OPINION

by Prof. DSc Arch. Aleksandar Dimitrov Slaev

member of the Scientific Jury in a procedure for awarding

the educational-and-scientific degree Ph.D.

Regarding: a dissertation entitled **"The Effect of the Urban Transformation on the Perception of Security"**

Author: Seyyid Muhammed Maruf Zortul

Area of Higher Education: 5. Technical Sciences

Professional Field: 5.7. Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy

Doctoral Program / Scientific Discipline: "Territorial, landscape and urban planning"

Academic Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Arch. Plamen Petrov

Grounds for submitting the opinion: Order No. 601 / 29.09.2026 of the Rector of Chernorizets Hrabar Varna Free University (VFU) on determining the composition of the Scientific Jury, pursuant to Art. 4, para. 2 of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Regulations for the Implementation of the DASRBA, and Ordinance No. 12 on Acquiring the Educational-and-Scientific Degree "Doctor" (Ph.D.) and the Scientific Degree "Doctor of Sciences" at Chernorizets Hrabar Varna Free University.

I. General Description of the Submitted Materials and the Doctoral Candidate

The submitted set of procedural documents complies with the requirements of the DASRBA, the Regulations for its Implementation, and Ordinance No. 12 of Chernorizets Hrabar Varna Free University. The doctoral candidate Seyyid Muhammed Maruf Zortul has developed a dissertation addressing the urban planning and socio-spatial aspects of large-scale urban renewal processes in the contemporary metropolis.

II. Relevance and Significance of the Research Problem

The topic of the dissertation is relevant and socially significant. Under conditions of accelerated urbanization and high seismic risk — as is the case in Istanbul and

specifically in the studied Fikirtepe neighborhood — urban transformation processes substantially alter the physical and social environment. While existing academic literature focuses primarily on the macroeconomic, legal, and investment parameters of these interventions, the question of how the residents themselves perceive their security remains insufficiently studied. In this sense, the dissertation fills a specific gap in the research field by directing attention to the micro-level of individual and group evaluations.

III. General Characteristics, Structure, and Methodology of the Dissertation

The dissertation has a total volume of 158 pages, including the main text, a list of references, and 4 appendices. The presentation is illustrated with 24 tables and 24 figures, and the bibliography comprises 124 literary and normative sources, demonstrating a good command of the specialized literature on the problem.

The structure is logically constructed and consists of five chapters:

- **Chapter 1 (Introduction)** defines the research problem, object, subject, objectives, tasks, and working hypotheses of the study.
- **Chapter 2 (Theoretical Framework and Literature Review)** traces the conceptual foundations of urbanization and urban transformation, the historical development of these processes in Turkiye (from the Ottoman period to contemporary regulations after 2002), and the specifics of the Fikirtepe case across five main dimensions (physical, environmental, social, economic, and legal/administrative).
- **Chapter 3 (Research Methodology)** presents the empirical design. A quantitative correlational approach was employed via a face-to-face field survey among 131 adult residents. Three five-point Likert-type scales with high internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha above 0.90) were applied, evaluating Fikirtepe, the surrounding Kadikoy district, and the projected transformation, respectively. The statistical processing is appropriately aligned with the ordinal nature and distribution of the data, applying adequate non-parametric and parametric tests (the Friedman test with Dunn’s post-hoc multiple comparisons test, Chi-square analysis, Spearman’s rank correlation, t-test, and ANOVA).
- **Chapter 4 (Empirical Study and Data Analysis)** contains the statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. The findings outline a clear discrepancy between the low rating of the current neighborhood (2.88) and the high expectations toward the transformation project (4.19), with seismic risk emerging as the primary factor legitimizing the intervention.

- **Chapter 5 (Conclusions and Recommendations)** systematizes the main results, presents the resolutions on the individual sub-hypotheses, and formulates recommendations for urban planning practice and future research.

The objective and specific tasks set out in the introduction can be considered fulfilled.

IV. Evaluation of the Scientific and Applied Contributions

The following more substantial scientific and applied contributions stand out in the submitted work, which I accept:

- **Methodological contribution:** A comparative three-scale model for evaluating the urban environment (the current neighborhood, the wider district, and the projected transformation) was developed and applied with the same respondents, allowing the perception gap between the current state and expectations to be measured directly.
- **Differentiation of the urban security concept:** It is empirically demonstrated that the individual layers of security do not change uniformly — while expectations of general security are equalized across different income groups, perceptions of earthquake resilience and social services remain socially stratified.
- **Identification of the "urban fatigue" phenomenon:** The study introduces a correction to traditional understandings of place attachment by establishing that chronic infrastructural deficits sever the emotional bond of long-term residents with the neighborhood and generate pragmatic consent for radical intervention.
- **Applied contribution:** The established correlation between income and confidence in seismic safety points to concrete failures in the social communication of urban renewal projects and offers guidelines for better planning and public information.

V. Assessment of the Publications and Personal Contribution of the Doctoral Candidate

On the topic of the dissertation, the doctoral candidate has presented a total of 5 scientific publications (including co-authored with the academic advisor) — 3 papers presented at international scientific conferences in Bulgaria and Turkiye (2023–2024), and 2 articles published in peer-reviewed scientific journals: *Engineering Sciences*, Journal of the

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (2024), and the *E-Journal of Varna Free University* (2026).

The publications reflect essential parts of the dissertation and meet the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, paras. 2 and 3 of the DASRBA and the Regulations for its Implementation for acquiring the educational-and-scientific degree Ph.D.

Based on the submitted materials, a well-founded conclusion can be drawn that the dissertation and the obtained results are the personal work of the doctoral candidate. I have no evidence or doubts regarding the presence of plagiarism.

VI. Evaluation of the Author's Abstract

The author's abstract has been prepared in accordance with normative requirements and reflects accurately, faithfully, and in the necessary proportion the structure, methodology, empirical findings, and scientific contributions of the dissertation.

VII. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

Without diminishing the achievements of the dissertation, I would offer the following remarks and recommendations:

- The voluntary nature of the sample (131 participants) and the small number of respondents in the highest income bracket (only 3 individuals) limit the possibility of statistically generalizing the conclusions to the entire district, which should be accounted for with greater caution when formulating certain generalizations.
- Since the survey was conducted while construction was in progress, it measures expectations toward the future environment rather than an actual lived experience of the completed project. It is recommended that in his future research work, the author conduct a follow-up (longitudinal) study after the full commissioning of the facilities in order to verify the extent to which these expectations have been met.

The remarks made are of a recommendatory nature and do not alter my overall positive assessment of the work.

VIII. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, I consider that the submitted dissertation possesses the necessary scientific and applied qualities and meets the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Regulations for the Implementation of the DASRBA, and Ordinance No. 12 of Chernorizets Hrabar Varna Free University for acquiring the educational-and-scientific degree Ph.D.

The doctoral candidate demonstrates in-depth theoretical knowledge in the field of urban planning and the ability to conduct independent scientific research.

Therefore, I give a **positive evaluation** to the dissertation entitled *"The Effect of the Urban Transformation on the Perception of Security"* and propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award **Seyyid Muhammed Maruf Zortul** the educational-and-scientific degree **Ph.D.** in Area of Higher Education 5. Technical Sciences, Professional Field 5.7. Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, scientific discipline "Territorial, landscape and urban planning".

Date: November 11, 2026

City: Varna **Prepared by:**

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(Prof. DSc Arch. Aleksandar D. Slaev)