

Stefan D. Todorović[‡]

PhD student, Faculty of Philology and Arts,
University of Kragujevac
Serbia

Nina Ž. Manojlović[·]

Faculty of Philology and Arts, University of Kragujevac
Serbia

**THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDENT FORUM
DAYS OF FREE THOUGHT IN SREMSKI KARLOVCI**

Prikaz
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Days of free thought in Sremski Karlovci (Karlovački dani slobodne misli) is the first international interdisciplinary student forum, organized with the aim to promote science, culture and art, through various interrelated content (congress, public lectures, exhibitions, film festival, etc.). First *Days of free thought* is a part of the main project of the *Center for the affirmation of free thought (Centar za afirmaciju slobodne misli – CEZASM)*¹ from Sremski Karlovci, headed by Andrea Ratkovic, the main conceptual designer and the president of the Organizing and Scientific Committee. CEZASM engages in the conceptualization and realization of projects having in focusing on reflection on the current socio-cultural phenomena and promotion and popularization of the culture of free thinking and creativity among young people. All this includes motivating young people to contribute to establishing a society that will be free from prejudice and stereotypes and other forms of thought through which the other, being different and/or insufficiently familiar, tends to be marginalized. The promoters of this view are committed to the implementation of projects whose purpose is: respecting democracy and its values, promoting of the culture of dialogue, raising awareness of the necessity of personal, collective and mutual responsibility for establishing quality human relationships, respecting fundamental human rights and freedoms, etc. Within this forum usually the following

[·] Faculty of Philology and Arts, Jovana Cvijića bb, 3400 Kragujevac, Serbia; e-mail: stodorovic@rocketmail.com.

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[·] Faculty of Philology and Arts, Jovana Cvijića bb, 3400 Kragujevac, Serbia; e-mail: manojlovic.nina@gmail.com.

¹ Web: <http://cezasm.wix.com/cezasm>; e-mail: afirmacijamisli@gmail.com.

activities are planned: 1. student conference, 2. cycle of invited lectures and open panel discussions with eminent experts and 3. student multimedia workshops focusing on open promotion of democratic values, equal human rights and freedom, interculturality etc.

The fact that CEZASM has received the support from the Municipality of Sremski Karlovci and the Provincial Secretariat for Culture and Public Information, as well as the other institutions (such as the Institute for Culture of Vojvodina, the Tourist Organization of Serbia and the City Museum of Novi Sad), testifies about the value and importance of this ambitious and complex project.

Days of free thought in Sremski Karlovci held from 5th to 7th of June in Karlovci, and as a the target group of the conference were students at all academic levels (bachelor, master and PhD studies) of all social and humanistic studies. Given that the main objective was the developing intercultural and interdisciplinary exchange of opinions, this year's conference included a dozen exhibitors and presenters from Serbia (Novi Sad, Belgrade, Kragujevac and Nis), Croatia (Zagreb) and England (London), with the papers from the different aspects of view (variety of social and humanistic orientations, such as: philosophy, sociology, psychology, linguistics, literature studies, art and film theory, art history, anthropology, etc.). The conference consisted of four main parts: 1) the cycle of invited lectures by eminent experts from the country and the region, 2) student congress on the theme *Social (de)constructions of identity (Socijalne (de)konstrukcije identiteta)*, 3) Student collective exhibition *Identities of Vojvodina (Identiteti Vojvodine)* and 4) the festival of short TV forms of *Mass Media (re)interpretations of identity (Medijske reinterpretacije identiteta)*.

At the opening ceremony the participants and guests were welcomed by the organizers and representatives of the Municipality of Sremski Karlovci, followed by the first plenary presentation. All conference participants and guests attended the cycle of invited lectures and open panel discussions with eminent experts. Prof. Dr. Lino Veljak (Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, Croatia) in his work entitled *Why is every genuine thought free? (Zašto je svaka prava misao slobodna?)* divides opinions into two types: critical thinking and opinions that does not exist, but is replaced by prejudice and dogmas. The latter type is seen as an illusion of thinking and a slave of dogma. The author claims that our opinion should be free if we want to have any kind of real opinion. Therefore, the result of opinion is a thought that is free from the bondage of authorities, free from prejudice, dogma, lies and deception. Dr. Enis

Zebić (Radio Free Europe, Zagreb, Croatia) in his presentation *Why (not) to give up on parliamentary democracy? (Zašto (ne)odustati od parlamentarne demokracije?)* highlights the fact that in transitive societies citizens are torn between idealized memories of a failed totalitarian structures and the reality in which liberal democracy is not recognized as satisfactory and successful model of political life. Therefore, the author does not see a global revolutionary change, declaring certain particular initiatives as "wishful thinking". The author asks whether liberal democracy in transitive societies can become a satisfying and successful model of political life, answering that it is probably possible, which raises the question of where to begin with progress towards its success. Finally, doc. Dr. Slobodan Sadžakov (Faculty of Education in Sombor, Serbia) in his presentation *Egoism and altruism in the context of the formation of modern identities (Egoizam i altruizam u kontekstu formiranja modernih identiteta)* examines the phenomenon of egoism and altruism: egoism regarding the concepts of human nature, individuality, interest, narcissism and moral, and altruism in connection with form and importance within the modern sociability (philanthropy, solidarity, altruism manipulation, etc.).

Within the congress *Social (de)constructions of identity* young scientists presented the results of their research, moving through several sub-themes of the Congress: the identification of identity, the role of media in promoting social identity, interculturalism, identity in the context of artistic creation, generating of mass identity in the era of popular culture, religion and social identities, etc. Through productive discussion participants contributed to the perception of the phenomenon of identity from a wide range of different scientific disciplines (critical discourse analysis, functional stylistics, history of arts, poststructuralist literature theory, speech acts theory, media studies, intercultural studies, philosophy of language, etc.), and thus better understanding of it.

Festival of short TV forms titled *Mass Media (re)interpretation of identity* has been designed with a focus on nurturing, promotion and popularization of audiovisual creativity, and its role in the affirmation of intercultural dialogue. In this regard, as part of this year's festival works of Samira Oulaillah were shown. She is a Frenchwoman of Moroccan origin, who is currently living, working and studying in the UK, and in the last ten years has been traveling around the world to record human life stories in engaged photos and documentaries. Stressing the social, political and cultural aspects of societies and tribes with whose representatives she has met during her travels, through her work Samira strives to lead as many people as she

can on an exciting journey around the world and present to them the distant and insufficiently known communities and areas they inhabit. Samira's documentaries about identities of Peru, Mali, Ecuador, Ukraine and Palestine were united under the name of *The Spirits of the World*, including the following films: *The Spirits of the Peruvian Amazon*, *Meeting the People of Mali*, *On the Roads of Ecuador*, *The Voices of Ukraine* and *Forever Palestine*. After the presentation of these films all participants had the opportunity to ask questions and, in a lively discussion with Samira, once more talk about the mass media reinterpretation of identity in modern societies. After this session, elected opus of Samira's engaged photos (called *Womenhood*) was exhibited so all participants could see the photos, incurred during the filming of the documentaries.

The exhibition entitled *The identities of Vojvodina*, which was set up on the first day in the pedestrian zone of Sremski Karlovci, consisted of exhibited photos of Philip Rađenović, a student of graphic design at the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad. Photographic opus presents a review of the identities of Vojvodina that are considered as being "alternative" and therefore, in their visual reflecting, different from the usual presentation of identity. This exhibition offered an unconventional visual identity of Vojvodina, which testifies that beauty lies not only in the past and tradition, but also in constant progress and changes as well. Artistic intention of the photos exhibited is the creation of visual unity of a number of different concepts based on aesthetics of personal appearance. Personal appearance stems from the experience and experiencing themselves and the world, social order and the dominant system of values.

Having in mind all the above, it seems obvious that most of the content of this conference corresponds to the most current directions and results in the humanities and social sciences as well as art, specifically how research endeavors are complementary with modern theoretical and methodological postulates of scientific and artistic thought. From the perspective of young scientists, we believe that the release of proceedings will be certainly welcomed by a good part of the scientific public that deals with interdisciplinary research. Although in its beginning, the conference proved to be very successful and attractive to young researchers. However, we need to highlight interdisciplinarity and interculturality, which can certainly be regarded as the key words of this conference. Finally, we need to underline the fact that this is a serious project and a conference with a promising future: as a matter of fact the next interdisciplinary forum is being planned with a

new theme *Perception of the other as different*, and will involve interdisciplinary research of marginalized groups and systems, study of intercultural dialogue, gender equality etc., focusing on a variety of theoretical and empirical research (philology, media studies, cultural studies, language teaching methodology, philosophy, sociology, art, political science, etc.). The second conference is supposed to be realized in June 2016, by the *Center for the affirmation of free thought* as well.