ASSESSMENT REPORT

by

Assoc. Prof. Dr Arch. Evgenia Dimova-Aleksandrova
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on

a doctoral thesis submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD), in professional field 5.7 Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, doctoral programme "Spatial and Landscape Planning and Urban Development"

entitled: "EFFECTS OF URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS ON PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY"

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This assessment report has been prepared pursuant to Order No. 601 of 29 September 2026 issued by the Rector of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar", and Minutes No. 1 of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on 9 October 2026.

1. BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Seyid Muhammed Maruf Zortul was born in 1994. He obtained a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Beykent University, Istanbul, in 2017, followed by a master's degree in Design and Construction Management in 2020. He has been a

doctoral candidate at Varna Free University since 2023. He has experience in managing and delivering residential, public and mixed-use developments in Turkey.

2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBMITTED MATERIALS

The candidate has submitted all documents required for the procedure under the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria and its implementing regulations: a doctoral thesis, an abstract of the thesis, a curriculum vitae and four co-authored publications, comprising two articles in journals included in the national reference list and two papers presented at international conferences and published in the respective proceedings.

The thesis abstract presents the principal findings but contains an internal discrepancy: it initially refers to 24 figures and 24 tables, whereas later it gives 33 and 25 respectively. The final lists of contributions also differ: five in the abstract and three in the thesis. Substantive and editorial consistency is required.

The publications also address the subject of the doctoral thesis and, although co-authored, their number meets the minimum national requirements for the award of the doctoral degree.

The thesis comprises 162 pages of main text, including a bibliography of 134 English- and Turkish-language sources, 25 tables and 33 figures.

3. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

I consider the relevance of the topic beyond dispute in the context of seismic risk and the social consequences of urban regeneration. The research object, subject, aim, objectives and methods are logically connected but require more precise alignment with the capabilities of the empirical approach.

The thesis presents conclusions whose evidential support varies: the descriptive findings are more convincing than the causal interpretations. The conclusion brings together the findings, the assessment of the hypotheses, and recommendations for practice and future research, but some generalisations go beyond the available evidence. A clearer distinction is needed between established relationships and proposed explanations.

4. CONTRIBUTIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

I regard the contributions as extending existing knowledge and adapting established tools for practical application, rather than establishing a new general theory or a universally validated method:

1. Empirical contribution. A dataset of survey-based assessments of the existing environment and the anticipated transformation has been compiled. Differences associated with income, age and length of residence demonstrate the social diversity of attitudes in the case examined.

2. Analytical contribution. The distinction between overall safety, perceived seismic resilience and the adequacy of infrastructure shows that these dimensions are not assessed uniformly. This finding adds to knowledge of the relationship between the quality of the residential environment and social circumstances.

3. Methodological contribution. A comparative model has been applied using the same respondents to assess the neighbourhood, the wider district and the proposed future intervention. It has potential for further use once the common indicators have been refined and their measurement equivalence verified.

4. Scientific and practical significance. The grounds for resident participation, accessible safety information, and monitoring of social impacts have been outlined as well-reasoned planning guidelines.

5. PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS, COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I do not know Arch. Seyid Muhammed Maruf Zortul personally and therefore have no personal impressions of him. However, the submitted materials demonstrate an understanding of the context and an ability to undertake empirical research. My principal comments are as follows:

First, the voluntary sample limits representativeness. The survey period and recruitment procedure should be clearly described, and distinctions made between residents who remained, new arrivals and those who were displaced. Expectations should not be equated with achieved safety.

Second, claims concerning the "manufacture of consent", the severing of emotional attachment to place and proven segregation are more categorical than the empirical evidence warrants. The absence of a statistically significant relationship does not demonstrate the absence of attachment. Direct indicators, qualitative interviews and longitudinal follow-up are needed.

Third, "urban fatigue" and social stratification are useful lines of interpretation, but I do not accept them as independently substantiated new theoretical propositions.

My substantive review found no obvious indications of plagiarism. References and a declaration of originality are provided.

6. CONCLUSION

The thesis addresses a significant urban-planning problem, presents empirical findings and makes contributions of scientific and practical relevance. The author demonstrates the ability to analyse, synthesise and summarise, and to identify and formulate problems, approaches and methods for achieving research objectives. Notwithstanding the comments above, in my capacity as a member of the Scientific Jury, I give the submitted thesis a POSITIVE ASSESSMENT and recommend that Arch. Seyid Muhammed Maruf Zortul be awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD) in professional field 5.7 Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, doctoral programme "Spatial and Landscape Planning and Urban Development".

2 November 2026



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Assoc. Prof. Dr Arch. Evgenia Dimitrova Dimova-Aleksandrova