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Movement as Conflict Transformation

Rescripting Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies

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For my Gran, Ann Littler, a wonderful woman.

PREFACE

CONSTELLATIONS OF TRANSFORMATION

Space, memory, and time create constellations of movement. We are born into space and time, and become social beings through memory and movement, experiences of space at different intersections of time produces memories. Similarly, as space changes over time, memories change over time. Others we meet in space are integral to our memories and understanding, not only of ourselves, but of the space itself. Our memories and experiences of space effects perceptions of, and therefore expectations of space. Positive experiences in space (what becomes place through communicating the story socially) impact on how we, and others we interact with, think about, and use said space in the future. Negative experiences of space such as traumatic or upsetting events can limit or change movement. This may be during a violent intra-state conflict or in “everyday” life, of course the risk of such negative experiences greatly increases in an intra-state conflict. However, as space can transition from safe to un-safe, so too can it be transformed from un-safe to safe, and spaces can of course invoke seemingly little feeling at all. As there is a multiplicity of factors which effect movement and perceptions of space there can be no one formula for transforming experiences of space. Our experiences of space are highly individual due to our spatial trajectories (or positionalities) as where we are “from”, impacts on how we process, understand, and move through space. The picture on the front cover of this book, ‘Pick your glasses’ is a piece of street art in Mostar by Mišela

Boras. I have used it in presentations about my work in Mostar to explain theory as a way of looking at a situation. This book should very much be seen in the same way, it is a way of looking at Mostar, informed by my own spatial trajectory. It proposes looking at and understanding post-conflict space through spatial narratives of residents. Focusing in on Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina this book demonstrates the transformative potential of movement and use of space in the city.

The city of Mostar, has at times been overgeneralised in academia, therefore, this work relays a narrative of the city, as one that is still deeply divided, but is transforming every day, in unseen and subtle ways. Though the work centres on Mostar, it presents an analytical framework that can be applied to any spatiality. While the narratives are of movement in Mostar, you may find common experiences within the narratives, though you may never have set foot in the city. Certainly, we have all felt out of place in one context or another, and more so, our experience of space is not static. We know the power of changing experiences of space, of revisiting a favourite place, of returning home after a period of time away, of avoiding a darkened street or park at night, but using the space happily in daylight. So, though this book is grounded in conflict transformation literature, it contributes a framework of analysis for identifying the transformation of space, by drawing on other disciplines, such as human geography and sociology.

This book explores historical, academic, theoretical and social narratives to set the context of the city of Mostar. The forthcoming chapters discuss the spatial dimensions of post-conflict space and reflect on the social use of the city space of Mostar. Through spatialising social narratives of the use of the city space, the work contributes to existing literature on the city of Mostar. The book begins by discussing the main themes of the work, in Chapter 1 you will be introduced to the framework of the book and also the city. The chapter also discusses the application of mapping as a methodology which was complemented by narrative interviews. Chapter 2, spatialises the structure and agency debate and through the theoretical framework demonstrates how social narratives rescript the use of the institutionally restaged city space. The interactivity of the two concepts, (re-)scripting and (re-)staging is also set out. The following Chapter 3 then locates the spatialisation of peace in the four interacting spaces of the institutional, urban, social, and personal. In the institutional space, the actors involved, in the restaging and maintenance of physical locations in the urban environment are

discussed. Fundamentally, the dominance of institutional actors in the production of space demonstrates the capability and responsibility of institutional actors to alter the cityscape and stage peace. In the urban context, restaging is performed by institutional actors, in order to direct the social use of space in cities. While cities are typically staged top-down the construction, urban spaces are inherently social spaces which can be transformed by social actors. In Mostar, as social actors have established shared spaces for the purpose of traversing ethno-nationalistic institutional divides, the conflict transformation potential of social actors to rescript the urban environment is proposed. Fundamentally, the capabilities of social actors to influence the use of, and spatial meaning of places in the cityscape are discussed. The social and personal spaces are collapsed in to each other and social actors are presented as agentive, and capable of socially rescripting divisively staged city space for a purpose different from its staging.

Chapter 4, provides a spatialised account of the historical formation of Mostar, charting narratives from initial settlement to recent history of the city. The theoretical conceptualisations of restaging and rescripting are employed to present the institutional establishment, and social use of the city space historically. This chapter reflects on the transgenerational narratives of historical restaging and rescripting of the space, which were instrumental in the contested ethno-nationalistic narratives and directed the 1992–1995 Bosnian War. Additionally, the chapter provides a social narrative of the spatial context of the city through presenting narratives of movement during the 1992–1995 war.

The social narratives of movement provided by participants, is presented across two chapters. Both Chapters 5 and 6 discuss spaces in the city. Chapter 5, discusses the spatial-institutional divisions in Mostar and how participants negotiate the divide. In focus, Chapter 5 discusses how social actors can rescript space (which may clash or correlate with the institutional staging of space) through the visibility of symbols, graffiti, and street art which reflect narratives of peace and conflict. Through contemporary narratives of movement; temporal, functional movement, and socially weighted movement are discussed as influencing social rescripting in the city. These variables of movement demonstrate how convenience, time, and context can direct movement which may be divisive or transformative, in the context of the divided city. This chapter also discusses the divisions in education in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) and Mostar and explores how use of shared spaces has transformed divisional movement.

In Chapter 6, the social narratives regarding the use of spaces of movement in the city are presented. This part of the work travels through popular spaces of movement in the city; and through the narrative of the spaces, the restaging and the social rescripting of the spaces is presented. Through the participant narratives, the work demonstrates the capability of social actors to rescript spaces in the city, though this is typically time and context dependent.

Chapter 7, discusses the implications of the research in Mostar and presents the relevance of spatial agency in the city, and the research, to other divided cities. This chapter discusses the theoretical contribution of the conceptualisations of rescripting and restaging as allowing for a deeper understanding of social dynamics of movement, particularly in divided cities. Furthermore, the chapter illustrates the potential for social movement to rescript divisively staged city space, which also rescripts social relations within space, therefore, enacting conflict transformation. Consequently, the chapter presents an outlook for research in divided cities that is informed by spatial analysis of movement.

This book provides a qualitative analysis of post-peace agreement space. The Dayton Agreement that ended the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has enshrined conflict divisions, yet through movement social actors demonstrate their agentive capabilities to enact conflict transformation. Fundamentally, as socio-spatial beings our memory is spatialised and is informed by movement through spaces and places. In intra-state conflict, everyday spaces become staged (through destruction or damage) and scripted (through personal experiences in the space) with conflict memories. Therefore, following a conflict, it is important for the city to be restaged through post-conflict reconstruction, which can allow residents of the city to rescript space. Of course, the opinions and experiences of residents of any city are not homogenous and there will exist a wide variety of local voices and opinions concerning post-conflict reconstruction. Accordingly, this book explores social spaces in the city set out by participants, contextualising the spaces through their spatial narratives. Through focusing on the conflict transformation potential of social rescripting in post-conflict environments, this work presents the agentive capabilities of social actors to enact conflict transformation, though this may be subtle, or temporal in nature.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABiH	Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine (Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina)
BiH	Bosna i Hercegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
EU	European Union
EUAM	European Union Administration of Mostar
EUFOR	European Union Peacekeeping Force
FBIH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
HVO	Hrvatsko vijeće obrane (Croatian Defence Council)
IRA	Irish Republican Army
JNA	Jugoslovenska narodna armija (Yugoslav People's Army)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PMC	Pavarotti Music Centre
RS	Republika Srpska
SAF	Street Arts Festival (Mostar)
SRFY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UWC	United World College
VRS	Vojska Republike Srpske (Army of the Serb Republic)

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