

## **Opinion**

by Prof. Dr. Rumen Hristov Yankov -  
member of the scientific jury, by order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment  
Ohridski" (SU), in connection with the defense of the dissertation work of regular PhD  
student Penka Lyubomirova Pisacheva

Professional field: 4. 4. Earth sciences, doctoral programme in Countrys Geography (Regional  
and Political Geography)

Department of Regional and Political Geography  
Faculty of Geology and Geography (FGG)

Theme of the thesis: "Migration processes and problems of socio-economic development in  
Karlovo after the liberation"

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Marin Rahnev Rusev

### **1. Data about the PhD student and the procedure**

Penka Lyubomirova Pisacheva graduated in Geography from Sofia University in 2000 with a Master's degree in Geography and is a teacher of Geography and Economics in secondary school. He works as a lecturer in geography and economics in the town of. Karlovo. Penka Pisacheva is enrolled as a full-time PhD student as of 01.02.2019 with a three-year period (Order of the Rector of Sofia University (PД-20-142/18.01.2019). The dissertation was discussed and recommended for defense at an extended meeting of the Department of Regional and Political Geography, held on 31.01.2023. Following a decision of the Faculty Council of the FGG, an order of the Rector was issued for written off with the right to defence (PД-20-447/17.02.2023).

The dissertation is presented in completed form, accompanied by an abstract.

### **2. Dissertation and abstract data**

The dissertation is devoted to the socio-economic and demographic development of the town Karlovo and the surrounding area for a relatively long period. Methodologically, the dissertant's work is in the intertwined fields of geographic local studies, historical geography and regional development.

The presented work contains all the required attributes of a dissertation research. The presentation is developed in an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion, which includes a self-assessment of the scientific contributions. The text is voluminous - almost 300 pages. with applications. The abstract (48 pages) presents the most important aspects of the content, structure of the work and conclusions. More than two hundred literature sources of different nature were used - scientific monographs and articles, statistical publications, press, cartographic publications, etc. , as well as 35 planning and regulatory documents and information from dozens of websites. The work includes 40 pages of tabular, graphic and map appendices, alongside the extensively illustrated main text. It also includes a survey conducted by the author among the residents of the municipalities of Karlovo and Sopot. This is appropriate given the parallel presentation of the results and the relationship between satisfaction with the environment and migration.

The content of the dissertation is developed in accordance with the assigned topic. The main indicators of the socio-economic development of the region for the study period are grouped into three groups: natural-ecological, production-economic and socio-demographic. Already in the clarification of the theoretical and methodological foundations, e. g. in the formulation of the objective of the study, a peculiarity becomes apparent - the issues of migration are considered as a continuation of the changes in the above-mentioned directions, a complex result and a specific indicator of regional development.

The second chapter is of a historical-geographical nature. It deals with the background of the period under study with an emphasis on the formation of the settlement centre and its links with the hinterland. The need to distinguish it as a separate part in the work can be challenged. The third and fourth chapters are the thematic nuclei of the author's exposition. They "thicken" the socio-economic and demographic picture in which the current state and the most pressing problems stand out. My expectation, given the chosen topic, was for a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis in the part on migration. Significant attention is paid to some politico-geographical and socio-geographical aspects, e. g., voting behaviour of the population, municipal plans and projects, and the role of the territory in the national spatial development concept.

In general, the scientific language of the work is clear and sustained. Critical comments can be made on the use of some of the terms, the definition of the study area, the quality and informativeness of the map appendices, the content and heading of some subsections, etc.

### **3. Scientific contributions of the dissertation work**

The self-report of the dissertation contributions lists five such contributions. Familiarity with the text gives me reason to accept them as valid, but with some notes and clarifications regarding their theoretical and applied value.

The work sets out to investigate the links between the socio-economic development of the area and population migration. Within a chronological approach spanning almost a century and a half in the development of a relatively small territory, this has largely been achieved. The summaries of the theoretical views on migration as an indicator of regional development and on the modelling of migration processes have a contributory point. The differentiated approach that distinguishes the migration dynamics of the centre (Karlovo) from that of the settlements gravitating towards it has positive results.

A contribution to the methodology of such studies is the inclusion of questions about the place of the city in territorial and settlement planning, and about its administrative and cultural role. These factors at the regional level modify the impact of the main processes of industrialization and urbanization. The dissertation analyses the management functions of the city of Karlovo under historically changing schemes of administrative-territorial organization.

A methodological contribution is the adaptation of the geographical passport method and its use in the analysis and assessment of the situation at the municipality level. A positive role for the study of contemporary migration attitudes is played by the application of the survey method.

A merit of the dissertation is the multivariate analysis. The quality of life is a synthetic result of the objective directions of the socio-economic and demographic development of the country and specific factors in the study area - the capacity of the local government, the degree of implementation of the objectives set in the planning documents, etc. A number of conclusions in the study can be used in the development of local development strategies and measures of municipal demographic policy.

### **4. Publications on the dissertation topic**

On the topic of the dissertation Penka Pisacheva presents an article co-authored with the supervisor, published in the Yearbook of Sofia University. Book 2 - Geography (Volume 114).

### **5. Conclusion**

The dissertation submitted for opinion is an independent and complete scientific study. With the help of competent scientific guidance, original contributions have been achieved. The work expands the empirical knowledge and enriches the experience in complex geographical local studies in the spirit of the good traditions of Bulgarian anthropogeography.

The dissertation of Penka Lyubomirova Pisacheva meets the requirements of the Law and the corresponding regulations. I give a favourable opinion and will vote in favour of awarding the candidate the degree of PhD, and I call on my esteemed colleagues on the scientific jury to do the same.

02.05.2023

Prof. Dr. Rumen Yankov