

Paper abstract for the conference:

Resourceful cities

Berlin (Germany), 29-31 August 2013

Humboldt-University Berlin, Institute for Social Science, Dept. for Urban and Regional Sociology

Name of the participant:

Ana Aceska, PhD

Department for Urban and Regional Sociology, Humboldt University, Berlin

E-mail: aaceska@gmail.com

Session to which it is submitted:

No. 4: Boundaries and (B)orders – Theorizing the City through its Confinements and Connections

Title:

“We” and “They” on the Promenade: Borders and Boundaries in a Divided City

Abstract:

The boundary-works or the construction of various “we/they” divides among city dwellers exercise forms of exclusion and inclusion in the city. This is very peculiar in ethnically divided cities. In these cities the border in the middle of the city marks the territory where “we” ends and “they” begins for the city dwellers in a very concrete and explicit form. However, this kind of linear view on the divided city must be put to question: the practices of bordering and boundary-work between the two ethnic groups in these cities are not always as visible. They can be imaginary, they may take forms of meanings attached to space, or they can be practices in space that are not always happening at the actual border.

In this paper I look at the practices of “taking walks along the promenades” in an ethnically divided city to understand how boundary-work is constructed in such a context. Here I advocate a view on the city that is not only determined by larger social or economic structures, but is organized by particular spatial practices of the city dwellers, like Michel deCerteau and Kevin Lynch argued. The question here is: how does the practice of “taking walks along the promenade” provide the people with a sense of distinct or common ethnic identities in an ethnically divided city?

I look at the divided city of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mostar has been divided since the Bosnian wars (1992-95) on a Croat/Catholic and Bosniac/Muslim side of the city. In this paper I look at the narratives of the city dwellers about the practices on the Fejicheva promenade, the largest and most-visited promenade on the Bosniac-dominated side of the city. The focus is on the

relationship between the post-war formation of ethnic identities and boundary-work on one side, and the practices linked to the promenade on the other. In this paper I, thus, explore the role of the practice of "taking walks along the promenade", in the construction of "us" and "them", "this side" and "the other side", and "being Bosniac" and "being Croat" in the divided city.