

Interdisciplinary Centre for Border Research *Crossing Borders* HU Berlin

TRANSGRESSING BOUNDARIES IN NORTH MACEDONIA
Historical narratives, identity constructs,
and political interventions in times of change



27th of June 2019 (Thursday), 10.00 AM-8.00 PM
Humboldt University of Berlin
Unter den Linden 6
Lichthof Ost (Room 1007), Main Building

The Republic of Macedonia has recently been renamed to the Republic of North Macedonia. Underlying this change was the country's willingness to join the European Union and NATO as a means of achieving economic prosperity, internal and external security, and stability. This development has taken its course but should not to be taken for granted in the post-Yugoslav context in the last decades. After a quarter of a century of resisting the idea of changing its name, a part of the Macedonian society has apparently accepted that this step was a precondition for Euro-Atlantic integration.

Meanwhile, the multi-ethnic Macedonian society has been stretched to its limits along all possible boundaries but managed to survive the ordeal. Central political actors enforced closed communities; by drawing boundaries they aimed to achieve a populist legitimization of their political power. The much discussed and enormously controversial Skopje 2014 project stands, in particular, for these "Invention of Tradition" practices and the demarcation of new ethnonational boundaries. But it was precisely such border-setting practices that challenged society and its border transgressing everyday life. After a period of intensive protests, their legitimacy has been challenged and following the elections at the end of 2016, they finally lost the capacity to control the Parliament and to form a government. The new government promised renewal and acceleration of stalled integrative processes.

In 2017, a bilateral agreement was signed with neighboring Bulgaria. In 2018, another agreement signed with Greece prompted the name change, once again raising concerns and even rage among Macedonian nationalists. Both agreements, the Agreement for Good Neighborly Relations with Bulgaria and the Treaty of Prespa with Greece stipulated the establishment of two separate bilateral commissions that would be charged with examining historical textbooks, establishing a mutual understanding of offensive and provoking content and suggesting more acceptable interpretations of the past in order to ensure relaxed and amiable neighborly relations in the future.

What would be the academic assessment of these divisive processes in the Republic of North Macedonia? And what are the reactions of neighboring Greece and Bulgaria to these new developments? Is there a potential to overcome the ethnonational founded narratives of closed communities that prevail in the media-mediated public sphere? What are the possibilities of engaging in a debate about common yet conflicting pasts that transcend the boundaries of ethnic communities?

PROGRAM

10:00-10:15

Welcoming words

Christian Voss (Humboldt University of Berlin)

10:15-12:15

Transgressing boundaries of narratives between Macedonia and Bulgaria

Miladina Monova (Bulgarian Academy of Science)

Čavdar Marinov (Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv)

Ljupčo Risteski (Ss. Cyril & Methodius University in Skopje)

Petar Todorov (Institute of National History, Skopje)

12:30-14:30 **Lunch break**

14:30-16:30

Transgressing boundaries of narratives between Macedonia and-Greece

Taso Kostopoulos (University of Ioannina)

Athena Skouluraki (University of Crete)

Irena Stefovaska (Institute of National History, Skopje)

Ana Čupeska (Sts Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje)

18:00-20:00

Podium discussion: Communication Unbound?

Perspectives for Northern Macedonia and its neighbors

Key note: Florian Bieber (Universität Graz)

Ambiguous Agreements: Addressing Nationalism through International Diplomacy

Ivaylo Dichev (St. Kliment Ohridski" University of Sofia)

Agata Rogoś (Humboldt University of Berlin)

Artan Sadiku (Solidarnost)

Ioannis Zelepos (LMU München)



**SÜDOSTEUROPA-
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Christian Voss

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