

REVIEW

FOR A DISSERTATION TO AWARD THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEGREE "DOCTOR"

Field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences

Professional direction: 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Book Studies, Library Studies and Bibliography)

Dissertation topic: SOCIALIZATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A FACTOR FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BULGARIAN CITIES

Author of the dissertation: DIMITAR STANISLAVOV KOPAROV

Supervisor: Assoc. Dr. Aneta Doncheva Doncheva

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Olya Borisova Harizanova

The present review is in connection with the order of the rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" № RD-38-175/12.04.2024 regarding the defense of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Dimitar Stanislavov Koparov.

GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE AUTHOR OF THE DISSERTATION

The author of the dissertation is Dimitar Stanislavov Koparov - PhD student at the Department of Library Science, Scientific Information and Cultural Policy (SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"), enrolled with order № RD 20-310 /31.01.2020 and № RD 20- 279/31.01.2020

He obtained his bachelor's degree in 2013 in the specialty "Pedagogy" (SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"), and his master's degree in 2016 in the "Business Analysis and ERP Solutions" program (High School of Insurance and Finance).

He started his working career in 2008 at the National Library as a technical contractor in the digital department. Over the years, he gained experience in management and production processes. For example, in 2011 he became the head of a department in the company "Lyuco -K" OOD, a member of the board of directors of the Romanian photovoltaic association RAPIA, he became the head of the "International Relations and Sales" department in "Hermes Solar " OOD, a member and participated in the governing bodies of NGOs, etc. He is currently the director of the Directorate "Organizational Policy, International Activity and Project Management" at the Chamber of Builders in Bulgaria.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DISSERTATION WORK

The dissertation is with **general volume** of 303 pages, which includes 243 pages of main text, 23 pages of bibliography and 35 pages of appendices. The text is formatted in A4 format.

The list of used literature contains a total of 263 titles, of which 183 are in Bulgarian and 80 in foreign languages. The text is illustrated with 21 tables and 6 figures. There are 10 appendices available with the paper.

The topic of the work is **relevant** and of interest both to the Bulgarian scientific community and to the system of memory institutions, to the institutions and organizations dealing with the development and implementation of policies on the topic, to local government bodies. It is of particular interest to teams working on the issues of uncovering economic and social benefits from Bulgaria's cultural heritage.

I am not aware of any other similar development by a Bulgarian researcher. The contribution of heritage to urban development in a European context is undeniable. It is of particular importance for Bulgarian cities. Taking effective action to socialize heritage as an economic resource outlines a new set of problems and issues that have yet to be identified, formulated and developed into effective and actually applicable national policies. That is why, in my opinion, Dimitar Koparov's work can significantly contribute to the research field on the issue.

In **the introduction** of the dissertation, the research problem, the object, the subject, the goal, the tasks, limitations of the research, applied methodology and methods, the expected results of the development and their applicability in practice are formulated.

The main scientific problem is focused on “revealing and analyzing the complex interactions and opportunities for integration between cultural heritage and urban development in the context of contemporary challenges such as digitalisation, climate change and the need for sustainable growth” (p. 8).

The object of research are the institutions of memory and in particular public libraries as places for informal public contacts with the aim of a shared future of cities and regions and a shared cultural heritage (p. 9).

The subject of the study is the discovery of mechanisms for using the cultural heritage stored in memory institutions, in particular in public libraries, as an economic resource and a means of sustainable development of cities and regions, as a mechanism for socialization (p. 9).

The research thesis is that “cultural heritage can be regenerated and optimized in the context of urban development and regional policy. The active inclusion of cultural heritage supports the development of integrated planning approaches that respond to the contemporary challenges of the digital society, including climate change and the need for a green transition. The goal is the achievement of a higher quality of life in urban and regional communities, the strengthening of local identity and the promotion of cultural and social dialogue. Thus, cultural heritage will become not only a guardian of the past, but also an active participant in the creation of a sustainable future, demonstrating its potential as an engine for local development, innovation and social integration in an era of global change' (p. 9).

The hypotheses are formulated, namely (p. 9-10):

Hypothesis 1 – How developed and adequate to the reality in Europe and in our country are the policies for recognizing culture as a source of "enrichment for humanity" that contributes to the sustainable development of cities, people and communities and empowers them to play an active and unique role in the initiatives for their development.

Hypothesis 2 – Can cultural heritage as a concept, tangible and intangible, become a powerful tool to regenerate cities, to promote economic activity and bind communities to social development.

Hypothesis 3 – Does the New Urban Agenda assume that culture will need to be taken into account and that cultural heritage offers a huge and largely untapped potential to support the just transition to the low-carbon, climate-resilient future envisioned by the European Green Deal.

Hypothesis 4 – Can and to what extent the institutions of memory - libraries, museums, archives preserving cultural heritage - can play an inclusive role for the future modern development of Bulgarian cities? To what extent can institutions of memory, and in particular public libraries, play a role as forums and places for informal public contacts with the aim of a shared future of cities and a shared cultural heritage? In what directions do libraries, museums and other cultural institutions need to develop in order to play a key role in creating resources that match the needs of their communities, needs that can be radically different in different cities?

The dissertation objective is to establish:

- whether cultural heritage has a role in striving to achieve a new kind of urban development, more flexible and democratic, based on the construction of the city as a communicative, collective and open endeavour, and

- whether libraries have a role in this new vision of the city as institutions of memory where material and immaterial, social and creative interactions take place. (p. 10)

The tasks of the research (pp. 9-10) are as follows:

1. To stand out the new dimensions and problems of cultural heritage by following the evolution of its understanding and the socialization of cultural heritage in international and European documents and tracing the main stages in Bulgaria.

2. To study the new future for cities - policies, stages, development both in cities in EU countries and in cities and regions in our country. On this basis, cities in our country should be selected to be the subject of research.

3. To examine urban development policies in the field of cultural heritage, the state of institutions of memory and their key role in creating resources corresponding to the needs of the respective cities and communities.

4. To highlight and describe already implemented projects and good practices for the preservation, socialization, digitization and exposure of cultural heritage in an urban environment with the participation of libraries.

5. To indicate the main trends and directions for the future of cultural heritage as a resource for the development of cities in our country with its contribution to green and digital transformation.

Quite appropriately, given the scope of the topic, Dimitar Koparov has formulated limitations in the study (p. 11), which I fully accept.

Methodology is based on an integrated approach to arrive at the formulation of a social model on the subject and to describe its subjects, location, hierarchy and legitimate legal interests (p. 12). The following *research methods* were applied (p. 13):

- search, synthesis and analysis of scientific literature;
- historical, comparative and legal normative analysis of European and Bulgarian legal acts;
- in-depth interviews;
- internet monitoring of web sites (to collect primary data from public libraries);
- analysis, synthesis and comparison of good practices; questionnaire construction and empirical data analysis.

I congratulate the doctoral candidate for describing the expected results of the research (p. 15) and their applicability in the introduction, as well as a brief presentation of the structure of the work.

In **the first chapter** (Socialization of cultural heritage - new dimensions and problems), an overview of the views and dimensions of the socialization of cultural heritage is made in a European context. The most important international documents are analyzed precisely and in detail, with an emphasis on the European ones.

Three main stages in Europe's cultural heritage policies are highlighted : Cultural heritage as an object of preservation, protection and identification; Cultural heritage as a resource for the development of regions and society; Cultural heritage as a key building block at the heart of the Green Deal Growth Strategy.

The main stages are outlined and the evolution of the understanding of cultural heritage and the socialization of cultural heritage in Bulgaria. Figure 1 (pp. 21-22) is provided, providing a visual representation of the highlighted stages and very useful for other researchers. An overview is made and basic research related to the socialization of cultural heritage and publications in several thematic areas are presented:

- Socialization of cultural heritage - state and state policies;
- Socialization of cultural heritage - regions, cities;
- Socialization of cultural heritage - museums, archaeology, libraries, archives, private collections;
- Socialization of cultural heritage – information and communication technologies (ICT);
- Socialization of cultural heritage – international documents;
- Socialization of cultural heritage - National Security;
- Socialization of cultural heritage – education ;
- Socialization of cultural heritage - media.

The current normative documents, the main national strategies, guidelines and programs in the thematic area of the dissertation have been analyzed.

A summary and conclusions are offered at the end of chapter one (p. 74).

The contribution of the work is that in the first chapter the importance of cultural heritage is outlined not only as memory and identity (predominant in most publications on the subject), but also as a resource for socio-economic development and sustainability (a relatively new direction in Bulgarian publications on the topic). Another point of contribution is related to the attempt made to highlight the main stages in the formation and implementation of the cultural heritage policy at the territorial, regional, international level (including at the EU level).

In **the second chapter** (The new future of cities and regions) European policies are analyzed first. It has been traced how the policy for cities in the EU is approved and what the policies for urban development are, as well as how the integrated approach in urban development is applied. Attention is given to the contemporary stage of urban development related to the green transition and digital transformation, as well as the New European Bauhaus. After that, an analysis was made of strategic and

normative documents relating to the state of cities and regions in Bulgaria. Numerous problems have been brought up for the period from the years of socialism to the inclusion of our country in the common European policy for urban development. On the basis of the analyzes made, a sample of cities was formed (Fig. 5, page 111), for which a target study should be conducted. For the same, a system of criteria has been developed to outline general trends in the management of cultural heritage as a resource for development. Brief visits were made to the selected cities cards by number of population according to the last official census, location in a planning area, etc. Chapter two concludes with a summary and conclusions (p. 118) that may be useful for further research.

In **the third chapter** (Policies for urban development and degree of socialization of cultural heritage in Bulgarian cities) the results of identified and studied problems of socialization of cultural heritage are described. Emphasis is placed on their connection with urban development policies, as well as with the policies of individual cultural institutions in the city and the region. For the same, empirical material was collected, as well as statistical data regarding the preservation, socialization, digitalization and exposure of cultural heritage. In-depth interviews were conducted (9 in the period from 01.01.2022 to 03.31.2022) with representatives of the local government administration in the cities of Sofia, Burgas, V. Tarnovo, St. Zagora, Targovishte, Vidin, Gotse Delchev, Krumovgrad, Madan. The results are presented in 9 tables. A quantitative and qualitative assessment was carried out, as well as an analysis of official public information, survey data. Appropriate indicators have been selected for this purpose. As a result, the role of the public library is highlighted (reflected in 11 tables). Chapter three ends with a summary and conclusions (p. 198).

In **the fourth chapter** (The future of cultural heritage as a resource for the development of modern cities with its potential for green and digital transformation) already implemented projects and good practices (abroad and Bulgaria) are identified and evaluated. Thus, it has been established that cultural heritage influences communities, especially those aimed at preserving and valuing cultural heritage, that heritage contributes to social inclusion and cohesion, that it leads to benefits for citizens' quality of life. By extrapolation, parameters of a model describing trends that emerge in a later future period and that can adapt to changing conditions over time are determined. Special attention is paid to the potential of Bulgarian public libraries for the socialization of cultural heritage as a resource for the development of Bulgarian cities. As in the previous three chapters, at the end of the fourth, a summary and conclusions are again made (p. 237).

In **the conclusion**, a summary of what was achieved during the research is made clearly enough. The tasks of the study have been completed. Hypotheses have been tested and proven. The research thesis is confirmed. The goal has been achieved.

Appendices contain the transcribed 9 interviews with representatives of the local government. They are very valuable not only as evidentiary material for the dissertation work, but also for other researchers who would work on the same or similar issues in the future.

EVALUATION OF THE ABSTRACT FOR THE DISSERTATION WORK

An abstract is provided for the dissertation work. The text has a volume of 53 pages in A5 format. It has the following structure:

1. Structure of the dissertation
2. General characteristics of the dissertation work
3. Content of the dissertation
4. Summary of results and conclusions
5. Reference to the main contributions
6. Publications on the subject of the dissertation

The abstract correctly reflects the content of the dissertation work.

PUBLICATIONS ON THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

The PhD student has submitted 4 independent publications, all on the topic of the dissertation and published in the period 2020–2023. The authorship of Dimitar Koparov is indisputable.

DISSERTATION CONTRIBUTIONS

In the abstract, Dimitar Koparov has indicated 5 contributions to his work. I fully accept the listed contributions which are as follows:

- *Contributions of a scientific and theoretical nature*

1. The importance of cultural heritage has been proven not only for national memory and identity, but also as a resource for the socio-economic sustainable development of cities.

2. For the first time in our country, three main stages in the evolution of understanding and subsequent formation of EU and UN policies in the field of cultural heritage have been identified and systematized, namely:

- Cultural heritage as an object of storage, protection and display;
- Cultural heritage as a resource for the development of tourism in the development of regions;
- Cultural heritage as the main building block of the Green Pact Growth Strategy.

3. For the first time, the current regulatory framework and the main current national strategies, guidelines and programs relating to the relationship between the socialization of cultural heritage and the social order in Bulgaria have been systematized and analyzed through an integrated approach.

- *Contributions of a scientific and applied nature*

4. Good practices from the work of public libraries in the country related to the socialization of cultural heritage, digitization processes and development of electronic services for end users have been identified and systematized. The obtained results can stimulate the implementation of the green transition and digital transformation in Bulgaria.

5. Trends are presented and guidelines are outlined for future benefits of cultural heritage as a resource for the development of cities in our country. The guidelines are predominantly related to promotion of social cohesion, commitment of citizens to the preservation and promotion of heritage, integration of citizens to care for common goods. The results of the dissertation research can be useful both in the development of strategies and visions for the socialization of cultural heritage, and in setting priorities in urban planning.

CONCLUSION

After thoroughly familiarizing myself with the content of the dissertation, I can conclude that it meets the statutory requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor". The minimum requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" have been met. The topic is current and important for the research direction.

The structure and content of the work correspond to the topic. The text demonstrates Dimitar Koparov 's knowledge of the issue. A positive impression is made by the doctoral student's ability to analyze, structure, visualize the written work. A positive impression is made by the fact that each of the chapters ends with correct summaries and conclusions. A large amount of information sources have been processed and analyzed, including normative documents and those related to EU policies. They stand out enough labor contributions.

The authorship of Dimitar Koparov is indisputable.

The work is useful for other researchers and for the development of adequate policies and for implementation in practice.

I propose to the esteemed jury for the dissertation work on the topic "*The socialization of cultural heritage as a factor for the development of Bulgarian cities*" with author Dimitar Stanislavov Koparov to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

18.05.2024
Sofia

Reviewer:
Prof. Olya Harizanova, DSc