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SPECIAL ISSUE:

**BORDERS AND BORDER ZONES: DIFFERENCES
AND EQUALITIES**

Veliko Tarnovo, 30 May – 1 June, 2014

Guest Editor: Prof. Dr. Margarita Karamihova

St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria

In May 2014, an international conference entitled “Borders and Border Zones: Differences and Equalities” was held at The University of Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius, Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria. The purpose of the conference was to explore historical, political, economic, social and personal impact of various types of borders, physical and conceptual, in southeast Europe. The conference was a part of larger research project, “National Boundaries,” [„Националните граници“] supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria during 2013-2014. At the conference, participants from three countries: Bulgaria, Russia, and Serbia examined the topic of borders from an interdisciplinary perspective.

From the end of twentieth century through the opening decades of the twenty-first, one of the central topics in the fields of Ethnology and Anthropology has been the study of the borders. Impressive publications treating the study of national borders now appear worldwide, most particularly in the USA and Western Europe. The academic network EastBordNet (COST Action IS0803) led by Professor Sarah Green,¹⁾ has made a major contribution to the field and also has served as the initial inspiration for development of border

studies in Bulgaria. Worldwide, studies concerning different types of ethnic, religious, social and methodological borders and boundaries are also underway.

The ongoing examination of borders throws light on new problems in the fields of anthropology and history. Their complex character calls for interdisciplinary approaches which apply diverse theories, rather than the search for a single overriding one. Bringing historians, ethnologists, linguists and experts in the fine arts at our conference was, therefore, a most fruitful way to examine issues of borders in the plethora of subjects including: national boundaries and border zones, state policies during the communist period and the impact thereof, ethnic and religious borders in post-socialist societies, migrations and mobility etc. The conference also provided a forum for the examination of relevant methodological issues in the fields of history and sociology as well as the concepts of the construction and performance of identities.

We were very pleased by the active participation in the conference of a number of doctoral students from Veliko Tarnovo University. For them the conference was of a special importance. It provided them with their first opportunity to attend an international conference and be published on English. Such platforms for their voices to be heard are of a crucial importance to their further development.

NOTES

1. <http://www.eastbordnet.org/>

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