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Theme1: Integrated development

ADDRESSING CONTINUITY CRACKS IN URBAN MEMORY: *ST. NEDELYA* SQUARE
IN THE CITY CENTRE OF SOFIA

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Abstract

In late 2016 the planning experts at Sofia municipality undertook steps for preparing an international urbanistic competition on the functional and spatial reorganization of *St. Nedelya* Square in the historic city centre of Sofia. For centuries the square has been part of a continual living network of urban public places; it has sheltered controversial memories and abundant layers of cultural heritage; archaeological excavations are still going on. The competition brief developed by an academic team raised various concerns among the city planning authorities; it was subjected to a preliminary public hearing and, after being published at the website of the planning department of the municipality, attracted media attention; yet it received minor professional and public feedback. The paper traces current results of the process and the challenges faced by city authorities, planning experts and citizens in conceptualizing the role of cultural heritage in the contemporary development of historic public space in the city. The social and cultural dimensions of the discussed planning and design interventions are outlined and the impact of claimed integrated planning approaches is estimated. The process provides a chance for discussing the potential of urbanistic competitions for respecting the continuity of the urban memory and the integrity of the historic urban environment; it is also indicative about the needed capacity on behalf of all urban actors for implementing inclusive forms of planning and governance.

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