

## REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Nikolina R. Popova International Higher Business School - Botevgrad

dissertation of Emil Borisov Petrov,  
PhD student in self-study at the Department of Geography of Tourism, GGF-SU SV. „K.  
Ohridski ” on the topic:

### „TRANSPORT ACCESS MANAGEMENT TO TOURIST SITES IN THE CENTRAL CITY PART OF SOFIA"

for awarding ONS "Doctor" in the scientific specialty Geography of recreation and tourism,  
professional field 4.4. Earth Sciences

The review has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law for the  
Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (RASRB), the Regulations for its  
implementation (PPZRASRB) and the Internal Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff  
in Sofia University “St. K. Ohridski ”

The review was assigned by order № RD38-340 from 27.07.2020 to the Rector of Sofia  
University “St. K. Ohridski ” on the grounds of Art. 4 of ZRASRB and decision of the Faculty of  
Geology-Geography-Faculty / Protocol №8 / 14.07.2020

#### **I. Candidate data in accordance with legal requirements**

The candidate for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" Emil Borisov Petrov was born  
on 05.08.1975. He received his higher education - Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in  
Geography (1998) at the State University of Sofia. In 2011 he received a Master's degree in IT at  
the University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy, Sofia, and in 2016 he became a Master  
of Intelligent Transport Systems at the University of National and World Economy. The  
professional experience of the candidate Emil Borisov Petrov, from 1997 until now, is related to  
the activity of System Administrator at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski ”, in the National  
Center for Territorial Development EAD - Sofia and in the Travel Agency "Bohemia" EOOD; IT

Manager at the Center for Urban Mobility EAD, Parking and Mobility Directorate and Director of the Information and Communication Services Directorate at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

It should be noted that the professional experience is directly related to the topic of the dissertation.

## **II. Relevance of the topic and general characteristics of the dissertation**

The presented dissertation consists of 255 pages of standard printed text, including 82 figures, 18 tables and a list of 208 sources, of which 101 in Cyrillic, 101 - in Latin, 6 Internet sources. The dissertation also contains 41 appendices, with which the total volume is 303 pages. It consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion.

The topic of the dissertation is extremely relevant, both in research and in practice. Recent years have marked a sharp jump in tourist visits to the capital city, due to which the topic of tourism development in Sofia arouses research interest, but also urgently sets a number of tasks to be solved, among which the condition of the transport and tourist infrastructure stands out to ensure easy and fast accessibility to the tourist sites in the city and increase its attractiveness for both Bulgarian and foreign tourists.

The goal is clearly and precisely defined. On the one hand, it justifies the main theoretical emphasis on the tourism system and its connection with the destination transport system, on the other hand, emphasizes the practical relevance of the topic, related to the development of a concept for better management of transport accessibility to tourist sites in the central part of Sofia.

The object and the subject are functionally connected with the goal. The object is precisely formulated, but the subject is insufficiently generalized- transport accessibility, defined as a subject, is complemented by the need to study pedestrian accessibility.

To achieve this goal, scientific tasks are set, covering the thematic content. Task № 2 is not research in nature.

The research question (thesis) and the hypothesis are formulated clearly and precisely.

The work contains all the necessary structural elements in accordance with its specifics.

## **II. Methodology and research methodology and connection with the set goals and objectives of the dissertation**

The methodological framework is adequately and precisely developed in relation to the research tasks and presupposes their implementation. The research procedure is described in the necessary detail, incl. the methodological tools used, the variables and their role in the research, the methods of data collection. From a methodological point of view, the research has a pronounced contribution character, along with the demonstrated skills of the author to use and combine a wide range of modern methods. The planned methods are adequate and applied correctly.

## **III. General characteristics of the dissertation**

The dissertation completely covers the content of the topic. This circumstance is presented in the general characteristics of the work below.

*Chapter one.* Good knowledge of the basic theoretical models and concepts directly related to the research topic. The theoretical framework of the study is adequate. Sufficient theories and theoretical models suitable for the purposes of the research are presented. Key concepts such as general and tourist infrastructure, transport accessibility are considered, special attention is paid to the territorial - structural environment, a result of the spatial planning of the urban territory. Good interpretation of the concepts in the direction of the basic concept of the developed topic. Special attention is paid to the concepts, and terms related to the tourist system - destination, tourist product and resources in the context of infrastructure and transport accessibility.

Point 2 presents the research methodology. It is very well provided with adequate official information. Research methods are presented in detail, among which the main for obtaining primary information are GIS and sociological methods, in full accordance with the purpose and scientific tasks of labor.

*Chapter Two:* "Status and problems of transport accessibility in the central part of Sofia" is a comprehensive situational comparative (good practices from abroad) analysis with identification of the weak points in the development of the transport system in Sofia, a result of the practice of the spatial development of the city in historical terms, as well as of the problems related to the current management of the city of Sofia.

A strength of the second chapter is the inclusion of important issues for the information provision of tourists through modern ICT - mobile applications, location services and QR codes and more. The author has reviewed the tourism in the city of Sofia by main tourist indicators. It is recommended to present the quantitative data in a table, to calculate some relative indicators, indices, revealing more fully the situation. Particular attention is paid to the regulatory framework and strategic documents on transport accessibility in point 11

*Chapter Three: "Analysis of the Results of Own Research".* The author analyzes conducted research in the field of tourism, skillfully linking them with the subject of the dissertation. A questionnaire adapted on the basis of questionnaires from previous surveys of tourism in Sofia was used, 331 foreign and Bulgarian tourists were surveyed - the sample is not representative of the general population, but shows the current picture of the supply of transport services in the city and reveals the main deficits in this regard. The results form the basis for substantiating a concept for better management of transport accessibility to tourist sites in the central part of Sofia. Point 3 also analyzes the results of the semi-structured interview with representatives of municipal structures and non-governmental organizations.

Presented and detailed review of good practices in developed European capitals in terms of tourism in terms of planning and accessibility based on ARTIST project.

*Chapter Four: The "Concept for the Development of Transport Accessibility"* is of a major contributing nature, as it corresponds directly to the defined goal. We will note, however, that its formulation does not completely coincide with the formulation of the goal, p.21.

The author justifies specific decisions in the form of measures. They are logical, but some of them - point 2.1 require additional justifications. The reviewer finds practical and well-founded suggestions arising from the study for:

- the creation of a regional transport portal as a social platform.
- for integration of fees and services of - unified system for tourist buses, introduction of intelligent transport systems, creation of tourist information systems (10.1 needs specifics), etc.

**The conclusion** should contain a structured presentation of the research tasks performed.

#### **IV. Reliability of the results and the analysis and their scientific-theoretical and applied value.**

The dissertation is distinguished by originality and a clear contribution to solving the scientific and practical problem related to the problem of offering transport services to tourists in the Central Center of Sofia. The set goal and research tasks have been successfully completed, the subject of the dissertation has been effectively defended

#### **V. Scientific and applied contributions to the dissertation**

The main contribution of the dissertation is of a methodological nature. A specific methodology has been created to approximate the number of households that will actually use the streets within the Blue Zone to house their cars. It helps to determine the remaining vacancies for tourists and other target groups.

The complex study of the tourist supply in terms of accessibility to the tourist attractions in the Central Part of Sofia is of a pioneering nature, including the undervalued aspect of the transport infrastructure from a research point of view.

The research has a theoretical contribution, expressed in the collected primary information about the offer of transport services to tourists in the Central City Hall of Sofia, supplementing the knowledge about the territorial tourist system of Sofia.

#### **VII. Abstract and publications on the topic of the dissertation**

The abstract presented by the dissertation Emil Borisov Petrov meets the academic standards for a summary presentation of the conducted independent research. The main research results are presented with the necessary specifics.

The presented scientific publications, by number (3 publications) and topics, are directly related to the thematic area of the dissertation.

#### **VIII. Critical notes**

Along with the mentioned merits of the dissertation, some gaps are noticed, which are not of a principled nature and can be easily overcome in the future research activity of the candidate for ONS "Doctor". We will point out some gaps in the dissertation such as:

- Too large a volume of dissertation work;
- Own research is presented with a dominant descriptive approach, which in some places "hides" the good interpretations of the author;
- References - too many literary sources used indirectly, based on one or two literary works;
- Stylistic and linguistic inaccuracies are also noticed.

## **IX. Conclusion**

Based on the indicated scientific and scientific-applied merits of the dissertation on the topic: "Management of transport accessibility to the tourist sites in the central part of Sofia" with full conviction I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Emil Borisov Petrov ONS "Doctor" scientific specialty "Geography of recreation and tourism", professional field 4.4. Earth Sciences.

Date:

09.09.2020

Reviewer:

Prof. Nikolina Popova