ASSESSMENT REPORT

by Assoc. Prof. Rumen Aleksandrov, PhD, Architect, Department of Residential Buildings, Faculty of Architecture, University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy

on the doctoral thesis submitted by

SEYID MUHAMMED MARUF ZORTUL

"EFFECTS OF URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS ON THE PERCEPTION OF SAFETY"

submitted for the award of the educational and academic degree "Doctor" in professional field 5.7. Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, doctoral programme "Spatial and Landscape Planning and Urban Development"

Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"

Academic supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Plamen Petrov, PhD, Architect

Basis: Order No. 601 of 29 September 2026 issued by the Rector of Varna Free University and Minutes No. 1 of the Scientific Jury meeting held on 9 October 2026.

1. Brief biographical information

Born in 1994, the candidate graduated in Civil Engineering from Beykent University in 2017 and completed a master's degree in Design and Construction Management in 2020. He has been a doctoral student at Varna Free University since 2023. His professional experience includes the delivery of residential, public and mixed-use developments.

2. General description of the submitted materials

This opinion is based on the materials submitted by the candidate: the dissertation, the dissertation abstract, a curriculum vitae and four co-authored publications, comprising two articles in journals included in the Bulgarian national

reference list and two papers presented at international conferences. These meet the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria and its Implementing Regulations. The abstract reflects the main results but needs to be reconciled with the dissertation regarding the number of illustrations and the expanded list of contributions.

3. General assessment of the dissertation

The topic is relevant to contemporary urban planning: the renewal of the built environment simultaneously changes physical safety, social relations and the sense of belonging. Fikirtepe in Istanbul is an illustrative case of the tension between the need for seismic resilience, investment pressure and preservation of the local community.

The research object and subject are clearly distinguished, while the aim focuses on the relationship between urban transformation and perceived safety. The five chapters successively present the research framework, theoretical context, methodology, empirical analyses and conclusions. The literature review connects the Turkish experience with international studies of urban renewal, spatial segregation and place attachment.

The empirical basis consists of a survey of 131 voluntary participants using three five-point scales concerning Fikirtepe, Kadıköy and the anticipated transformation. Descriptive statistics, comparative, correlation and categorical analyses are applied.

A principal finding is the marked discrepancy between the low assessment of the existing environment and the high expectations for renewal. The data point to the importance of seismic risk, infrastructure and social services in shaping public support. These are respondents' assessments and expectations, not a measured change in objective safety following completion of the project.

4. Contributions and significance of the dissertation

I recognise three groups of contributions:

1. *Empirical contribution* — collection and systematisation of data on assessments of safety and the environment in Fikirtepe and Kadıköy, and on expectations regarding the transformation. Knowledge of this particular case is enriched, without establishing a universally applicable pattern.

2. *Methodological contribution* — application of a comparative framework involving three assessments by the same respondents. Its value lies in the organisation and application of the approach rather than the development of a new statistical method.

3. *Applied scientific contribution* — identification of grounds for incorporating residents' perceptions into the social assessment and monitoring of urban renewal. Neither implementation nor a realised economic impact has been demonstrated.

5. Comments and recommendations

I do not know the candidate personally. The submitted materials demonstrate an interest in the human dimension of urban transformations and connect professional experience with research questions.

The voluntary sample and single-round survey limit representativeness and do not permit causal conclusions. I recommend clearly specifying the fieldwork period, the sampling method and the participants' status in relation to the renewal process, as well as following up on expectations after implementation.

The statistical results requires verification. The statement in Section 3.4 that all compared subgroups comprise more than 30 people is inconsistent with Table 1. Tables 4 and 7 contain discrepancies between group means, standard deviations, t-values and p-values. I recommend checking these against the primary data and original statistical outputs, clarifying the assumptions underlying the tests and revising the conclusions accordingly.

These comments limit the certainty of some statistical interpretations but do not invalidate the descriptive findings or the practical value of the comparative approach.

The dissertation abstract conveys the main results but contains an internal inconsistency: it initially reports 24 figures and 24 tables, and later 33 and 25, respectively. The final lists of contributions also differ: five in the abstract and three in the dissertation. Substantive and editorial consistency is needed.

I recommend correcting the statistical tables and limiting causal generalisations.

6. Originality and final assessment

During my substantive review, I found no obvious indications of improper appropriation of others' texts or results. The dissertation includes citations, a bibliography and a declaration of originality. My assessment is limited to the scope of this review. My comments primarily concern the evidential strength of certain interpretations and do not negate the empirical and applied scientific results.

In conclusion, I give a POSITIVE ASSESSMENT and recommend that the Scientific Jury award Seyid Muhammed Maruf Zortul the educational and academic degree "Doctor" in professional field 5.7. Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, doctoral programme "Spatial and Landscape Planning and Urban Development".

2 November 2026

Signature: .....

Assoc. Prof. Rumen Aleksandrov, PhD, Architect