

# STATEMENT

**By Prof. Dimitar Trifonov Simeonov, PhD**

Department of Geography, Faculty of History  
**"St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo,**

Regarding: Dissertation for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences"

Higher education field: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences

Professional direction: 3.7. Administration and Management (Regional  
Development)

Faculty of Geology and Geography, Department of Regional Development

Title: "GEOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL  
DYNAMICS: REGIONAL DISCOURSES IN INTERCULTURAL  
COMMUNICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT"

Applicant: Prof. Kliment Minev Naydenov, PhD

## **1. Information about the doctorate, dissertation, abstract and scientometric requirements**

The statement was developed on the basis of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic positions in Sofia University, adopted by decision of the Academic council on 31.10.2018, amended and last completed by decision of the AC dated 28.06.2023.

The composition of the scientific jury is approved in accordance with the requirements of Art. 4, para. 1 and 2 and Art. 13, para. 1 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Art. 2, para. 1 and para. 2, Art. 40, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as from Art. 2, para. 1, Art. 10, para. 1 and 2, Art. 74, para. 1 and Art. 75, para. 1 and para. 2 of the

New Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at "St. Kliment Ohridski" Sofia University, with order No. RD-38-39 of 19.01.2024 of the Rector.

At the first meeting of the scientific jury held on 31.01.2024, the chairman, three reviewers and four authors of opinions were unanimously elected, the terms of the procedure, the date and time for the open meeting of the public defense were determined. Based on the submitted documents, I believe that the procedure was followed and that no violations were committed. Plagiarism signals are not detected and are absent. The minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The presented dissertation has a total volume of 726 pages, of which a main text of 683 pages, in which 28 cartographic figures are included. The dissertation follows its own analysis algorithm, which is structurally divided into an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, scientific contributions, approval and publications, a list of references. The attached bibliography covers 475 bibliographic units, of which predominantly 469 are in Latin (including electronically accessible ones).

The applicant, with his own author's language style, substantiates the scientific and practical significance of the topic, successfully defending and arguing it in the course of the exposition. The conducted research has an undisputed interdisciplinary or even transdisciplinary essence, which is of particular importance for its relevance within our national academic context. The approach utilized, including research relativism for the analysis of author-selected geographical determinants of social and cultural dynamics, refracted through the prism of regional discourses in intercultural communication and focused on the context of sustainable development, should be positively evaluated.

The relevance of the dissertation is complemented by the derived integrated interdisciplinary research project. From this perspective, the content and the adopted methodology of the presented scientific work can be evaluated as an original attempt to address an important scientific-applied problem, with the achieved results corresponding to contemporary achievements and representing a real contribution to

science. The abstract (128 pages) adequately reflects the structure, content and contributions of the scientific work.

According to the reference submitted by the applicant on the minimum national requirements for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" according to Art. 2b of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for a field of Higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences from a professional direction 3.7. Administration and management there is a significant excess of quantitative requirements. Particularly impressive are the results of the groups of indicators D and E, in which scientific publications up-to-date and on the subject predominate and citations in referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases.

## **2. Scientific contributions**

The dissertation work of Prof. Kliment Minev Naydenov, PhD, "Geographical determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development" builds a multidisciplinary author's model for extrapolating complex scientific activity into a practically applicable academic product.

The introduction clarifies the relevance and significance of the topic, which are conceptually framed by the two main modern functions of geographical science, the cognitive and the constructive. The five-level object of the study has been identified. The formulated subject of the dissertation work is insufficiently emphasized. On the other hand, the set goal and the tasks related to its implementation correspond directly to the content. The main hypothesis and the four sub-hypotheses of the dissertation are defined, which definitely expands and complements its theoretical base.

A selection and distribution of the methods used was carried out, not all of them were used directly, and others were woven as an element through the exhibition. Due to the complexity of the chosen topic, the problematic limitations and the introductory literature review have not been omitted.

The first chapter (in a volume of 196 pages) emphasizes geographical science, geographical "laws" and their impact on the development of society, culture,

sustainable development and the index of green growth, which is the theoretical-methodological basis of the study. The adopted approach allows the mixing of the concept of empirical laws with compact descriptions of models and regularities to highlight the multispectral nature and significance of the subject. The author's scientific challenge is the selection of the main geographical factors influencing society and culture, as well as the analyzed (geographical, social and cultural) influences.

The influence of Tobler's first and second geographical laws on the axis of society, culture, sustainable development, which has a contributing nature, has been argued. This is a kind of new interdisciplinary focus that has been applied successfully and systematically, but needs further theorizing.

The impact of spatial heterogeneity on society, culture and sustainable development has been characterized in a regular and correlational manner. The concept of spatial heterogeneity, which has a longer history than the first laws of geography, is perceived as an "inevitable feature of geography", sets the regional overview in the next paragraph of the dissertation. The applied nature of the research paper would increase its dimensions if the systematized summaries and conclusions were added at the end of each section.

The second chapter (251 pages) is a kind of regional analysis of intercultural differences in the world (using the example of 78 countries and their business culture). The academic interest shown in linking business culture and sustainable development, in specifics and in multi-directional value practices, is valuable. By realizing the obvious semantic connection between "culture" and "sustainability" a path has been paved for understanding sustainable development through the prism of culture. Here, the logical integration and interaction of the affected scientific-problem areas is partially broken, and the same need a deeper theoretical-methodological consolidation. However, the adopted methodological approach can be defined as traditional and expedient.

The third chapter (167 pages) is dedicated to understanding the interrelationships between regional discourses in intercultural business communications in the context

of sustainable development and environmental behavior. Of applied and contributing importance are the author-built regional constructs based on the model of Hofstede's dimensions of culture. The skillful and detailed analytical characterization of each of the dimensions is refracted through the lens of regional governance. The overall composition is visualized using correctly cited cartographic images. Correctly from a scientific point of view, the critical geographical remarks and limitations to the Hofstede model adopted by the author have been brought out and explained. Determining importance in the overall composition of the dissertation work are the outlined dynamic and multifaceted connections and risks between the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), geography and environmental behavior. Clarifying how these interactions affect sustainable development and the green growth index is a contribution.

The candidate shows a broad competence of intercultural business communications in the world and skillfully interprets them in terms of sustainable development and environmental behavior.

In the conclusion, through the inferences, the position is defended about the importance of geographical science for: achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, its decisive role in public administration, the creation of management policies, the importance for international business communication and a number of others.

Accepting the proposed author's contributions in essence, they could be summarized and synthesized into theoretical-methodological (1, 2, 8), empirical-diagnostic (3, 4, 5, 6, 7) and educational (9, 10).

### **3. Conclusion**

The dissertation work developed and presented for public defense on the topic "Geographical determinants of social and cultural dynamics: regional discourses in intercultural communication in the context of sustainable development" by Prof. Kliment Minev Naydenov, PhD, is an original scientific interdisciplinary study dedicated to an important problem. The substantiated and adopted methodology, the derived theoretical-methodological, empirical-diagnostic and educational contributions of the dissertation are necessary for the academic community and the

preparation of personnel with higher education in the country.

This provides grounds for me to confidently vote positively for awarding the scientific degree of "Doctor of Sciences" to Prof. Kliment Minev Naydenov, PhD. I urge the esteemed members of the scientific jury to vote in the same manner.

26.02.2024

Prepared the statement: .....

Veliko Tarnovo

(prof. Dimitar Simeonov, PhD)