

*Scientific symposium "History/ Archeology/ Antiques and Sustainable City "
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ADDRESSING CONTINUITY CRACKS IN URBAN MEMORY: ST. NEDELYA SQUARE IN THE CITY CENTRE OF SOFIA

Elena Dimitrova
ICOMOS-Bulgaria

The REFLECTION LINE chosen

How to give a concerted definition of space planning that respects the integrity and authenticity of heritage and 'spirit of the place'?

- ✓ How to define the integrity and authenticity of a changing vital urban space?
- ✓ How to define and estimate the quality of planning interventions in a historic public space?

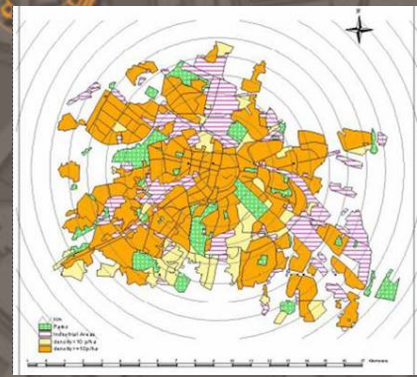
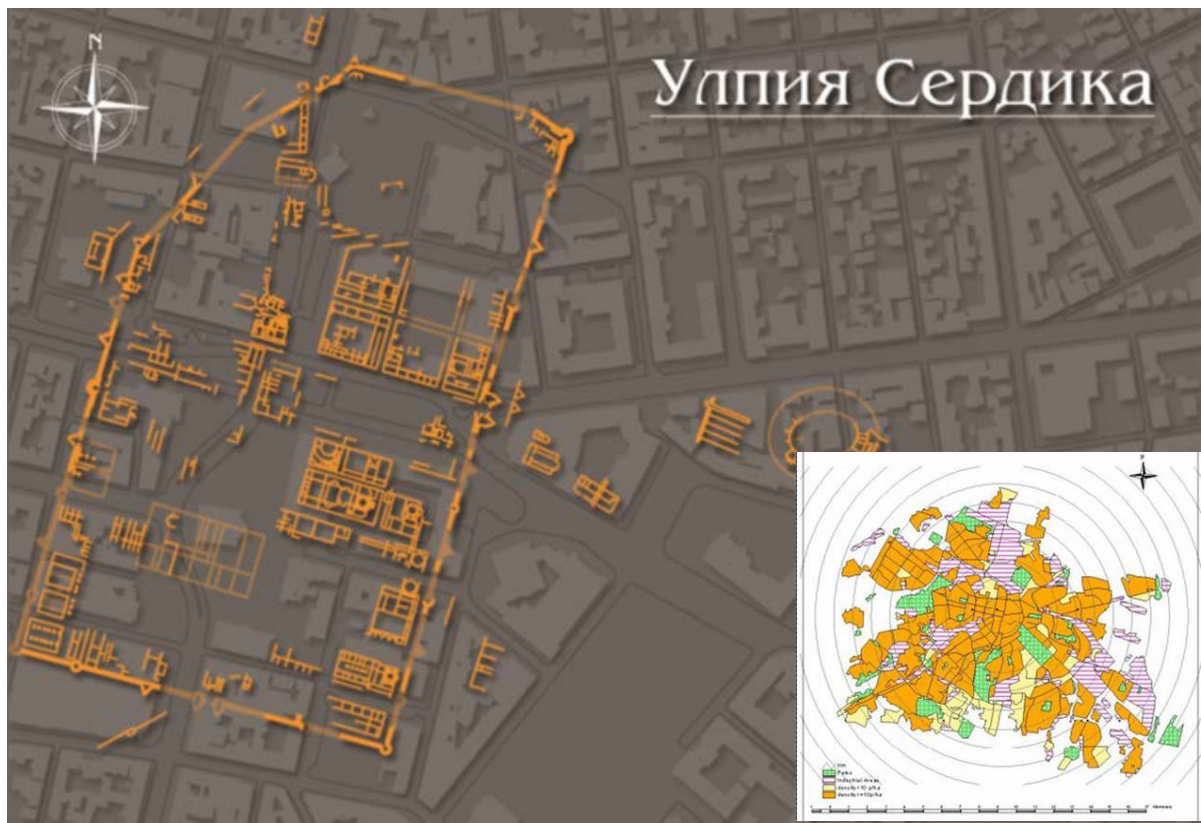
'KEEPING URBAN MEMORY'

- ✓ Whose memory? Memory of what?
- ✓ What messages to pass to whom?
- ✓ Keeping memory by what means? Whose responsibility?
- ✓ **WHY keeping urban memory?**



ST. NEDELYA SQUARE CASE STUDY

- ✓ Abundant layers of history and archaeology
- ✓ Controversial memories and estimations of past events
- ✓ A vital urban place of today
- ✓ Growing urban tensions and disparities of today, urgency of needed interventions





CIVVIH Annual meeting 2018, Nimes
- France



Winning projects in the previous architectural competition, held in 2013

ACTORS, STARTING POINTS AND CONCEPTS

The urban context:

Ongoing archeological studies; contradictory investment demands; growing citizens' pressure; aging urban infrastructure; EC funding rules and deadlines;

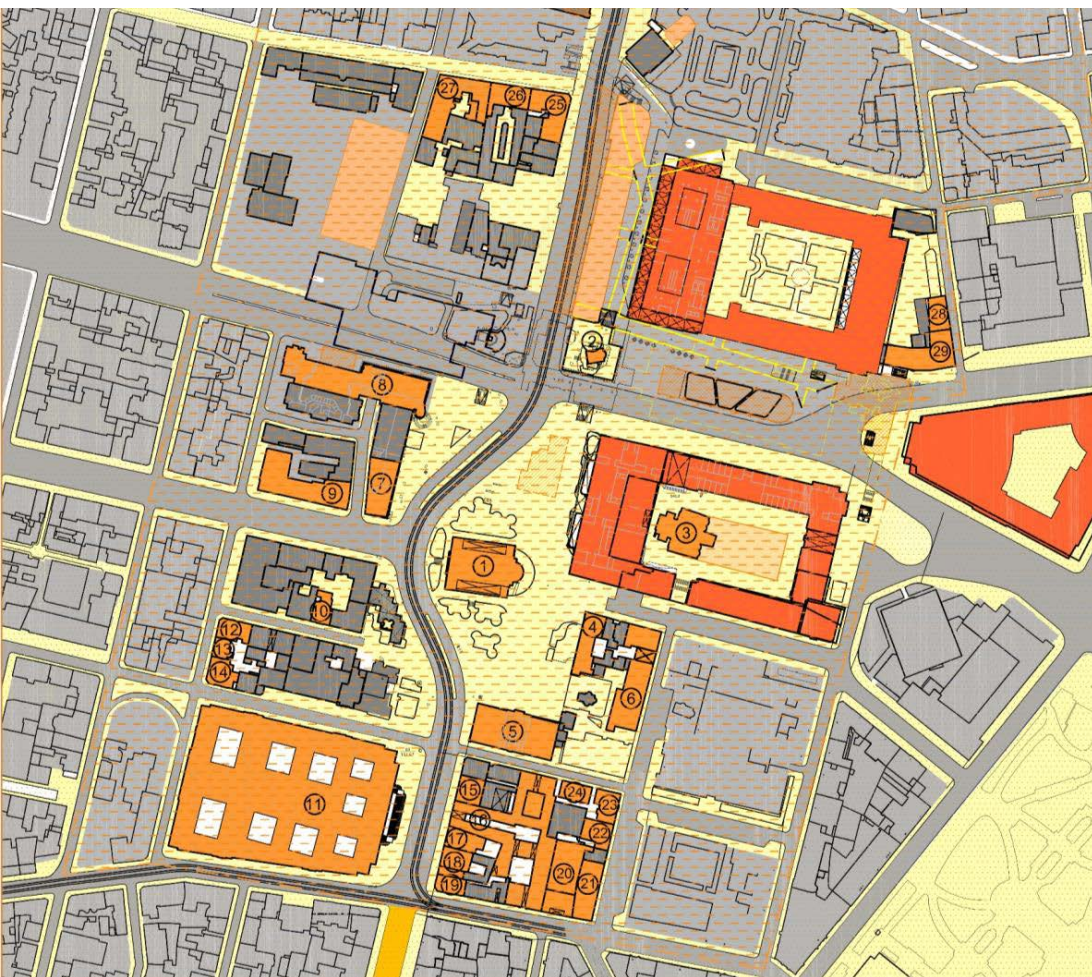
The city administration

Fast action and visible effects needed in public; in order to minimize criticism and discontent, academic experts should take the responsibility for naming requirements and prominent foreign experts should be invited to participate; the area to be pedestrianized; the cars and the tram to be moved out.

***A competition
brief
commissioned
for the square
and the
adjacent urban
areas***

The academic team

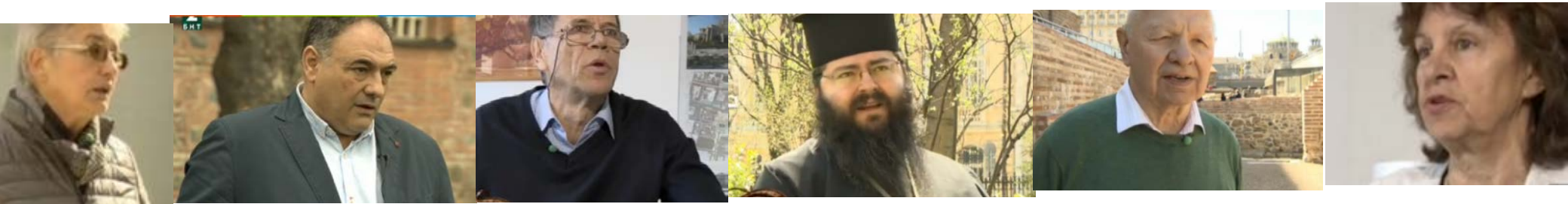
Urban planners and architects, recommended:
Preliminary action needed:
Survey on peoples' modes of behavior and attitude and the place and the cultural heritage ;
Developing a clear vision for the future of the square;
Identifying deficiencies with regard to information, infrastructure, etc.;
A two-stage process recommended: urban concept + urban design



Preliminary stage – a survey, counting of pedestrians, meeting with stakeholders

The competition brief – a study of 60 pages, overview of historic development, cultural heritage and active planning documents, analysis of current challenges and development potential, formulated competition aim and objectives;

A **public hearing** on the first draft, public presentation of the final draft in the square



A 30-minutes TV film: "A feeling for city. The temple, the Square and the Competition" presented an indirect public debate on the competition goals and the brief: The concerns of architects, planners, civil engineers, politicians, stakeholders, citizens.

<https://bnt2.bnt.bg/bg/a/chuvstvo-za-grad-khramt-ploshchadt-i-konkurst>



The Chief Architect of Sofia municipality:

"The future competition winner should be able to provide a solution to the transport problem – how to move out the cars and give the place back to the people".

The **international competition** announced in September 2018, overall sum of awards 250,000 BGN (about 125,000 EUR) <http://svetanedelya.com/sveta-nedelya-square/> 7

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

(as officially published)

1. Continuity between historical layers and modern structure
2. Connect public spaces of human scale
3. Establish connection between pedestrian spaces
4. Create an accessible and safe connection between the visitors and the archeological values
5. Enhance the accessibility
6. Ensure activity at all times of the day and the year
7. Create modern urban design
8. Economic feasibility of the conceptual solution

COMPETITION OBJECTIVES

(as in submitted document by the brief team)

1. To keep the cultural and spatial identity of the square, its character of a central and representative, yet also accessible, inclusive and democratic urban space
2. To provide for the development of its functional and spatial structure in conformity with contemporary requirements for energy and resource efficiency of urban processes, for guaranteeing safe and healthy urban environment and for the optimization of the of the city footprint on the natural environment.
3. To achieve a balance in space between transport flows and calm areas; to relate comfort requirements to ones for functional effectiveness;
4. To re-think the process of urban planning itself in conformity with the requirement for involving the urban community in the planning process

LESSONS LEARNED?

- ✓ **Urban memory is not to be taken for granted**, it is continually regenerated or lost; it is value- based and needs to be shared with living people – individuals and communities in **building urban culture**
- ✓ The material traces left in the urban environment carry tangible **messages to the future**, yet behind that there has been processes of searching and arguing, clashes of ideas, values and concerns that remain largely unrecorded and important lessons are actually lost.
- ✓ Both heritage preservation and planning action **need to develop greater sensitivity to the urban process**; expert and 'lay' knowledge could mutually educate each other through dialogue only if built upon trust and respect;
- ✓ **Architectural competitions** are not a panacea, they need a clear vision and focus, and a sound basis of continual transdisciplinary research on the actual functionality of public urban space.



We need to master
**the transformative
power of memory
and heritage** for
continually re-
conceptualizing the
evolving urban
process.



Thank you!