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## **International Conference “Culture, Infrastructure, Mobility”, 9–11 October 2023, Sofia**

The International Conference “Culture, Infrastructure, Mobility” was held in Sofia, Bulgaria in the period 9–11 October, 2023. The forum was hosted by the Sofia University (Department for History and Theory of Culture) and organized together with the Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, IfL) located in Leipzig, Germany. The first Panel “Historical evolution of infrastructures and evolving social and cultural competences” took place on October, 9<sup>th</sup> at the New Conference Hall (Sofia University) with speakers Malte Fuhrmann who made a short reflection on late Ottoman urban transport and Boriana Antonova-Goleva whose presentation was about railways, entrepreneurs, and the integration of the Ottoman Empire in the global communication networks. During Panel 2 titled “Knowledge production, contested norms and notions of modernity: public transportation, mobility services, new technologies”, case studies on transport infrastructure planning and heritage preservation from socialist Prague (Czechoslovakia), Tallinn (Estonia), Haifa (Israel), and Toruń (Poland) were presented by speakers, Jiří Janáč, Tambet Muide, Johann Nicolai, Iuliia Ermenko, respectively. The first conference day concluded with the keynote lecture “Culture, infrastructure, mobility. How a new field of research was formed” delivered by Prof. Dr. Dirk van Laak at Goethe-Institut, Sofia.

On October, 10<sup>th</sup> the forum was opened by Prof. Dr. Arnold Bartetzky who gave the second keynote lecture “Buildings and infrastructures for a new Mankind. Architecture and town planning for ideal communities”. Panel 3 was dedicated to the topic “Infrastructures, mobility, migrations: identity, habitation, and the Anthropocene”. The speakers presented cases of a Bulgarian coworking space in a rural area (Petya V. Dimitrova), rural identities against large infrastructural projects (Rosalina Todorova), the new urban settlement areas designed against nature in Turkey (Sinem Atay), migration infrastructure in Bosnia and Sudan (Abdullah Ounour, Hassan Davide Blotta, Riccardo Sacco). The title of Panel 4 was “Regulations, access, resistance: leveling of inequalities/emergence of new asymmetries in late capital-

ism” and featured the topics of waste infrastructures and the social contract (Velislava Petrova), cultural infrastructure and access to culture in the city (Radoslava Kuneva), environmental justice and access to water (Rositsa Kratunkova), commodification of thermal water resources in a Bulgarian town (Raphaëlle Segond and Miladina Monova), waste management in the Roma district Stolipinovo, Plovdiv (Nikola Venkov). “Sidelined by/in mobility: on the importance of marginalized voices in mobility planning and research” was the topic of the last keynote lecture given by Dr. Wladimir Sgibnev at the end of day.

The third conference day, October 11<sup>th</sup>, began with the topic of Panel 5 “Infrastructures as instruments of socio-cultural engineering and everyday governance”, with speakers, presenting cases related to theatre infrastructure (Halvard Schomartz), the use of bicycle in World War II Ukraine (Olha Martynyuk), cultural infrastructure in the creative districts of Bulgaria (Zlatina Bogdanova). Panel 6 “Infrastructures, communication, and geopolitics” included a presentation on the construction and development of the Maritza-Iztok mines (Hristo Kaloyanov), and a case study on the urban transport planning regimes in the Russian Federation (Nikolay Zalesskiy & Tonio Weicker). The Panel session was followed by a presentation of the book “The Road to Socialism. Transport Infrastructure in Socialist Bulgaria and Yugoslavia (1945–1989)” authored by Lyubomir Pozharliev (IfL), introduced by Prof. Dr. Ivan Tchalakov. The conference continued with the speakers from Panel 7 devoted to the topic of “Changing “aesthetics” of infrastructure and the landscape of cultural imagination”. Prof. Dr. Alexander Kiossev presented the rise and fall of the locomotive, and Yakim Petrov spoke about an excursion in a linear city. The last Panel 8 of the conference concluded with the infrastructural lives of the tram in Samarkand (Maria Petrova), and a case study on the discontinuation of the world’s biggest trolleybus network (Egor Muleev). At the end of the day, the conference participants were invited to take part in a role-playing game created by Anton Polsky and later attended the farewell reception at Toplocentrala (Centre for contemporary arts), Sofia.

From 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> of October, in the framework of Comode Sofia Symposium, a follow-up program was organized as an add-on to the conference by the CoMoDe Project (CoMoDe (leibniz-ifl-projekte.de)). On October 12<sup>th</sup>, the conference participants were invited to visit trolleybus depots in Sofia, talk to managers and personnel and join a ride on an old Ikarus trolleybus and a retro-tram in the streets of Sofia. Later in the evening, a roundtable discussion was held on the topic “Sustainable mobility narratives and the future of EU” hosted by Goethe-Institute Sofia together with the Mobility and Migration Research Group from the Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography. They invited the citizens of Sofia, experts, representatives of the non-governmental and governmental sector, artists and all transport enthusiasts to discuss the chances and opportunities of public transport in the cities and regions of Europe. Among the topics of discussion were the future of electricity driven vehicles, of implementation of new technologies from Smartphone mobility apps to autonomous transportation, the old and newly emerged ecological challenges in the

cities as well as in the regions. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, the conference participants were invited to join a day-trip to the cities of Vratsa and Pleven, where they visited bus and trolleybus depots and exchanged thoughts with drivers and directors. The excursion was organized in partnership with the NGO Public Transport and Infrastructure (PTI) Association.

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