature, highlighting the idea that boundaries are in a constant state of flux. This book can be recommended to researchers of conflicts in the post-Soviet space, the Yugoslav Wars, and any prolonged civil confrontations in general.