

STATEMENT
FOR A DISSERTATION FOR THE AWARD OF
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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

3.5. 5.3 Public Communications and Information Sciences (Book Science, Library Science and Bibliography - Policies in the Library and Information Sector)

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

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Author of the opinion: Prof. Dr. Tsvetanka Hristova Pancheva

GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE AUTHOR OF THE DISSERTATION

The present dissertation work is authored by Dimitar Stanislavov Koparov - PhD student at the Department of Library Science, Scientific Information and Cultural Policy at Sofia University in the part-time form of study, enrolled by Order No. RD 20-310 /31.01.2020 and No. RD 20-279/31.01.2020 and discharged with the right to defend by Order No. RD 20-610/18.03.2024. At the scientific jury the candidate for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor has accurately submitted all the required documents, according to the Law on the Research and Development and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski".

Dimitar Koparov holds a Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy from St. Ohrid University of Sofia. Kl. Ohridski University and a Master's degree in Business Analysis and ERP Solutions from the University of Insurance and Finance. His professional career includes various positions: technical contractor in the Digital Department of the National Library, dealing with the digitization of valuable documents of written cultural heritage; department manager in private companies; Member of the Board of the non-profit association "SEVI - Association for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Sources"; Chairman of the non-profit association "D. U.L.O - Dignity, Respect, Loyalty, Experience", where he works in the field of preservation of intangible and tangible cultural heritage; the Chamber of Builders in Bulgaria, where he holds various positions and is currently the Director of the Directorate of Organizational Policy, International Activities and Project Management. His interests in the field of preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, combined with his work commitments at the Chamber of Builders, are the basis for the choice of the topic of this dissertation.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE THESIS

The dissertation consists of a preface, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and 10 appendices and has a total length of 303 pages. The main text includes 21 tables and 6 figures. The bibliography contains 263 titles, of which 183 in Bulgarian and 80 in foreign languages.

Relevance of the topic

Despite the fact that the topic of cultural heritage, its preservation, wide use and promotion has been repeatedly advocated in scientific research and that there are also popular works in which it is considered as a measure of identity, local and national memory, this dissertation is very topical.

This is because this thesis develops the topic of heritage for the first time through the prism of:

- European documents in which the topic of cultural heritage has evolved from its highlighting as an object for which, due to its great importance, funds, resources and efforts should be invested for its preservation and conservation for the future and its wider use in the present, to a resource and asset through which the urban population is involved, communities are created, industries are developed, for example tourism, digital technologies are applied to improve access to it, new jobs are created. Analysing a large number of documents and initiatives of the European institutions in their complexity, focusing mainly on the socialisation of heritage in the life of cities, in their policies related to the Green Pact, the risks to cultural heritage from climate change, the Digitisation Strategy, the New European Bauhaus are definitely a new undeveloped niche that gives a current European focus to the work; Or to put it another way, for the first time this work intersects modern trends in cultural heritage development with contemporary notions of urbanization. Koparov's dissertation is innovative not only in outlining the European parameters of the topic, but also in analyzing a number of problems in the Bulgarian practice of socialization of cultural heritage in urban environments.

Structure of labour

The structuring of the work makes a very good impression. It consists of a preface, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and appendices.

In the preface, the relevance of the topic, the object, the subject, the aims and objectives of the work, the methods used, the hypotheses assumed and the expected results are clearly and logically sequenced. The main scientific problem of the research is well outlined around the search for new approaches and strategies that can enhance the role of cultural heritage as a strategic resource for achieving sustainable development, social cohesion and economic innovation in urban and regional contexts. Its elucidation corresponds to the guiding research thesis that cultural heritage can be regenerated and optimized in the context of urban development and regional policy so that it can transform from a custodian of the past into an active participant in the creation of a sustainable future, a driver for local development in a dynamically changing digitally, socially and climatically urban environment.

To this end, four research hypotheses have been formulated, gravitating around: the possibility of cultural heritage becoming a source for promoting economic activity and community cohesion in cities; its recognition in European and Bulgarian policies as a source

for sustainable urban development; its potential to support a just transition to a low-carbon future and the European Green Pact; the extent to which memory institutions can play a key role in creating re The hypotheses set out correspond to the aim and the 5 objectives formulated for the research and are limited to establishing whether cultural heritage has a role to play in aspirations to achieve a new kind of urban development and whether libraries have a role to play in this new vision of the city as memory institutions where tangible and intangible, social and creative interactions take place.

The limitations of this dissertation in terms of the breadth of the topic are well outlined in the preface. The necessity of applying an integrated approach in the research, of a systematic and comparative analysis is also motivated, and the other research methods are correctly chosen.

I consider the set parameters of the thesis to be fully adequate to the structure chosen and developed in the 4 chapters.

In the first chapter "Socialization of Cultural Heritage - New Dimensions and Problems" the main concepts are discussed in turn, the European policies are outlined in detail through an analysis of the relevant documents, the Bulgarian normative base and its practical embodiment in the national strategies and programmes are examined. The evolution of the understanding of cultural heritage and its socialization in international and European documents is traced - as an object of preservation, protection and identification; as a resource for the development of regions; as a building block in the Heart of the Growth Strategy. Green Pact. Similarly, the main stages and evolution of the understanding of cultural heritage and its socialisation in Bulgaria are presented in different aspects - scientific research and publications, normative documents, national strategies, guidelines and programmes. The topic of the socialization of cultural heritage is not new, but in the present work it is addressed in a multidirectional way through a review of scientific publications in the aspects of "state and state policy"; "regions, cities"; "museums, archaeology, libraries, archives, private collections"; "information and communication technologies"; "international documents"; "national security"; "education"; "media", which is the contribution of the work.

The approach adopted in Chapter One (and, for that matter, in Chapter Two) has two advantages: 1. It allows the PhD student to demonstrate a very good knowledge of the European documents and his ability to present them in their chronological and thematic coherence, which in this topic is done for the first time in a scientific work; 2. Provides an opportunity to analyse to what extent the European perspective of the topic is harmonised through the legal framework and relevant policies in Bulgaria.

The second chapter, "The New Future of Cities and Regions", has an identical structure. It first reviews EU policies on urban development, outlines the main documents, strategies and declarations, focuses on the integrated approach to urban development, the new policies on sustainable urban development brought forward by the Green Pact, the digital transformation and the New European Bauhaus initiative. This chapter also focuses on the problems of cities in Bulgaria, outlines a number of imbalances in the development of large,

medium and small cities, and focuses on their lagging behind European urban development trends. The existing Bulgarian normative and strategic documents and concepts outlining urban development models that predetermine investments in regional development and opportunities for socialization of cultural heritage are analyzed. Attention is drawn to the fact that libraries, archives and museums are not recognized as centres of cultural heritage, which are included in the National Concept for Spatial Development for the period 2013-2025, no support is planned and its inclusion as a resource for development is not envisaged. Chapter Two is also important in terms of outlining the parameters of the PhD student's own empirical research. On the basis of the analysis of the state of Bulgarian cities made in it, 5 criteria for the selection of cities are formulated, the combination of which determines their sample for the study. The selected cities are given short business cards, with an emphasis on the presence of diverse cultural heritage in them.

The third chapter "Urban Development Policies and the Degree of Socialization of Cultural Heritage in Bulgarian Cities" is also a contribution to the work. It has been achieved through the analysis and synthesis of data from in-depth interviews with senior local government officials in the cities selected for the study, as well as through the examination of library websites on certain parameters in order to explore their role as memory institutions and holders of cultural heritage and especially its socialisation in cities in the context of European expectations. For the purpose of the analysis, 9 interviews were conducted with representatives of the local government administration in the cities of Sofia, Burgas, Veliko Tarnovo, St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg and St. Petersburg, Zagora, Targovishte, Vidin, Gotse Delchev, Krumovgrad, Madan they were formed in special samples, allowing comparability of information, and thus greater reliability in the interpretation of the data. The summarized data provide material for reflection on the problems of cultural heritage and its socialization in the direction of clarifying the role of local authorities in the development and management of cultural heritage; their attitude to perceive it as a resource for development and as an asset of cities; the attitude of the local community towards cultural heritage and its appreciation as an important component in achieving the identity of a city; ways of financing cultural heritage, including through implemented projects; the role of partnership in heritage conservation and socialisation processes, etc. under.

The positive impression here is not only the analysis of the results, but also the correct description and documentation of the empirical study itself and the well-designed questionnaire.

The study of the websites of public libraries operating on a territorial basis - regional, municipal/city and community libraries - provides additional material for analyses on the work of cultural heritage libraries. The object of the analysis is the types of cultural heritage in libraries, their information and digital representation through electronic catalogues, databases and digital libraries, the services offered on its basis, including electronic ones. Work with different categories of users to promote cultural heritage is also highlighted. In addition to the information extracted from its own research, the work also draws on public data from national surveys conducted on cultural heritage in libraries, which seals the picture achieved through empirical research.

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" the perspectives for the development of the socialization of heritage in Bulgarian cities are examined by outlining foreign and Bulgarian good practices and outlining future directions in theoretical (Improvement of the definition of cultural heritage), normative (National frameworks, policies, strategies and programs regarding cultural heritage), research and European (Similar perspectives are noted for public libraries in the direction of - strategies and policies, cultural heritage services, the future of digital libraries, libraries and the socialisation of citizens in times of crisis, cooperation with other institutions in the field of cultural heritage, library buildings, green libraries, staff, etc.

After each of the chapters, there are **summaries and conclusions** that follow directly from their text. This gives better coherence between the chapters and a smoother flow of the text from one to the next.

The conclusion clearly and distinctly shows what the work has achieved. The analysis and summary of the data confirm the fulfilment of the stated aim and objectives of the thesis and prove the intended hypotheses. The guiding research thesis that cultural heritage can be regenerated and optimized in the context of urban development and regional policy is proven.

The citation and bibliography at the end of the text - both in terms of content and layout - is excellent. It also suggests an excellent knowledge of the material on the subject, allowing a broader view of it.

The appendices contain the transcribed 9 interviews with local authority representatives and represent not only valuable source material for the thesis itself, but can also serve for future research on the broad topic of cultural heritage and its use in local contexts.

Evaluation of the abstract

The abstract correctly presents the content of the thesis in a synthesized form.

Publications on the topic

The doctoral candidate presents 4 independent publications. All of them are on the topic of the dissertation.

Contributions of the thesis

As the most significant contribution of the work, I highlight that "the importance of cultural heritage has been proven not only for national memory and identity, but also as a resource for socio-economic sustainable development of cities". And this is so because this evidence stems from the generalizations, analyses and conclusions in all the chapters of the work, as well as from the evidence of empirical research.

Notes, recommendations and questions

I have no substantive comments at this stage of the discussion of the paper. All my comments from the Departmental Council discussion have been taken into consideration. Given the public importance of the topic, I propose that this paper be published after final editing.

My question to the PhD student is "Could you please motivate yourself which of the activities of Bulgarian public libraries related to cultural heritage at this stage comes closest to the European requirements for its socialization and its use as a resource for sustainable urban development?".

Conclusion

Dimitar Koparov's dissertation meets the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education and Science. The subject matter is topical and the research field is promising. The doctoral candidate demonstrates a very good knowledge of the topic, the ability to summarize and analyze the facts presented, to draw reasonable conclusions. His authorship is beyond doubt. The work has undoubtedly a contributory character.

All of the above gives me grounds to vote "YES" for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Book Science, Library Science and Bibliography) to Dimitar Stanislavov Koparov.

Prof. Dr Tsvetanka Pancheva

/Member of the scientific jury/

13.05.2024 г.