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Title: Costs and Values in Facing the Historic Layers of Sofia City Centre

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Abstract

The contemporary city center of Sofia spreads over the ancient Roman town of *Ulpia Serdica* and has kept through centuries the traces of the long history of the settlement going back to 2th century AD and beyond. Fragments of different historic layers have been excavated, studied and integrated into the modern city fabric and structures since early 20 c. The recently undertaken (long postponed and already urgent) construction activities of building the underground infrastructure in the city center provided a chance for large-scale archeological excavations that were expected with considerable interest by both experts and the public. Expectations ranged from hope for integrating the traces of city memory into a newly developed unique public space, to concern about possible damages to be caused by the urgent and expensive construction activities starting with only too general plans. The paper traces the development of the process and the challenges in communicating priority considerations in the dialogue between the actors involved - experts in different fields (from archeology and heritage conservation to transport infrastructure, urban planning and architecture), politicians, local authorities, cultural institutions, civil society groups, etc. It outlines the importance of a transparent and democratic planning process for overcoming the difficulties of communicating cultural values and expert knowledge in the city development of today.