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ABSTRACT

URBANISM IN BULGARIA FROM THE SECOND WORLD

WAR TO THE END OF THE 1980s

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The dissertation was discussed and proposed for defense on January 21, 2025, by the Department of Bulgarian History at the Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." It consists of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices, totaling 255 pages.

The dissertation topic, "Urbanism in Bulgaria from the Second World War to the End of the 1980s," addresses several interdisciplinary tasks that have been comprehensively explored within the scope of the research and are then presented in the text.

First and foremost, the dissertation discusses the **concept of the city, urban space, material, spiritual, and ideological environment** in which societies leave significant, visible, and lasting marks of their historical development. The city is examined as an object of **interdisciplinary historical analysis and as a kind of "litmus test"** for larger historical trends. It is a habitat or dwelling place of perhaps the main focus of historical inquiry and knowledge, namely the image and characteristics of people and societies in different epochs. The dissertation offers a view of Bulgaria's recent history through the lens of urban history, institutional evolution, professional characteristics, ideological influences, and material realizations.

The main focus is on the question of how the city emerges, how it evolves, and what characteristics it acquires, particularly in the Bulgarian case, where it has been influenced by European modernism and the socialist ideology of the ruling Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). The approach to the city is justified as humanitarian rather than technical, a trend in contemporary European historiography and literature concerning 20th-century history.

This task "permeates" the topic and research as the first, though not the primary, one, as the research focus is temporally and spatially narrowed to the socialist period and governance in Bulgaria, described in the title as the period from the end of the Second World War to the late 1980s. The text does not delve into the terminological distinction between the closely related concepts of "urbanism" and "urban planning," as they are often used synonymously in the text. In consultation with Bulgarian researchers and architects such as Assoc. Prof. Iskra Dandolova, Prof. Todor Bulev, Assoc. Prof. Yassen Kyosev, and Chief Assistant Dr. Angel Bondov, the term "urbanism" is employed in the broad context of urban life and structure, encompassing historical, social, economic, and cultural processes. In contrast, "urban planning," apart from being a more specific discipline related to planning and design, is also part of the authentic historical lexicon and tradition of the period before 1989.

During that time, both specific and broader issues concerning the city were discussed under the term "urban planning"/ *gradoustroistvo* in Bulgarian.

This specific context requires the introduction of **two central concepts** to the Bulgarian city, urbanization, urbanism, and architecture during the time of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. These concepts are the ideas of the "**modern city**" and the "**socialist city**."

The modern movement for restructuring and developing cities was a powerful pan-European factor and characteristic just before and especially after the end of World War I. The 1920s marked the end of the devastating war, the collapse of empires in Europe, and the closing of the 19th century, all marked by the industrial revolution and the increasing concentration of large societal groups in cities. The response to these challenges is sought through urbanism, the "revolution" in the forms and organization of cities and architecture, which now have distinct social imperatives to prevent the negative trends of spontaneous socio-economic development and reconstruction. The modernist movement in urban planning and architecture is social in origin, nature, and tasks, regardless of its variety: French modernism, Italian futurism, German Bauhaus, Soviet constructivism, and others. Bulgarian alumni of European schools, who will bring their experience to Bulgaria, will face similar tasks: solving the social issues of mass urbanization as a consequence of industrialization through modern theory and experimentation. The first chapter reviews the main theories that will directly or most often indirectly influence Bulgarian urbanism in the second half of the 20th century. It outlines the three main approaches to solving social problems through urbanism and urban planning: **individual, cooperative, or centralized state initiative**. **Special attention is given to Édouard Jeanere/Le Corbusier**, who, in addition to being a global authority of the modern movement, symbolizes the connection and influence between Western and Eastern/socialist modernism. He is also the founder of the movement from which the "father" of Bulgarian urbanism, Lyuben Tonev, originates. Tonev, a Parisian graduate and a doctor in urbanism from the 1920s (during Le Corbusier's flourishing in Paris), became the founder of the first urban planning department in Bulgaria after 1944.

The second chapter sequentially addresses the theory of the highly ideological socialist city, which goes beyond modernist approaches to solving social or housing issues. It becomes a powerful ideological and political tool of the empowered Marxist utopia with a new type of social and urban organization, aesthetics, economy, and structure. This occurred after the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 and the establishment of the USSR in the early 1920s.

Naturally, after 1944, the **Soviet modernist school will have a central place** in Bulgaria. The Soviet experience is seen as the first approach to building a modern and socialist city in the world's first socialist state: the USSR. This chapter illustrates the **connection between modern and socialist theories about the city and society**. It outlines the main theoretical clashes during the 1920s and 1930s in Soviet urban planning. The **levels of low urbanization and industrialization** in Soviet Russia after World War I and in Bulgaria after World War II are similar, allowing for the methodological clashes between Soviet "urbanists" and "anti-urbanists" (Ohitovich and Sabinovich) in the 1920s to find personal reflection in local clashes in Bulgaria in the 1950s, such as the one between Lyuben Tonev and Petar Tashev over the case of Dimitrovgrad, which is part of the case studies of the dissertation. This chapter also explores the **Soviet internal evolution of tightening contact with Western modernist schools** to explain the "**Stalinist style**" that emerged in the 1930s and 1940s in architecture. Bulgarian urbanism after World War II will begin precisely from this phase of "deviation" from the principles of modern and socialist urban development. The theoretical and historiographical sources on the ideas of **Moisei Ginzburg**, **Nikolai Milyutin's book "Sotsgorod,"** and **Anatol Kop's work "Ville et révolution"** are discussed. These works laid the foundations for international research programs in the second half of the 20th century, focusing on Soviet urban planning concepts and experiments.

The third chapter delves into the core of the examined topic. The political ideology or Marxist-Leninist Soviet-style model that dominated the country until 1989 is **modernizing and socialist**, corresponding with the theoretical introduction in the first two chapters. Its clearest materialization will be in **the city**. In Bulgaria, this coincides with the period of rapid **industrialization and the associated urbanization** of the country, which, by the time of World War II, had a social and demographic structure (over 80% of the population) as an agrarian society and economy. The sustainability of industrialization, which naturally leads to large internal migration waves from rural areas to cities and the creation of entirely new cities, is not the primary focus of the research itself but is described as a fundamental part of the historical logic and driving force of processes that occurred in nearly all European societies during the era of modernization, industrial revolution, and mass urbanization.

The third chapter presents the chronology and periodization of mass urbanization in Bulgaria, as well as the institutionalization of the various forms of Bulgarian urban planning schools. Before presenting the internal chronology of the 1944-1989 period, the framework of Bulgarian urban planning during the Third Bulgarian Kingdom is outlined, meaning the

status quo as of 1944. Three internal stages are identified: **early steps** (1878-1885), **development and regulatory framework** (1885-1919), and the **adoption of modern trends** (1919-1944).

The creation of a **school and stable tradition** coincides with **the period of postwar reconstruction, socialist urbanization, and the establishment of the urban planning department** at the Higher Construction School by **Lyuben Tonev**. The internal periodization after 1944 largely corresponds to the political chronology of the stages of development of the People's Republic of Bulgaria:

- 1944-1948: The so-called years of "**people's democracy**," coinciding with **postwar reconstruction** and the theoretical clarification of new tasks, **focusing primarily on the capital Sofia**. The changes are both specific to Sofia and general for Bulgarian cities, including architectural-symbolic and regulatory-ideological shifts, such as the adoption of several fundamental laws, notably the law on nationalization and the **Law on Planned Development of Settlements**.
- The "**Cult of Personality**" Period (1949-1956): This period coincides with the tightening of Bulgaria in 1949 and the gradual "thawing" following Stalin's death, in line with Soviet dynamics between 1953-1958. The years of "Stalinism" in Bulgaria cover the established and singular role of the BCP, symbolized politically by Valko Chervenkov and architecturally by the adopted Soviet **urban planning experience and the creation of new industrial cities or models for a socialist society** in the "**Stalinist aesthetic**." The example of Dimitrovgrad is discussed here, along with Pernik in the final chapter, as representatives of this period. During this time, first in the USSR and later through the April Plenum of the Central Committee in Sofia and other acts, a new course was adopted, including changes in urban development, planning, and conceptual approaches. Key highlights include the **report on "Eliminating Excesses in Architecture"** from the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1955, the **April Plenum of the Central Committee** of the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1956, and the first implementations of the "**new models**" in cities in 1958.
- The **period of "thaw"** associated with Nikita Khrushchev, coincided with the **second wave of modernism both in the West and the East**. In Bulgaria, this movement remained active from the 1960s until the early 1970s. The initial years of the "thaw" in the USSR overlapped with the early years of the "April Line" in the People's Republic of Bulgaria within the broader political dynamics of the Eastern Bloc. This period also

marked the conclusion of the first phase of mass industrialization and urbanization in Bulgaria during the 1960s. Beyond adopting **international experience from both East and West in modern urban planning**, this era introduced new focal points in the urban fabric, reflecting historical, political, and ideological objectives. **Key themes included mass recreation, green spaces, and the adaptation** of the urban environment for the new residents of large urbanized structures, industrial zones, and residential neighborhoods. Special attention was given to leisure time. Examples from this period, which thematically extended into the first half of the 1970s, are analyzed in the chapter on field studies. These include the resort complex Albena, the only one **largely preserved** in its original form to this day, and Rusalka, the most emblematic **foreign investment** in the People's Republic of Bulgaria, designed and constructed as an entirely new architectural and spatial vacation settlement for French and international club tourists. Another significant case is Smolyan, often referred to as "the capital of the Rhodopes"—a project that evolved over 20 years yet successfully integrated **modernist ideas, socialist objectives, and the natural landscape into a distinctive and authentic urban solution**.

- The final stage is internally divided into an attempt to formulate a new **synthesis between the modern and traditional, the socialist and patriotic**. This will develop most strongly in urbanism and architecture from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, and by the end of the regime, it is sometimes referred to as a **kind of postmodern phase**. This period marks **the end of modernism both in Europe and in Bulgaria**. It also coincides with **major cultural campaigns** related to the **anniversaries** of the April Uprising, the Liberation, the "Flag of Peace" Assembly, and the **culmination in 1981—the 1300th anniversary of Bulgaria and the 90th anniversary of the Bulgarian Communist Party**. This synthesis of different aesthetics and tasks aimed at creating a new man, a new **"well-rounded individual"** in a **new environment**, influenced the major reorganizations in urban areas. In the field research section, emblematic cases of the *largest urban interventions in central Sofia* are discussed: the *National Palace of Culture (NDK) and the surrounding complex*, as well as the largest ideological monument in Eastern Europe, which integrates the archetypal image of the Balkans into public function through architectural and urban planning tools: *the House-Monument of the Bulgarian Communist Party at Mount Buzludzha*.

The third chapter integrates studies on the trends, political influences, legal provisions, and the institutional framework, including ministries, design organizations, and research institutes, which worked with varying intensity, style, and structure during different stages. As a description of the late 1980s, the three most developed institutional forms are presented, which are sufficiently informative about the levels and characteristics of urbanism in the late socialist period.

- These three institutional examples examined in the final phase of the 1980s are the two main design organizations, "**Glavproekt**" and "**Sofproekt**" as well as **KNIPITUGA (the Complex Research and Design Institute for Territorial Planning, Urbanism, and Architecture)**. In the last 15 years, roughly divided along the line of the turbulent development of KNIPITUGA until the mid-1980s and the gradual disinterest of political leadership after the mid-1980s, the finalized form of the Unified Territorial Planning (ETUP) of the country is presented.

The research also includes a special look at the normative evolution during the most developed stage of Bulgarian urbanism after mass urbanization and industrialization, specifically in the 1970s. This is linked to the **Territorial and Settlement Planning Act of 1973**, part of the broader context of key decisions from the 10th Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) in 1971 and the new "Zhivkov" Constitution of the same year, as well as the December Plenary Session of the BCP Central Committee in 1972, which establishes a program for improving the standard of living. The February Plenary Session of the BCP Central Committee in 1974 further expands and refines the tasks in the cultural field. The first important "directive" concerns the "relevance" of the "permanent political decoration." To achieve the objectives, closely related to current socio-economic tasks for the year, work on visual propaganda must actively involve "trade unions, the Komsomol, and the Fatherland Front." In addition to relevance, the new "aesthetics" is clearly defined.

The achievement of the "aestheticization" of the public environment is not a novelty. We are familiar with the idea of "monumental propaganda" and urban "education of the masses" since 1918 and the decisions of Lunacharsky in Soviet Russia. In Bulgaria, this architectural and urban "education" process began with great force immediately after 1944, but it was only in the early 1970s that detailed and substantive work began on creating this ideological environment in a mass and not necessarily monumental order. This process would deeply root the power through its urban and architectural materialization. That is, after the extensive

restoration campaign in the 1940s, the completion of all General Master Plans in the 1950s, and the progressively developing modern trend in urban planning, zoning, public and industrial areas, and architectural design in the 1960s, the established expert, administrative, and power potential in the 1970s focused on the idea of improving not only the macro framework of urban planning and architecture but also the micro-level of aesthetic education and public services.

In this regard, at the beginning of the 1970s, chronologically positioned between the two key political decisions of the 10th Congress and the "Zhivkov" Constitution of 1971, on one hand, and the February Plenary Session of 1974 on cultural education, on the other, are two acts with direct influence on the history of urban planning:

- The December Plenary Session of 1972 for **comprehensive public service and plans until 1990**, which transformed into a resolution by the Council of Ministers, assigning the Ministry of Construction and Architecture and other functional ministries to develop a **National Program for Improving the Public Service System**. The main goals are two:
 - To **comprehensively satisfy consumer needs** for goods and services in cities.
 - To **effectively regulate the infrastructure** that has been built up to this stage and address the negative consequences of internal migration processes.

The goal is to build sufficiently comfortable urban, rural, and integrated units that harmonize the integration processes of urbanization. This is seen as a prevention of tendencies toward concentration in future large urban centers.

- The second foundational new phase in the development of urbanism is the Territorial and Settlement Planning Act of 1973, which directly and implicitly expresses the same tendencies, goals, and spirit: a **holistic approach to creating an urban environment for social change**. It is the result of a collective research and design effort by architects, urban planners, economists, sociologists, and artists.

After presenting the chronology, institutional evolution, normative framework, and theoretical issues discussed and programmed as political strategies, the final chapter describes the role of the **Unified Territorial Planning (ETUP)**. The Unified Territorial Plan of the

country has several key characteristics and priorities that describe its essence and historical significance. ETUP is continuous, requiring periodic updates in line with the five-year plans and long-term programs for public and economic development of the country. Its horizon is forward-looking—complex, integrated, and normative.

ETUP is structurally linked to the General Scheme for Sectoral Structure and the General Scheme for Territorial Placement of Productive Forces, which are among the main strategic documents of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (NRB) for industrialization, aimed at building a socialist society. Both developments are long-term forecasts for the territorial placement of productive forces and the territorial planning of the country. Alongside these forecasting hypotheses, ETUP sets specific goals for urban, landscaping, and territorial problems during the eighth five-year plan. ETUP, together with other general schemes, forms a "multifaceted urban planning and territorial 'organism,'" based on a centralized demographic and economic policy, related to the current situation and future results. The General Scheme for the Territorial Placement of Productive Forces addresses issues related to the development of material production sectors (with a focus on industry), while ETUP deals with social reflection (housing, recreation, integrated public services, technical infrastructure, settlement systems, and others).

The fourth chapter focuses on another issue of Bulgarian urbanism, in addition to its institutionalization, development, and periodization. These include some of the **key theoretical problems** as well as the emblematic and most widespread implementations that became **symbolic in public memory** and later in research for the period.

1. The first issue is the **socialist solution to the housing problem**, which materializes in **housing complexes, microdistricts, or the industrialization of construction**. The prerequisites, ideas, some implementations, and the internal system for evaluating deficits are discussed.

The large development of housing complexes begins after 1956, during the late 1950s and 1960s. This is known as the era of the "April Line" or the Bulgarian equivalent of de-Stalinization, when small, low-rise panel buildings were constructed. In the second half of the 1960s and the last two decades of socialist rule (1970s and 1980s), the largest inner-city housing complexes were built in all regional cities, as well as in many medium-sized and some small towns. Housing complexes have **three main premises**:

1. They originate ideologically in addressing the housing problem amidst rapid **industrialization and urbanization**.
 2. They have a socio-political task to implement communal/community, socially-served, and new ways of life—a **socialist lifestyle**.
 3. They have **urban planning principles** and dimensions; they are a fundamental element of the three distinct spaces of the modern city: **industrial zone, park-recreational zone, and residential zone**.
2. This chapter also presents another form, which has limited and incomplete implementation, namely the "**removal of the contradiction**" between **the city and the countryside** in the context of socialist ideology and the political system. In the new type of "**settlement system**" the transition between the developed socialist society and communism is proposed. Here, the theoretical foundations, discussions, political decisions, and the beginning of specific implementations of this large plan, called ETUP, are presented.

The new structure and form take into account the following **three main factors**:

- Increasing production areas that do not pollute the environment, i.e., the **ecological** factor;
- Improving the possibilities for civil mobility, including infrastructure, technical support, i.e., the **transport** factor;
- Enhancing public services, i.e., the **consumer-social** factor.

These three factors are considered central in future settlement systems, and there is a need to build corresponding zones in the new systems: living, labor, and leisure zones. This approach is essential for counteracting the negative trends identified in the 1970s in collaboration with the Institute of Sociology. These trends include large migration processes and clustering, increasing labor commuting, and unregulated social infrastructure. Nature and the environmental appeal are once again recognized as issues requiring decisive actions.

Unlike classical industrialization or Stalinist-style Soviet urbanization, there is now a "postmodern" perspective on maintaining a natural balance, preserving more arable lands and green corridors within settlement units.

The transportation question is raised through the three development tools. New street-road networks are being developed, along with hypotheses for the recategorization of existing roads, construction of urban highways, and intercity motorway networks.

3. In the final part of this chapter, the hypothesis regarding **three central terms** with **symbolic, ideological, and structural significance** for the Bulgarian city in different periods is discussed. These terms are: **"labor" (combined with industrial and ensemble complexes); "leisure" (combined with harmonious scales and mass environments); and "synthesis" (combined with aesthetics and multifaceted development)**. The historical, ideological, semiotic, architectural, and urban planning significance of these terms is described.

One of the main theoretical issues in the mature phase of Bulgarian urbanism, architecture, and territorial planning is the issue of the epoch and the proper approach to it. The epoch is understood in a broader sense than the narrow ideological framework of socialist society, which is claimed to have been built after 1944 and "is moving towards communism." The epoch or epochs are discussed in terms of ethics, aesthetics, and semiotics by those dealing with the relationship between historical development and change, the philosophy of space, and architectural semiotics. The epoch of the "new movement" or modernism is seen as a temporal environment naturally suited to and catalyzing progressive actions for the foundation of material construction. This attitude toward modernism experienced declines and deviations during Stalinism but reemerged with the general trends after the dismantling of the "cult." In the 1980s, the debate continued about whether we are, after modernism, living in a supernova epoch again. If so, what are its characteristics, conditions, requirements, and perspectives? However, three periods with three symbols are passed through before this.

The first symbol is "labor" and the ensemble character of the city.

Urbanization is a vast historical phenomenon with multifaceted factors and aspects of development. In Bulgaria, it accumulated experience and expert potential until 1944, after which it became institutionalized and centrally planned. This is an important historical characteristic because mass urbanization in Bulgaria is directly influenced not only by the historical roots of real socialism but also by the ideological connection between the city and Marxist ideology, which holds a central place in the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Cities were developed, renovated, and transformed in all periods, but mass urbanization in Bulgaria

started after 1944. It is predicated on the idea that the city is the place of class contradictions and the struggle for "alienated labor" in capitalist societies. However, in socialist societies, the city should be the place of liberation for the working labor from exploitation, through popular power and scientific-technical progress. Since the power and the republic are defined as people's, the city should be "synchronized" with the general tendency and "inevitable" progress. The city must be a place, incubator, stage, and catalyst for scientific-technical progress. Popular power and scientific-technical progress are the two tools for constructing the city as a concept and material expression of ideology. **However, the "flag" of the city is labor.**

The second symbol is "leisure" and the issues of new scales and harmonious environments:

Leisure is impossible without free time. "Free time" is a very late concept in world history, associated with the Industrial Revolution, the Modern era in the 19th-20th centuries, and urban populations. In Bulgaria, the mass citizen emerged around 20 years after 1944, in the 1960s. The declaration at the April Plenary Session in 1956 confirmed the achievement of socialism and the movement towards the communist horizon. Not only because of the processes of liberalization and mass housing policy in the late 1950s and 1960s do we speak of "free time" and "leisure" on a symbolic level. This symbolic level is not focused on specific party or power decisions or architectural-urban planning realizations. However, it is directly related to internal processes in the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the emergence of mass tourism and social benefits in Western countries at the same time. The Marshall Plan, the fear of the French and Italian communist parties, and many other factors made the long-urbanized Western population the "owner" of part of their time, and with the development of increasingly mass transportation (especially air travel), this free time was channeled into **leisure and mass tourism.**

Improvement, modernization, raising living standards, and surpassing socialist achievements on the road to a communist society are all factors that made the appearance of these tendencies possible not only for the increasing urban population but also for the construction of a leisure system in this period. Workers received their "work time" and the corresponding free time. Free time and the idea of leisure and recreation can be viewed as a market-consumer phenomenon in the West or as a conceptual-political phenomenon for building a new socialist environment in the East. But the results are similar. The mass citizen

with free time for recreation emerges. Leisure begins to integrate with mass tourism: both domestic and foreign. This provokes the need for the development of material infrastructure for this focus.

The third symbol is "synthesis" together with the aesthetics of multifaceted development.

The programs among the entire "cultural front," including architects and urban planners, who naturally seek correction for the spiritual and emotional deficit at the societal level, are associated with aesthetic education and the creation of environments. Part of this rhetoric, which began in the early 1970s, especially strong in the period 1975-1981, but continued until 1989, included expressions such as "**multifaceted developed personality, aesthetic education, historical spirit**, patriotic in content, and socialist (internationalist) in form," and many others.

An attempt is made to create a **form of spirituality** within the regime, society, and environment. In Bulgaria, it has its peculiarities, which would also be the subject of extensive research on this issue alone. These peculiarities outline the patriotic turn in leadership politics; major campaigns celebrating anniversaries of historical events such as the April Uprising and Liberation; as well as international forums with worldwide attention such as the "Flag of Peace" Assembly, but undoubtedly the peak and center is the 1300th anniversary celebration in 1981.

Bulgarian urbanism begins **to materialize** this broader developmental line towards **aesthetic education**, not only in new and modern forms but also through their connection to tradition, history, and patriotism. This phenomenon in itself has the characteristics of parallel postmodern tendencies, beyond the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the Eastern Bloc. Bulgarian cities and urban initiatives are now centered around images like architectural-monumental complexes, the synthesis of arts, architecture, cities, innovative approaches, and traditional forms.

Thus, the socialist emphasis first lies on "labor" and the "labor city" of industry and popular power. Then, there is a shift towards harmonizing the laboring person in the newly built city, with an emphasis on "modern balance between production and nature, labor and

free time." Mass leisure emerges. Finally, the postmodern synthesis of the idea for a new aesthetic is reached, with historical foundations in local soil and heritage.

In the final part of the dissertation, Chapter 5 presents **six specific cases**, the so-called **case study** examples. These can be grouped in pairs, with the first two examples from **Dimitrovgrad and Pernik clearly belonging to the large period (1944-1956)** with a primary focus on building **the labor environment, industrialization, and ensemble centralization**. The second pair pertains to **the 1960s and early 1970s**, related to the imperative of building **a mass and harmonious environment not only for labor but also for leisure and the development of the individual**. Here, examples include the **resort complexes "Rusalka" and "Albena"** as well as the innovative example of the "Rhodope Capital" **Smolyan**. The third pair, focusing on the **early 1980s**, is marked by the idea of **synthesis, incorporating architectural approaches in art and monumental art in urban or natural contexts**. Examples are the largest complex in the historical center of Sofia, the **National Palace of Culture (NDK)**, and the largest ideological **architectural monument surrounded by a natural park at Mount Buzludzha**.

These six examples, grouped thematically in pairs, summarize multiple trends in Bulgarian urbanism from the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. A hypothesis is proposed for the typology of urban types within the framework of the new Bulgarian urban planning school, such as *"Stalinist city," "industrial/linear city," and "nature-integrated and modern city."*

The research approach is chronological-thematic. Historical documents and writings, divided into three levels, are fundamental for the research and its staged unfolding:

- *General theories of urbanism and modern architecture* influencing Bulgaria after 1944, such as the works of Le Corbusier "Towards Architecture" and "Urbanism," as well as "Socgorod" by Nikolai Milyutin;
- *Socialist urban planning revisions*, with key influences coming from the All-Union Conference of Builders and Architects in Moscow, December 1954, and the published resolution "On the Removal of Excesses in Design and Construction"; the decisions of the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Architects (1955), and in Bulgaria, the translated decisions of the National Conference on the "Architecture" section of the

Scientific-Technical Unions in Sofia in 1956, along with the key April Plenary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party from 1956.

- *Bulgarian internal contributions and innovative approaches* for a new framework, related to the political framework of the 10th Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1971, which announced "a new path of development"; the December Plenary of the Central Committee in 1972, which established "the program for the people's standard of living and comprehensive public services until 1990"; and the February Plenary of the Central Committee in 1974, which focused on the cultural synthesis in every aspect of life. The development tracks are crucial, as defined by the Territorial and Settlement Planning Act of 1973 and the creation of the professional giant with theoretical, design, research, and many other functions—KNIPITUGA—in 1976. The climax of Bulgarian urbanism history came at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, with decisions from the March Plenary of 1977 and the Politburo's acceptance of the report for the Unified Territorial Planning (ETUP) until 1990 with development perspectives for 2000-2026.

The historiographical sources are diverse, with literature on the history of urbanism, the relationship between architecture and public ideologies, particularly in the context of Bulgarian socialism, being limited. For the first two chapters, which provide an introductory and contextual understanding of modern and socialist urban planning, the primary source has been the largest library and archive on contemporary architecture and urban planning at the Centre for Architecture and Cultural Heritage in Paris. I worked there as a scholarship holder of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2021 and 2024. The titles that allowed the synthesis of the extensive literature on these two key terms of the dissertation are in French, Russian, Italian, and English. Among them, I would highlight works such as Jean-Louis Cohen's studies "L'architecture au futur depuis 1889"; "Le Corbusier et la mystique de l'URSS: théories et projets pour Moscou"; the vast three-volume work by Michel Ragon "Histoire mondiale de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme modernes", as well as many other studies in English from academic urban studies centers in the US, such as Chicago, Yale, Princeton, and Zurich. All these sources are available at the library, archive, or personal collections of the research fellows at the Centre for Architecture and Cultural Heritage, who provided unrestricted access for the research (Director Philippe Perrot and Veronique Curthina-Jeanen). The work on the socialist foundations of Bulgarian urbanism and Soviet influence is based on an extensive body of literature, including classic works by key figures in

the field, such as Nikolai Milyutin's "Socgorod", Anatol Kopp's "Ville et Revolution", as well as the Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Documents on Recent History's electronic archive, which provided all the decisions made in the USSR before and after World War II related to the topic. Among the important works used are the studies of Vigdaria Khazanova "Istoriya sovetskoy arkhitektury pervoy pyatiletki"; the collection edited by Thomas Decker "Modern city revisited"; the most famous classical researcher of Soviet architecture and urban planning, Selim Khan-Magomedov, and his book on Milyutin and other portraits of important Soviet architects. Other authors contributing to the overall picture of modern movements and socialist urban experiments include Tijana Vujosovic, Tom Avermaete, Yanina Gose, Owen Hatherley, and others.

For the main focus of the research, specifically urbanism in Bulgaria after World War II, the primary sources from the period before 1989, as well as post-1989 research perspectives, include works by Ivan Avramov, particularly his study "Modern Urban Planning in Bulgaria"; the history of the Department of Urban Planning, edited by Professor Ivan Nikiforov and Assistant Professor Mila Nikiforova; and their summarizing work "Urban Planning in Bulgaria in the 20th and 21st Centuries in the Context of Europe". In addition to these comprehensive works, significant contributions to the proposed typology, conclusions, and assumptions are drawn from "The White Book of Bulgarian Modernism", published by the Union of Architects in Bulgaria, "Urban Planning in the People's Republic of Bulgaria", and "Composition of the Modern City" by Lyuben Tonev, as well as the collection in his honor "On the Path of Bulgarian Urbanism"; "The City and the Arts"; "Aesthetic Problems of the Modern City" by Todor Bulev; the journal "Architecture", the newspaper "Stroitel", and the magazine "Architecture and Society".

The dissertation relies on key historical studies that are essential for understanding the historical context. Notably, two major historiographical works addressing cultural processes during the period 1944–1989 stand out: *Bulgarian Culture and Political Imperatives 1944–1989* by Prof. Evgenia Kalinova and *The Cultural Front* by Prof. Ivan Elenkov. Regarding the fundamental relationship between urbanization and industrialization, a crucial text for a comprehensive understanding is *The Policy of Economic Modernization in Bulgaria During the Cold War* by Prof. Iliyana Marcheva.

Interviews, discussions, and opinions from participants, researchers, or witnesses of the historical processes under study also hold significant value. These include Associate Professor

Iskra Dandolova (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), Dr. Dobrina Zheleva-Martins (LTU); Assistant Professor Dr. Mila Nikiforova (UASG); Associate Professor Yassen Kisiov (UASG), Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Bondov (UASG); Professor Todor Bulev (VSU); Professor Georgi Stanishev (UASG); Professor Valentin Starchev (SBH); Professor Krum Damanov (NHA); Architect Stanislav Konstantinov (Glavproekt), Yulia Glushkova (SAB).

Special mention should also be made of conversations with those who have passed away, such as Architect Georgi Stoylov and Professor Jean-Louis Cohen, who themselves are historical figures summarizing the era.

In addition to the general framework provided by the mentioned monographs and studies, a large portion of the archival sources are concentrated in the following archival collections: File 116 for the Ministry of Construction and Architecture, File 215 for the Committee for Urban Development; File 69A for KNIPITUGA; File 188 for the Ministry of Communal Construction and Roads; File 1B of the Central Committee with Index 87 for "Construction and Architecture"; File 141 for the Committee for Culture; File 405 for the Ministry of Culture; File 77A for the Union of Architects in Bulgaria; File 136 for the Council of Ministers, File 980 for the magazine "Architecture", File 1096 for the State Commission for Monumental Art.

The fieldwork and specific examples among the sources include thematic collections, yearbooks, albums, and regional historical collections for Smolyan, Dimitrovgrad, Pernik, albums, brochures, and analytical articles about NDK, "Rusalka", "Albena", and the House-Monument of Buzludzha. Fieldwork also involved a significant volume of local periodical or specialized press such as the newspapers "Rodopski ustrem", "Rodopi", "Dobrujanska tribuna", "Dimitrovska znaime", among others.

Working with personal archival collections in Smolyan, Dobrich, and Pernik, as well as museum or library archives, plays a central role in the research at the local level. This work was made possible with the great assistance and responsiveness of Darina Slavova from the Regional Library "Nikolay Vranchev" in Smolyan; Desislava Elencheva from the city library "Penyo Penev" in Dimitrovgrad; Nina Umurska and Nedyalka Todorova from the "New and Recent History" department of the Historical Museum in Dimitrovgrad; Albena Petrova and Neviana Pencheva from the "Regional Knowledge" sector of the "Dora Gabe" Regional Library in Dobrich; Boris Nachev from NDK; Bedros Azinyan from Kazanlak. Also,

significant assistance and guidance were provided by architect Petar Dikov and Yulia Glushkova from the library and archive of the Union of Architects in Bulgaria.

Among the contributions of the dissertation work, the following can be noted:

- The realization of the first interdisciplinary research with a historical focus on urban planning history, architectural aesthetics, political development, ideological and conceptual influences for the period 1944-1989 in Bulgaria. This enriches historiography by addressing the narrower studies on political, economic, and cultural history, as well as those dealing with technical aspects from the perspectives of architects, urban planners, and engineers, and on the other hand, from the aesthetic perspectives of art historians and artists.
- The use of a large corpus of foreign literature in French, Russian, Italian, and English, which covers both classic and new titles in the field of urban history, architecture, and modernization of societies in Europe during the last century, many of which are unknown or untranslated into Bulgarian.
- The use of a significant number of untapped archival collections, personal collections, interviews, conversations, and testimonies from experts, researchers, or witnesses closely related to the main subject of the study. This includes a large number of documents from regional libraries, archives, local collections, memoirs, periodicals, and other materials that have been described, cited, and represent starting points for future research in the same or broader directions.
- The proposed hypothetical framework, which aims to semantically highlight three key concepts from the era that are generally related to separate fields such as economics, social history, or philosophy but, in this specific case, have been identified as lexical foundations frequently found in the terminology of the era and can be considered as characterizing, symbolizing, and structurally determining the trends in political decisions regarding city planning, architecture, and professional implementations in the field. These concepts are "labor," "leisure" and "synthesis."

Publications related to the narrow scientific focus of the dissertation and the broader theme of the relationship between socio-cultural history and architectural-urban concepts include:

1. **Types of Urbanization in Socialist Countries after World War II**, collection "Kyustendil Readings 2022 in Memory of Prof. Todor Popnedelev," University Press "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," Sofia, 2023, p.412-432 (online)
2. **Buzludzha and Models for Urbanization and Monumentalization of Natural Space in Ideological Narratives in the Balkans after World War II**, Historical Aspects and Contemporary Dimensions, 2025, p. 94-109
3. **The Vrancea Earthquake in the History of Bulgarian Urbanization and Architecture in the Period 1944-1989**, collection "Kyustendil Readings 2023," University Press "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," Sofia, 2025, p.223-233
4. **Culture as a Factor for Peace in the Post-Yugoslav Space: Yugoslav Art and Post-Traumatic Cultural Space**, Historical Aspects and Contemporary Dimensions, Series No.4, Volume 1, University Press "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," Sofia, 2022, p.98-112
5. **Bulgarian and Yugoslav Support for "Building" Africa during the Cold War: Architectural Models and Decolonization Politics**, Collection "Serbo-Bulgarian Relations," Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, 2024, p.319-331