



EVALUATION REPORT OF PH.D. THESIS

Referee: *Prof.Dr. Christina Lazarova Nikolova*
Economics of Transport and Energy Department, UNWE
Scientific filed 3.8 Economics, Economics and Management
(Economics of Transport)

About: PhD thesis in the scientific field of *Earth Sciences*.

Author: *Emil Borisov Petrov*

Topic: *MANAGEMENT OF TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY TO TOURIST SITES IN THE CENTRAL CITY OF SOFIA*

Supervisor: *Associate professor Dr. Mariana Atanasova Asenova*

Reason for the presentation of the report: participation in the examination board for viva voce examinations for PhD research degree, according to the Order P038-340/23.07.2020 of the Rector of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

1. Information about the PhD-candidate

The PhD-candidate, Emil Petrov has been a student in a doctoral program conducted by the Department of Geography of Tourism at the Sofia University in the Scientific field 4.4. Earth Sciences, Geography and Recreation of Tourism. The study was carried out in a non-formal personal learning between 01.06.2018 – 01.06.2021. The PhD candidate has submitted his dissertation thesis on 03.07.2020.

2. General characteristics of the dissertation thesis

Dissertation thesis has a volume of 255 pages, structured in an introduction, a four-chapter exposition, a conclusion, bibliography, lists of tables, figures, annexes and abbreviations and 47 pages of annexes. The main text includes 18 tables and 82 figures.

Chapter One presents the basic concepts and theoretical aspects and approaches to assessing transport accessibility to tourist sites in cities.

The second chapter analyses the state and problems of transport accessibility in the central city of Sofia, defines its peculiarities and assesses the spatial and urban development of the road (street) network, demography and related problems of urban mobility and

provides a brief overview of the regulatory framework and strategic documents for transport accessibility and its management in Sofia Municipality.

Chapter Three complements the analysis in the study with the results of the surveys carried out by the PhD-candidate in the context of the transport accessibility of Sofia, as well as with an analysis of the results of the semi-structured interview with representatives of the municipal authorities and non-governmental organizations. An overview of good practices from well-developed European capitals with regard to the planning and accessibility of central urban areas of tourist importance is presented.

Chapter Four presents a concept developed by the author for the development of the transport accessibility of Sofia, based on SWOT analysis of destination Sofia in the context of transport accessibility and offers specific solutions for: restricting access by private cars in the central city area; increasing the scope of parking services incl. and payment methods; developing the Park & Ride service; improving and promoting public transport; integrating public transport charges and services; establishing a tourist buses managements system; reorganizing and improving the road network for cycling and pedestrians; introducing intelligent transport systems; establishing tourist information systems and electronic reservation and payment systems.

The conclusions summarize the results achieved in the dissertation thesis and the fulfilment of the research tasks.

The research topic of dissertation thesis is actual and very important for the development of tourism and the provision of transport accessibility to the significant tourist sites in the central urban part of the city of Sofia. It is intended to provide justification and implementation of adequate approaches and models for assessment of transport accessibility and optimization of tourist flows and services in the city. The object, the subject and the main research tasks of the study are properly formulated. The PhD-candidate's main goal is to propose a concept for better management of transport accessibility to tourist sites in the central city of Sofia based on an analysis of the state of the art. The main research thesis, proven in the dissertation work, states that "the city of Sofia has the opportunity to establish itself as a year-round tourist destination as well as a convenient city to live in, and for this purpose, targeted actions are to be adopted to achieve easy and convenient access to tourist attractions in the central city". It is decomposed in 6 working hypotheses, which have been successfully approbated and proven in the study on the topic of dissertation.

The bibliography consists of 201 literature sources, including 100 in Bulgarian and 101 in English. The excellent knowledge of the literature in the research field and the precise citation of the information sources in the text and in the bibliographic references should be noted as well.

3. Evaluation of the results achieved in the dissertation thesis

The research presented in the PhD-dissertation thesis has been conducted with a suitably selected methodology and scientific tools. In order to achieve the defined research

goals and the implementation of the research tasks, a PhD-candidate has applied statistical, mathematical and economic research methods involving a complex and specialized analysis, questionnaire survey and interviews, as well as scientific comparisons and summaries.

The PhD-candidate has presented original research, extending the forefront of the economics discipline and merit publication and providing answers to essential theoretical and practical questions.

4. Evaluation of the scientific and applied results and contributions

The main scientific and applied results and contributions to the scientific field of Geography of Tourism found in the dissertation thesis could be summarized as follows:

I. Scientific results and contributions:

1. On the basis of an in-depth analysis of all elements of the transport infrastructure that are relevant to the accessibility and its provision and development, the main problems and challenges for the provision of tourist services in the central urban part of the city of Sofia are summarized.
2. An adaptation has been made and a comprehensive definition of the concepts of "destination", "tourist product and resources" has been proposed in the context of infrastructure and transport accessibility.
3. The importance of the territorial system of recreation and tourism (TSOT) is justified and on this basis the general properties are systematized.

II. Applied results and contributions:

1. Based on analyses and comparisons of the individual elements of the transport infrastructure in the cities the directions for continuous analysis of the state of transport accessibility to the tourist sites in central city areas in Sofia are systematized.
2. A methodology for analysis of accessibility by elements of transport infrastructure for the territory examined has been derived and approbated.
3. A complex concept for the development of transport accessibility on the territory of the central urban part of Sofia has been developed so that it is suitable for all target groups and adapted for the movement of vulnerable citizens.
4. An approach has been developed and proposed to transfer the results of the implementation of the concept to other destinations similar in structure, demography and problems after its adaptation.

5. Evaluation of the scientific publications on the dissertation topic

Three publications on the dissertation topic are presented, respectively: two articles in a specialized and indexed scientific journals and one report on a scientific conference. These publications on the dissertation topic provide adequate dissemination of the achieved results in the scientific literature.

6. Evaluation of the author's summary of the dissertation thesis

The author's summary reflects accurately and adequately the dissertation thesis as a structure and contents.

7. Critical remarks, recommendations and questions

There are some minor technical errors and inconsistencies in the dissertation thesis, but they do not have a serious impact on the quality of research presented, as well as on the fulfilment of the research tasks. They are technical in nature and can be considered as recommendations for refinement of the future research work of the PhD-candidate.

8. Conclusions

In conclusion, I believe that the presented dissertation thesis fully meets the requirements for awarding PhD degree to the candidate. It contains the respective scientific and applied contributions to the scientific field, as well as it is based on an innovative research approach, which allows me to praise the conducted research and to recommend to the honorable Evaluation Board to award to Emil Borisov Petrov a PhD degree.

08.09.2020
Sofia



Prof. Dr. Christina Nikolova