



University of the
West of England

Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Active Citizens – the Key to a vivid and healthy urban environment: case study of Trakiya plattenbau neighbourhood (part of large-scale interdisciplinary research conducted during One Architecture Week festival 2016)

- **Format:**

Written paper / Presentation (in-person)

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

"Trakiya" is a typical plattenbau residential neighbourhood, planned and executed during the 1970s and 1980s. Built in accordance with the modernist urban planning principles and the social engineering approach, nowadays it houses more than 60 000 people. During the past 25 years it has undergone a major transformation from an avoided notorious districts into one of the most preferred neighbourhoods to live in, attractive with its vast green spaces, good transport, health and social infrastructure and pleasant urban microclimate.

The aim of the paper is to explore this transformation into district preferred for raising children, and to provide an in-depth look at the interrelations of the developed medical infrastructure, local socio-cultural practices of its inhabitants and the way of creating healthy and vivid urban environment.

The information was gathered as a part of a large-scale interdisciplinary study, conducted from February until October 2016 for One Architecture Week festival. The author has developed a special research methodology. It included field surveys, desk research, quasi-representative sociological survey of 477 people, meetings with residents of the neighbourhood and representatives of the local Municipal administration, maps and schemes production. Among the studied more than 40 urban environment elements and sub-systems were the green spaces, sports facilities, medical infrastructure, social practices and demographic profile, schools and kindergartens, etc.

The results showed that the local communities are the key-players in turning the notorious area into vivid and healthy district. Today Trakiya is attractive for young families to raise their children for its numerous of medical and social services, multiple kindergartens, schools, playgrounds, parks, and open-air sports facilities. Among the drawn conclusions are the strong and weak sides, the threads and the potential for developing sustainable community and healthy urban environment, and the potential to address global issues by good local examples.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Nina Toleva-Nowak is an architect, PhD candidate in the Department of "History and Theory of Architecture" at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia, Bulgaria. After her grant under AUSMIP+ Erasmus Mundus Programme, at The University of Tokyo, Japan, she was invited as Research Coordinator for One Architecture Week festival 2016. She developed a special methodology for the interdisciplinary research of Trakiya neighbourhood and led a team of more than 60 people (students, volunteers, researchers, specialists). Part of the results were published in the book "Almanac of Pre-fab Trakiya".

Nina has published several papers on the topic of healthy urban environment for children, palliative care in urban environment and active aging and is a co-founder of Bulgarian Long-term and Palliative Care Society.

Currently she is finishing her second masters degree in Artmanagement at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv and is working full-time as Chief Expert in the "Culture and Cultural Heritage" Department at the Municipality of Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

Among her professional interests are urban environment development, bottom-up approach, and interdisciplinary approaches in the field of urban planning, socialization and adaptation of cultural heritage and health issues in urban context.