Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities-Skopje

*NATIONAL IDENTITY AS CENTRAL POLITICAL CONCERN:*
*THE CASE OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AND ITS COMPETING MYTHS OF ORIGIN*

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

17-18 January 2014, Kulturno-informativen centar (KIC) Skopje

### The main idea behind the conference

In the last two decades, the region of Southeast Europe – not only the Western Balkans – has been marked by a politics based on the pronounced primacy of the issue of national identity over other socio-political questions. National identity as an issue per se entails material cultural and academic processes aiming at the construction and fixing of an idea and a sense of a collective. These processes work through the means of recognition, legitimization and symbolic production that maintains, enriches and perpetuates the representation of the national self.  Artistic production, academic re-creation of the national truth and re-production of the cultural symbolic (essentially patriarchal) in the fields of humanities are at work in the institutions of the state, in public and private universities and media. Ample evidence in terms of material culture and recorded public discourse corroborates our claim that the question of national identity determines the course of politics, nationally and internationally, in Macedonia but also in neighboring Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Kosovo. This implies that the issue of political integration of the entire region of SEE, including Western Balkans, is not one which can be dealt with through political means *senso strictu* or technocratically. It is a process which requires complex understanding and study of critical cultural and cross-disciplinary analytical approach which entails cultural-esthetical critique and the inclusion of gender perspective aiming at policy solutions which address the complex reality at stake. Another issue that needs to be addressed is the fact that the unambiguous interpellation to fidelity to the national collective unity to which both the political right and left respond in an almost identical way paralyses any productive political debate on all other social-political themes. Avoiding the label of a traitor in a country that feels threatened by negation of its very self becomes the political imperative which conditions the way in which all other issues are addressed. In Macedonia, the esthetical-cultural project "*Skopje 2014*" overshadows all other themes in Macedonian political debate; in Greece,  the "Macedonian question" was the only one which could bring Syriza close to the positions of the political center (both left and right) as it unities opposed political forces in Bulgaria. The Kosovo question is still central to the Serbian political discourse in spite of the fact that Republic of Kosovo has functioned as an independent country since 2008. And these are just a few among many examples in the region of post-Yugoslavia and its neighbors...

### Organizing Committee
**Katerina Kolozova,** Professor/Senior Research of ISSHS
**Artan Sadiku**, Junior Researcher/Program Director of ISSHS
**Maja Muhic,** Assistant Professor/ Researcher of ISSHS
**Jordan Shishovski,** Assistant Professor/ Researcher of ISSHS
**Dona Kolar-Panov,** Professor/Senior Researcher of ISSHS
**Igor Jovanoski,** Assistant Professor/ Researcher of ISSHS

**Day 1** (January 17th, Friday)

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| 10:00 – 10:15 | **Welcome address** |
| | **Katerina Kolozova**, Director of Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities (ISSHS), Skopje |

**First Session**

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| 10:15 – 11:15 | **Key Note Speaker** |
| | **Svetlana Slapsak** |
| | *Nationalism as a problem for epistemology, ethics and policy-making* |
| 11:15 – 11:45 | **Respondent** |
| | **Bozidar Slapsak,** University of Ljubljana |
| 11:45 – 12:15 | **Q&A** |
| 12:15 – 13:00 | **Lunch Break** |

**Second Session**

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| 13:00 – 14:30 | **Panel Discussion** |
| | *Nation-Building and Ethnocentrism in Former Yugoslavia: Discussion Around A Case Study of 'Skopje 2014 Project"* |
| | **Bozidar Slapsak,** University of Ljubljana |
| | **Svetlana Slapsak**, ISH - Ljubljana |
| | **Richard Seymour,** LSE - London, UK |
| | **Katerina Kolozova**, ISSHS, Macedonia |
| | **Moderator: Artan Sadiku**, ISSHS, Macedonia |
| 14:30 – 16:00 | **Snacks and Coffee Break** |

**Third Session**

16:30 – 17:00          **Richard Seymour,** London School of Economics (LSE), London UK

                       *Nationalist Interpellations Under Neoliberalism*

 17:00 – 17:30          **Respondent**
                       **Akis Gavrilidis**, Social Laboratory/Makedonia University, Thessaloniki

                       *The petrification of culture: Greece, Europe and the(ir) colonial encounter*

17:30 – 18:00          **Q&A**

19:30  --              **Dinner for conference participants**

**Day 2** (January 18th, Saturday)

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**First Session**

10:00 – 11:00          **Key Note Speaker**
                       **Florian Bieber**, University of Graz, Austria

                       *Tourism, Nation-branding and new self-definitions of state and nation in Souhteastern Europe.*

11:00 – 11:30          **Respondent**
                       **Artan Sadiku**, ISSHS, Macedonia

11:30 – 11:45          **Coffee Break**

11:45 - 12:30          **Plenary Discussion**

12:30 – 14:00          **Lunch Break**

14:00 – 16:30          **Panel Discussion**

*Models of Modern Cultural and Esthetical Heritage as Alternative to "Skopje 2014": Possibilities of Re-Appropriation of the Urban Culture of Socialist Yugoslavia for the 21st Century*

**Neda Korunovska**, Reactor – Skopje, Macedonia

**Artan Sadiku**, ISSHS, Macedonia

**Florian Bieber,** University of Graz, Austria

**Moderator**: **Goran Buldioski**, TTF

16:30 – 17:00          **Snacks and Coffee Break**

**Third Session**

17:00 – 19:30          **Panel Discussion**

*The Effects of Skopje 2014 on the Intra–Regional Foreign Policies: Countering Challenges through Policy Mechanisms Conceived Beyond the Discourses of National History*

**Igor Jovanoski,**  ISSHS, Macedonia

**Akis Gavriilidis**, Social Laboratory/Makedonia University in Thessaloniki, Greece

**Goran Janev**, ISPPI-University of Skopje, Macedonia

**Moderator**: **Jordan Shishovski**, ISSHS, Macedonia

**Closing Remarks**

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