The Spatial Dimensions of State-Building

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INTRODUCTION

Why do certain states form and others fail to do so? This chapter illustrates how a spatial approach to state-building casts light on the material and symbolic dimensions of state-building. It will help understand the reasons for which a state like Kosovo ended up being widely recognised, both internationally and domestically, while Republika Srpska (RS), one of Bosnia-Herzegovina's (BiH) entities, has never completed this process despite its strong ambitions to do so. Based on our earlier work on spatial transformation and agency (Björkdahl and Kappler, 2017), we suggest that state-building practices can be subdivided into material categories (place-making) and political-symbolic practices (space-making). Only when a newly emerged state combines place-making and space-making can it successfully act as a new state. In this chapter, we argue that, whilst Kosovo and RS have both acquired a material territory through their state-building ambitions, only Kosovo has managed to obtain the necessary political and symbolic resources for it to become an independent state. It has acquired recognition at the domestic and international scale, whereas RS primarily enjoys recognition at its domestic scale. This chapter does not suggest that successful state-building is positive or negative per se, but instead casts light on the interplay between material and symbolic spatial conditions of state-building that explain the different possible outcomes in the process.

State-making and self-proclaimed states

A sovereign state is not always the outcome of struggles for independent statehood and state-building processes. However, little scholarly attention has been paid to failed, suspended or abandoned state-building attempts. Like successful state formation processes, fledgling states have their origins in an idea about the state based on the right of self-determination within a territory (Buzan, 1991; Visoka, 2018; Lemay-Hébert, 2009). The emergence of a state therefore has a symbolic (self-determination and recognition) as well as a material (territory) dimension. Sometimes, statehood is claimed based on ethnicity or nationality and performed through independence or secessionist movements' vision of a 'homeland' (Billing, 1995). Once territorial control and state-like institutions are achieved, *de facto* independence may be claimed. Since these self-proclaimed states often are born out of violent struggles, they are seen to violate the principle of territorial integrity of the established state and are thus rarely internationally recognized. The lack of recognition means that the state in the making is in limbo, outside the international system of sovereign states (Bartelson, 2001; Bryant, 2014; Caspersen, 2012; Bliesemann de Guevara, 2012).

As state-making processes around the world evidence, these processes may not always produce sovereign states. Recent research identifies a number of possible outcomes of unfinished, interrupted or stalled state-making processes and suggest that even some suspended or abandoned processes may result in a state-like entity (Kuftinec 1998: 85; Stjepanović 2015). A variety of concepts is available to describe these entities; de facto states, para-states, statelet, unrecognized states, pseudo-states and quasi-states (cf. Kolstø 2006).

The concept of '*de facto* states' has been used by a number of scholars to characterize polities that have achieved *de facto* independence including territorial control and have managed to maintain this for some time. They function as a state and may be recognized as such by their

population, but are unrecognized by the international community of states. Anthropologist Rebecca Bryant (2014: 126) points us towards 'liminality' as a key feature of *de facto* states. Liminality describes transitional periods or phases and it is often used to analyse thresholds in rites of passage towards statehood. Unrecognized *de facto* states are described as "permanently liminal", a status which shapes their ambiguous statehood and puts them in a "precariously unstable situation" (Bryant, 2014: 126, 138). In this, RS and Kosovo have been analysed as holding fragmented or ethnic sovereignty, and as such have failed to gain full international recognition (Fawn and Richmond, 2009). Unrecognized statehood points at states that strive for international recognition and membership in the international community of states (Caspersen, 2012). Recent research on international recognition by Edward Newman and Gëzim Visoka (2016) demonstrates the agency of fledgling states as well as the hybrid justifications behind recognition of statehood and independence. In contrast, the notion of quasi-states refers to a state that only possesses external sovereignty and that can exist because of international recognition, and not because it controls its territory or provides for its citizens (Jackson, 1991).

By critically excavating polities with internal sovereignty, referring to entities recognized by its population as a state and performing as a state, it is possible to unpack the concept of the state to reveal the multi-layered and fluid nature of its construction in order to attempt to understand under which conditions it successfully represents itself as coherent and singular (Gupta 1995). James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002) as well as Aradana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (2006) explore the social processes through which state ideas are reproduced. With the rise of the nation-state, the idea of the state came to rest on the nation and the idea of national self-determination. It links rights of nations to the notion of self-determination and the rights of states to questions of sovereignty (Lemay-Hébert, 2009). Following from this idea of the

nation-state, state-making is becoming a struggle to represent and emplace the nation within the borders of a sovereign state.

The physical territory of the two case studies for this chapter, Kosovo and Republika Srpska, emerged as a result of the breakup of Yugoslavia in which one bigger state-level unit was broken down into smaller entities. This process can also be said to have been accompanied by the collapse of Tito's idea of 'brotherhood and unity', which had served as a centripetal force in Yugoslavia. Kosovo was initially part of Serbia, but had held a degree of formal autonomy. RS emerged as a result of the ethnically segregated outcomes of the Dayton Peace Accords, which sought to gain the agreement of all warring sides by granting them their own territory. The territory of the RS was therefore established in dialogue with the international actors who had facilitated the agreement and, with it, the decentralised constitution of BiH. It was one way to use the state to end the violence and organise the country in spatial terms once the war had ended (Dahlman and Ó Tuathail, 2005). This was linked to the ethnic segregation of BiH, coupled with the displacement and migration of people who now predominantly live in ethnically homogeneous areas.

SPATIALIZING THE STATE

There are different ways in which the state is spatialized and how a population comes to imagine the space as a formal state with certain spatial properties. The spatialization of the state refers here to the spatial and material forms that ideas and practices take on in state-building processes (cf. Björkdahl and Buckley- Zistel, 2016). It is about the emplacing the idea and the practices of the state through a fusion of ideational and material properties. Contestations and conflict over space and place may create new spatial arrangements. This results in a new way of ordering space, gives rise to new ideational and territorial landscapes

and emplaces a given idea of the state (Campbell, 1998; Kliot and Mansfield, 1997). Thus, the state is understood to be both material and territorial as well as imagined and ideational. It is emplaced, constituted and populated by the way people experience its ideational and material forms (Björkdahl, 2018).

However, spatialization is a fluid process as it is constitutive of and constituted by peoples' continued belief in the idea of the state and the actualizations of certain spatial orders such as the state. "'Placing' the ethnic or national community in 'its' territory, physically and symbolically, is inseparable from the process of the bounding of the nation and of the making of the state" (Kostovicova, 2004: 270). It forges "the mystic bond between people and place", i.e. between nation and homeland. Such work is particularly intense during state-building processes, according to Smith (cited in Kostovicova, 2004: 270). Thus, the state becomes a means of institutionalizing the link between identity and territory.

Based on these insights, we suggest that a state emerges through two fundamental geographical processes: place-making on the one hand, and space-making on the other hand (cf. Björkdahl and Kappler, 2017). We understand 'place' as a material, physical and bounded entity, a location. It represents the territory that a state needs to govern a peace within its boundaries. Space, instead refers to the ideational, symbolic counter-part of place, its relational qualities and the meanings associated with it. Indeed, a state needs a repertoire of symbols in order to function in our global system – not only a flag and an anthem, but also the recognition of its citizens and the international community. The processes of place-making and space-making are thus not the same, but have to take place jointly if a new state is to emerge.

Scaling place-making and space-making

Place-making and space-making are processes that are not limited to the scale of the nation-state, but reach across different scales of analysis. They take place in the interplay of local, national and international actors.

In this context, in the bulk of work on scalar politics, most attention has been given to the social construction of spatial scales as a way of governing. A lot of this work has referred to the global capitalist economy as a sphere in which spatial hierarchies are created, with an underlying assumption that the scale of the 'global' is superior to that of the 'national' and 'local' (Sassen, 2000: 226). It has been acknowledged that the establishment of scales in itself is a political process (Brenner, 1998: 460) and "imbued with power" (McCann, 2003: 160). If we take this for granted, then we have to acknowledge that our scalar understanding of politics, that is, at what geographical level politics take place, is fundamentally instrumental. It reflects assumptions about which scale is best suited for the implementation of particular policies (McCann, 2003: 163) as well as about the types of actors who have the right to reshape and transform a place (McCann, 2003: 172).

In that sense, following Swyngedouw (2000), the choice of scale, the attempt to rescale politics from one level to another, and the resistance against this process, can all be considered spatial expressions of power (p.67, 70). Brenner (1998: 473) derives the need for a fixation of scales from the divisions inherent in the global economy and associated imperial practices. This is certainly not to say that scales are natural givens in terms of where politics can *best* take place. Much in contrast, scalar categories are a matter of representation and thus power (Cox, 1998: 43). When it comes to state-building practices, we can observe a strategic interplay between local, national and international dynamics and actors. Which scale is

dominant depends on the given case as well as point in time. Different actors at various scales of governance mobilise and inhibit each other, depending on the desired outcome of their state-building ambitions. Geographical places to host a state can be created locally of internationally and often in the mutual support of specific domestic and international actors, as the case of Kosovo and its internationally-managed state-building process clearly demonstrates. It is the very interplay between scales of actors and policy makers that helps us understand, in a geographical sense, how mechanisms of state-building are initiated, sustained and resisted at different levels of agency.

PLACE-MAKING AS A MEANS OF STATE-BUILDING

Place-making is the process through which a material presence is given to an idea (Björkdahl and Kappler, 2017). In the context of state-building, this is materialised in the establishment of a given territory on which a state can emerge, i.e. the materialization of the idea of the state.

A place is not neutral, but reflects power. A homeland may become an arena where a dominant nation may enforce its vision, but also a ground for the contestation of that vision (Tuan, 1976: 35). Thus, the state is understood as territorial and it is emplaced and constituted and populated by the way people experience the place.

Republika Srpska

Already in 1990, the wartime Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić revealed the emergent ethnoterritorial idea of BiH held by SDS, the Serbian ethno-nationalist party. Karadžić, a renewal nationalist, was elected leader of the Bosnian-Serb ultranationalist party (SDS)

because of his powerful oratory, and he came to be one of the founding fathers of RS. Following the refusal of Serb politicians in BiH to endorse the referendum on the independence of BiH, Karadžić spoke to the secessionist parliament set up in Pale and declared the independence of the Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina in early 1992 (later renamed RS), stating that BiH no longer existed (Stjepanovic, 2015; Woodward, 1995). In the declaration of independence of RS, Karadžić stated his aim to control the territory of Eastern Bosnia that he expected to be the material foundation of the RS. In his rhetoric, Karadžić portrayed BiH as a land of primordial violence and Serbs as perpetual victims of its different empires in order to legitimize the ideas about a Serb homeland. Consequently, in the declaration of independence, Karadžić also outlined the strategic goals for the army of RS (Toal and Dahlman, 2011). These goals included ethnic cleansing and territorial control to make up the Bosnian-Serb state. Through the ethnic cleansing of territory, the Bosnian-Serb leadership reinforced their claim to the place. The ethnic cleansing was done mainly by paramilitaries[1] assisted by the JNA/VRS to secure territory for the new Bosnian-Serb state. By removing different ethnic groups from a formerly mixed location and by erasing the material and tangible heritage of the other, the past was erased and cleared the way for the new state. The RS became rooted in the place as the material legacy of the other was demolished and the territory became associated with Serb identity. Serbian flags, party symbols, portrays of Bosnian-Serb ethno-nationalist political leaders, Serb-Orthodox churches replacing mosques, all came to mark the territory as Bosnian-Serb. The place thus became ethnicized and marked as 'belonging' to the Bosnian-Serb community as parts of their historic homeland. Bosnian-Serb ethno-nationalist political elites, their supporters as well as many Bosnian-Serbs in their everyday acted as if RS was an

[1] This involved persons and groups such as Vojislav Seselj and his paramilitaries, also known as Seseljvci (Seselj's men), Arkan's Tigers under the command of the Serbian criminal Zelko (Arkan) Raznjatovic and Beli Orlovi (White Eagles).

established, internationally recognized state. The fragile achievements of RS as a 'state' relied on the repeated performance of its existence, and an 'ethnic sovereignty' (Fawn and Richmond, 2009) was established. RS was performed through controlling territory, declaring independence and establishing a constitutional framework and institutions. RS still continues to exist in opposition to and as one part of the Dayton-sanctioned state BiH and an internal inter-entity boundary line (IEBL) divides the territory of BiH into two "sub-states" the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with 51% of the territory and the Bosnian-Serb RS, with 49% of the territory (Toal and Dahlman, 2011).

Kosovo/a

In contrast, Kosovo[2], a region which has historically had a certain degree of autonomy with respect to Yugoslavia, saw its autonomy status suspended in 1989. Ambitions for secession from Serbia resulted in the outbreak of a violent conflict in the late 1990s and the eventual creation of an independent state in 2008. With a Serb minority scattered across Kosovo and predominantly in the North, the internationally-supervised state-building process has not been without resistance (cf. Jansen, 2000). However, the Kosovar territory could fairly easily be delineated from Serbia due to Kosovo's historical status of autonomy and therefore did not come with the same degree of displacement and restructuring as was the case at the creation of RS – a more a-historical entity.

From early on, a range of international agencies, particularly American and European, were involved in the associated state-building processes. More specifically, Visoka and Richmond (2016) suggest that international actors strategically used state-building as a means to respond

[2] We refer to Kosovo and Kosova as 'Kosovo' in this chapter.

to the requests of Kosovo Albanians, whilst resorting to peace-building techniques to accommodate the demands of the Kosovo Serb minority.

State-building in Kosovo has therefore been clearly performed and enacted at multiple scales, including domestic and international actors. Those actors may have worked in agreement as well as disagreement with each other: NATO and UNMIK being primary forces of international involvement in Kosovo's state-building process with an increasing role of the EU is contrasted with the Kosovo-Albanian Vetëvendosje! ('Self-determination!') party, to quote but one example (cf. Vardari-Kessler, 2012). Whilst there is a degree of agreement between all of those actors that Kosovo needs to be an internationally recognised state, Vetëvendosje! specifically has long campaigned against the foreign presence of state-builders in the country itself. The recognition of Kosovo as a physical entity is therefore shared to a large degree between those above-mentioned actors, who, however, are in competition with each other about the possible ways in which this territorial autonomy can be achieved. These varied imaginaries about what state should be built, and how, are not just clashing between local and international actors, but can be found between the different minorities of Kosovo as well (Sigona, 2012).

Having said that, it becomes obvious that the presence of a territory is an important element of state-building and, where this territory is not yet delineated, place-making consists in creating a physical territory on which a state can emerge. Different actors operating at different scales have their competing needs and demands that any given territory needs to fulfil. And whilst place-making needs an available territory, we see both in the case of RS and Kosovo a strong international tutelage process through which place is devised, divided up and allocated to different groups and agencies in positions of power.

SPACE-MAKING AS A MEANS OF STATE-BUILDING

We have now shown that both Kosovo and RS were successful in creating a place, a material base or territory, as a basic precondition of state formation. However, as we shall argue, only Kosovo has been able to achieve some degree of multi-scalar sovereignty in terms of domestic *and international* recognition through the process we term 'space-making'. Space-making refers to the creation of a symbolic, ideational counter-part of material place-making (Björkdahl and Kappler, 2017). With respect to state-building, it extends to the creation of sovereignty, legitimacy as well as the establishment of domestic and international recognition. It reflects the political capital that any given material entity requires in order for it to act as a state on the global stage.

A key dimension of state-building is turning the territory under control into a sovereign state. The process of space-making represents the crafting of an idea of the state that resonates with domestic, regional and international audiences. Such crafting relies on myths, symbols, narratives and is reinforced through processes of 'acting like a state' (Visoka, 2018). Thus, the physical place, i.e the 'homeland', is where the idea and the practice of statehood is grounded and then, socially and symbolically emplaced through processes of state-making.

Republika Srpska

Among Serb nationalists, the territory of RS has long been regarded as a state for the Serbs and claims of sovereignty were derived from the right to self-determination. Such sovereignty based on claims to ethnicity is based on a self-constructed "web of meaning" of which perceptions of sovereignty is an important part (Fawn and Richmond, 2009: 210). There was an ideological reservoir to tap into to construct the idea of a sovereign RS. The space-making

process centred around the idea of a new Greater Serbian state, based on Serbdom's 'historical and ethnic borders' and a romanticisation of the nation (Toal and Dahlman, 2011: 44). Furthermore, the power of state symbols, historical narratives and selective remembrance were tools that nationalist politicians used prior to, during and after the war in the space-making process as giving meaning to the Serb ethnic homeland, the material foundation of RS. As a visual representation of RS, its flag was frequently used in building the ideational foundation of the state. Many Bosnian-Serbs have continued to fly the RS flag outside their houses, for example when celebrating the national holiday. The Dan Republike, the 'entity day', commemorates the establishment of RS on 9 January 1992 and is celebrated every year on that day as a sign of pride, despite the celebration of statehood was ruled as unconstitutional. The national anthem 'Bože Pravde' was seen by both the ethno-nationalist elite and its supporters to represent the Serbs in RS as well as in Serbia. Moreover, the national flag was a version of the Serbian flag of Serbia, but without the coat of arms displayed. Thus, the state symbols of RS connected it with Serbia proper. Epic warfare values as well as personal heroism and self-sacrifice dominated historical narratives that were dug up before the outbreak of the war in the early 1990s and legitimized the idea of the historical correctness of the Serbs' own nation. Through narratives selectively referring to a particular memory, such as crimes committed by Croats relating to the Jasenovac concentration camp during World War II, the idea of the RS was also projected it into the past (Stjepanovic, 2015). These narratives became important to ethnonationalist politicians to ensure the 'right' understanding of the Serbian history, to assert Serbian national belonging. Thus, these ideas held symbolic power and impelled the state-building process forward. The constitution of RS reaffirmed the idea of RS as a Serb state, referring to it as the State of Serbs (Stjepanović, 2015). Article 1 of the Constitution stated that Republika Srpska[3] was a "territorially unified,

[3] The Constitution of the Republika Srpska was formally approved on the 28th of February 1992. It has been amended several times since to comply with the constitutional agreement of the Dayton Peace Accord and the

indivisible and inalienable constitutional and legal entity that shall independently perform its constitutional, legislative, executive, and judicial functions."

In the narrative of ethno-nationalist Serbs, RS was the supreme territorial identity, its very name demarcating an ethnic-based homeland. To mark the territory, the names of various cities and municipalities falling within its territory were amended by Serb politicians at various levels of governance, during and after the war to demonstrate that these were Serb cities or municipalities. One example is the renaming of a town called Foča in ethnically cleansed South-East part of BiH. After Foča's non-Serb population was forced to flee or were killed, the town was renamed 'Srbinje', which means 'the place of Serbs'. This renaming captures the ehnonationalist idea of the Serb state being built purely along ethnic lines (Mannergren Selimovic, 2011; Toal and Dahlman, 2011). Serb names for cities and municipalities in RS can be seen as a symbolically powerful statement reinforcing the idea of the state of RS. Thus, by utilizing the symbolic power of historical narratives of a selected past, and by naming the territory 'RS', a web of meaning that signifies the space-making process helped build domestic recognition for RS. The idea of RS, however, failed to gain international support.

So, despite its claim for right to self-determination and despite control over a particular territory, RS failed to secure international recognition and was unable to pass the threshold of statehood and until this day it is caught in what can be described as permanent liminality. The DPA legalized and legitimated RS not as a state, but as an entity emplaced on the territory claimed through large-scale ethnic cleansing (Belloni, 2007). Now RS exists as one part of the Dayton-sanctioned state BiH, confirming a de facto spatialization of ethnonationalist state ideas (Toal and Dahlman, 2011), yet without creating an internationally-recognised state of its

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Constitutional Court of Bosnian and Herzegovina.

own. The contemporary discourse in RS is a referenda discourse and the secessionist rhetoric of Milorad Dodik, party leader of the SNSD and a key force in RS politics, who constantly threatens to hold a referendum on independence keeps the idea of a Bosnian-Serb state alive (Toal, 2013; Ker-Lindsay, 2016).

Kosovo/a

In contrast to RS, Kosovo is now widely recognized as a state. Not only did the leaders of the independence movement make claims to a physical territory, but they also kept performing the state in different ways (cf. Jeffrey, 2013). Elsewhere, we have written about the labelling and marking of the urban space of the capital city Pristina (Björkdahl and Kappler, 2017: 56ff). Such efforts of engraving the state in a symbolic landscape aim to give it social legitimacy by repossessing symbols and claiming heritage for political purposes (cf. Björkdahl and Kappler, 2017). In Kosovo, this process was always directed at varied audiences. First, the marking primarily of urban spaces serves as a means to consolidate a distinct Kosovo-Albanian identity in the state – the featuring of sculptures dedicated to Albanian heroes such as Mother Teresa or Skanderbeg is certainly no coincidence (cf. Krasniqi, 2013). Second, this serves to send a message to the Kosovar Serbs, most of whom are located north of the river Ibar, with some smaller communities still scattered across the south, about the nature and control of the 'newborn' state – to which there is even an explicit statue in Pristina. Third, the language of symbolism is directed at an international audience, which had to be able to grant international recognition to Kosovo for its inclusion in a world family of states (cf. Caspersen, 2015). Whilst the Republic of Kosovo is not a member of the United Nations, primarily due to Russia's opposition, it is meanwhile a member of various other international organisations, including the World Bank and the IMF as well as seeking

eventual EU accession. As Jeffrey (2013) suggests, the ways in which states are performed by their managers embeds power relations of both control and resistance and relies on scripting and improvisation alike. For instance, the resourcefulness that Pristina's city planners have shown to reinvent and reframe the state's heritage is an indication of a performative practice vis-à-vis its different audiences. Such processes certainly face resistance, which a glance to the Kosovo-Serb dominated north of Mitrovica shows with its own use of cultural symbolism, memorials and political performance. Clearly, the spatial markers of statehood lend themselves not only to the cementation of power structures, but equally to possibilities of challenging those.

Discussion and Conclusion

What our discussion of the spatial dimension of state-building as well as our two chosen case studies show is that the processes through which states emerge are firmly rooted in both material and symbolic dimensions. State-building is, by its very nature, a spatialising operation. Its ever-changing dynamics can therefore be understood in the transformation of place (territory) into space (symbolism) and vice versa. Every state needs a material presence as much as the necessary performances and symbolic acts that reinforce its legitimacy and existence. Coupled together, these processes serve to generate the recognition that they need, domestically, regionally and globally. Space-making and place-making must therefore not be viewed in isolation, but as two connected processes which emerging states engage in to manifest their existence and identity in material and ideational terms. None works without the other.

In that, state recognition has to be seen as multi-scalar, operating at various levels of society,

government and international community. The importance of the global and the domestic scale, respectively, vary from case to case. Yet, there are always multiple processes of place-making and space-making at work at different scales. They may operate in mutual concordance, or in friction with each other. They might reinforce or oppose each other, and actors striving to build a state – at whichever scale they may be operating – have to work with actors at different scales in order to achieve their goal.

However, this is not to say that once statehood has been achieved, it is a completed process. Spatially and temporally, statehood always has to be performed and reperformed as it is always at risk of being undone or challenged. To this day, Kosovo is seeking universal recognition of its status as much as RS is being denied it by the majority of states.

State-building, in spatial terms, is the recognition of statehood engraved in the physical and ideational landscapes of power and control. As much as it can be granted and promoted, it can be resisted and challenged – by international, regional or local actors. It is only when a group asserts control over both the territory and the symbolism of a state – its place and space – that it stands a chance of being recognised as such at its different scales of existence.

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