

PUBLIC POLICIES FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE VALORIZATION IN THE 20TH CENTURY. CASE STUDY OF CITIES' SOFT POWER CONSOLIDATION PROCESSES IN VERONA AND BISTRITA

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Abstract Public administration is a complex structure, which, because of its excessive bureaucratization, is extremely difficult to change. The present study of cities' soft power consolidation processes was possible due to the interdisciplinary approach that combines expertise in public administration and history. The aim was to identify the causal links between cultural institutions and creative industries and the role played by public administration in the development of the city through an overarching cultural policy. The present study presents the results of a comparative interdisciplinary approach to the consolidation of the cities' soft power through the valorization of cultural heritage, relying on the example of the cities of Verona and Bistrita.

Keywords City soft power, interdisciplinary research, cultural policy, urban history, public administration.

Introduction

Public administration is a fairly beadle structure, which, because of its excessive bureaucratization, is extremely difficult to change. The current global crisis of mistrust in public administration caused by the COVID-19 pandemic only confirms that public administration needs changes, and these changes should primarily concern human capital and the continuous professional training of the public administration specialists. However, similar processes could be observed during throughout the 20th century.

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In a world that undergoes such rapid changes and in which frequent clashes with the old world order occur, in the form of revolutions and the two world wars, from a scholarly viewpoint, an exclusive focus on one particular field has become obsolete. The very clear requirement is for interdisciplinarity.

The understanding of public administration is also aided by the humanities, such as history, philosophy, literature and poetics etc.,¹ given the fact that public administration is involved in all aspects of life. In the western world, it quickly became obvious that specialists in public administration needed to have interdisciplinary training, so that they would be able to handle complex issues efficiently. In the predominately communist eastern world, public administration did not focus on specialization and knowledge, but rather on loyalty to the party. This led to the emergence of a completely different approach to the development of the cultural policies that aimed to exploit cultural heritage and thus to consolidate the soft power at the citywide, regional and national levels.

In earlier stages of the present research, it was revealed that sustainable urban development could rely on the concept of soft power. In this sense, the city's influence would increase by attracting certain demographic groups with the help of various socio-cultural characteristics that distinguish the city in question from other cities that have relatively equal levels of economic development. Cultural heritage and events, as the primary forms of the aforementioned socio-cultural characteristics, play a significant role in urban development. The cultural production thus becomes a major element of the urban economy that constructs the image of both the physical places themselves and the urban life in general.²

The present study employs an interdisciplinary approach that combines the expertise in public administration and history. Thus, we identified the causal links between local cultural institutions and creative industries and the role played by local public administration in the development of the city through an overarching cultural policy. As such, the present study presents the results of a comparative interdisciplinary approach to the consolidation of the cities' soft power through the valorization of its cultural heritage, using the cities of Verona (Italy) and Bistrita (Romania) as examples, in the context created by the popular literary characters with which these cities are associated.

Given the context described above, the article will be structured as follows:

- The opportunities for Public Administration
- Cities' soft power and interdisciplinary approach
- Case study: Verona vs. Bistrita. Two soft power consolidation approaches

¹ Jos Raadschelders, *Public Administration: The Interdisciplinary Study of Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 80.

² Greg Richards, Robert Palmer, R., *Eventful Cities: Cultural Management and Urban Revitalisation* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2010), 3-5.

Interdisciplinary research: opportunities for Public Administration

The primary focus is on the cities' soft power and its consolidation. Their approach employs interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary³ viewpoints, that are crucial, given the fact that public administration essentially encompasses the study of history and cultural politics in the field of urban development. The interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach reveals the "manageable part within the context of the whole,"⁴ and leads to a synergistic result in terms of solving scientific problems and tasks.

In this ever-changing world, interpretation difficulties arise in the course of linear monodisciplinary research. There is a clear tendency towards the multipolarity of knowledge and, consequently, towards its systematization within a more global system that surpasses the traditional disciplines.⁵ The current research practices reflect the approach requirements of today and they thus compile more coherent and complex studies on an entire array of scientific issues.⁶

A phenomenon as complex as the city and, more particularly, the city's soft power, naturally requires an approach that goes beyond the public administration discipline, as part of an endeavour to elevate the city in such a way that it could eventually meet the expectations of its residents. This approach allowed an in-depth assessment of a city's soft power. We were thus able to outline a comprehensive definition and to analyse effective ways to consolidate the soft power of the city, from cultural and historical viewpoints, as well as from the points of view of public policies.

Public administration, as a discipline, was originally interdisciplinary, relying on other academic disciplines,⁷ borrowing elements from sociology, statistics, economics, history, political science, jurisprudence, etc., since public administration simultaneously affects a considerable number of fields that, in fact, cover all aspects of social life.⁸ All branches of the humanities are thus involved and, in this case, they are somewhat compelled to turn primarily

³ Jean Piaget, "The epistemology of interdisciplinary relationships," in *Interdisciplinarity, Problems of teaching and research in Universities*, edited by Briggs A. and others (Paris: OECD, 1972), 127-139.

⁴ Eran Vigoda-Gadot, *Public Administration. An Interdisciplinary Critical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2002), 173.

⁵ The Danish Business Research Academy, *Thinking across disciplines - interdisciplinarity in research and education* (Copenhagen: The Danish Business Research Academy, 2008), 26.

⁶ Rodica Mariana Niculescu and Doina Usaci, "An Effective Learning Environment for Training Future Professionals Including the Field of Politics and Public Administration," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 81(0), 2013: 4-8.

⁷ Eran Vigoda, "Rethinking the identity of Public Administration: Interdisciplinary reflections and thoughts on managerial reconstruction," *Public Administration & Management: An Interactive Journal*, 8 (1), 2003: 1-22.

⁸ Christopher Pollitt, "Envisioning Public Administration as a Scholarly Field in 2020," *Public Administration Review* 70, (December, 2010): S292-S294.

to history in order to explain the emergence and changes of certain social and cultural phenomena that determine the development of society.⁹

Cities' soft power and interdisciplinary approach

The concept of soft power represents a way of influencing and achieving the desired results through voluntary participation; in other words, it compiles non-military methods of exerting influence at different levels - at the state level in particular. The development of the soft power concept allows for the extrapolation of its principles upon cities, in the field of international relations. There is a distinction between the soft power of a city and urban attractiveness. Soft power is unrelated to economic criteria: urban attractiveness is a universal concept for all cities, but the concept of a city's soft power always refers to the certain cases.

In contrast with the rural areas, the city, as an administrative unit, due to its economic and socio-cultural development, provides the convenient option of living almost anywhere. However, there has always been a need for a certain competitive advantage that was more than a mere economic superiority. The city can attract tourists or qualified professionals only through its image,¹⁰ while developing the "symbolic economy."¹¹ The author of the concept, Joseph Nye, stated that soft power is based on culture (places that are attractive to others), political values (in accordance with which an individual makes the decision to leave their home or to move abroad) and foreign policies (when others consider them legitimate).¹²

The processes of globalization led to the acceleration of the regionalization processes, especially noticeable in Europe, where the concept of a 'Europe of Regions' emerged. As a result of this decentralization of power, the city actually receives state-like responsibilities at different levels. Therefore, the end of the development cycle within a centralized state is rather foreseeable. There are several historical parallels with this process of regionalization. Although history is best viewed in its continuum, the closest historical parallel to our time is the disintegration of the Frankish Empire, especially after 987. Its collapse led to the formation of the famous independent city-states of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance within the territory of modern Italy: Milan, Bologna, Verona, Genoa, Turin, Florence, Pisa, Venice, etc.¹³

The cultural sector is one of the key sectors for the consolidation of city soft power. The extent of the development of a cultural sector and that of the masses' access to the aforementioned sector establish the level of the more general development of the urban community.

⁹ Mattei Dogan, "Political Science and the Other Social Sciences," *Political Science* (1975:1): 97–130.

¹⁰ Jan Van der Borg and Antonio Paolo Russo, *The Impacts of Culture on the Economic Development of Cities* (Rotterdam: Erasmus University, 2005), 27.

¹¹ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995), 3.

¹² Joseph Samuel Nye Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

¹³ Armando Lodolini, *Le Repubbliche del Mare* (Roma: Biblioteca di Storia Patria, 1967).

Case study: Verona vs. Bistrita. Two soft power consolidation approaches

From the point of view of the cities' soft power, Verona (Italy) and Bistrita (Romania) have a lot in common. Perhaps some of the most famous literary characters in history are somewhat associated with these cities, namely Romeo and Juliet (whom Shakespeare placed in Verona¹⁴), and Count Dracula¹⁵ (whom Stoker placed near Bistrita, at the Borgo Pass, where Jonathan Harker makes his final stop before his arrival at the Count's castle). However, the public administration of each city had drastically different approaches to the consolidation of the city's soft power. The potential was given by the fame of each city's literary "residents", a factor that could contribute to the city's cultural diplomacy and to the creation of an attractive image of the city – not only to increase tourism, but also to attract new residents and to establish the position of a regional centre because of city's fame.

It is important to note that neither of these two literary masterpieces contains a detailed description of the mentioned real estate. The authors give us the opportunity to dream and imagine, since the real estate in question does not serve as a plot-defining subject. Thus, the "boundaries between factual and fictional are blurred."¹⁶

While Verona's public administration opted for the involvement of scholars from the fields of history and culture, Bistrita's public administration opted for the involvement of amateurs, thus favouring the economic factors in the development of the cultural policy for the valorization of cultural heritage. The public administration of Verona made the active choice of developing the city's image as a centre of a romantic story, transforming and adjusting the appearance of the city and its particular buildings into what the general public thought Verona looked like at the time of the events described in *Romeo and Juliet*. The public administration of Bistrita had a slightly different approach. They tried to replicate the experience of Verona, but with no consideration for the historical realities. They used the names from the novel *Dracula*, but did not attempt to reflect any of the general public's ideas about the impression that places associated with Dracula should give. Therefore, the public administration of Verona used an interdisciplinary approach, which gave a much more interesting and sustainable result than in the case of Bistrita, where the decisions were made by monodisciplinary specialists, strictly controlled by Romanian Communist Party, ignoring the fact that culture and economy are "intertwined, socially constructed processes, rather than naturally separate spheres."¹⁷ To illustrate this idea most accurately, let us consider *Juliet's House* in Verona and the Golden Crown Hotel and Dracula's Castle Hotel in Bistrita.

¹⁴ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Company, 1871).

¹⁵ Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1897).

¹⁶ Emilija Lipovsek and Smiljka Kesic, "Commodification of culture in fiction-induced tourism," *TIMS Acta*, 2015(9): 105-113.

¹⁷ Eugene McCann, "The cultural politics of local economic development: meaning-making, place-making, and the urban policy process," *Geoforum*, 33(3), (2002): 389.

The building known as “Juliet’s House” was, in fact, merely “appointed” as her home, since the Dal Capello family, whose name is simply consonant with the Capulets’ surname, once owned the building.¹⁸ However, by the 19th century, the building fell into disrepair. It housed “a most miserable little inn,”¹⁹ according to Goethe. Quite a lot of tourists came to Juliet’s house since the popularity of the Grand Tours in the 17th and 18th centuries, but, until 1905, the house was privately owned and the city authorities decided to purchase it only under public pressure.

As well as in case of Count Dracula, cinema has played an important role in promoting the story. Although there were earlier films dedicated to Romeo and Juliet, it was John Cukor’s film that became the breakthrough, and the love scene on the balcony became iconic, representing the ideal true love story.

Then, the public administration of Verona decided to use the fame thus granted by the movie. Between 1937 and 1940, they practically reconstructed the building, following in the footsteps of Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and his approach to restorations. Therefore, they practically remodelled the building in accordance with their own idea of how Juliet’s house should look. One of the most significant changes was the construction of Juliet’s famous balcony. Therefore, for the balcony fence, the author of the restoration project Antonio Avena used spolia – parts of an antique structure, judging by its artistic features and sarcophagus, which, for a long time, was kept in one of the city museums.²⁰

In general, during the reconstruction of the building, many original medieval elements were used, which gave the final appearance of the building a credible eclecticism. Juliet’s House got a second chance at life and a new round of popularity, despite the fact that only walls remained from the original building, and that it is largely impossible to prove that this house is somehow related to the fictional family of the Capulets. However, as a part of cultural policy, on local administration level, it was a successful project, despite the fact Avena’s ideas were not approved by the Ministry of Education of that period.

In Bistrita, the awareness about the vast historical, ethnographical and touristic potential existed among scientists²¹ and communist public administration.²² The idea to build the Golden Crown Hotel and Dracula’s Castle Hotel originated in the 1970s, when the head of the Tourism Office of the Bistrita County, Alexandru Misiuga, read Bram Stoker’s novel and hit upon the idea of building a hotel that resembled the fictional castle and that reminded people of the Count. Despite the correctness of such an idea in terms of the image of the city and the

¹⁸ Eleonora Oggiano, “The Shakespeare Brand in Contemporary ‘Fair Verona’,” *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance* 23(38), (2021): 111.

¹⁹ Maria D’Anniballe, *Urban Space In Fascist Verona: Contested Grounds For Mass Spectacle, Tourism, And The Architectural Past* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2010), 92.

²⁰ Paola Marini, *Medioevo ideale e Medioevo reale nella cultura urbana. Antonio Avena e la Verona del primo Novecento* (Verona: Vérone, 2003).

²¹ Thomas Năgler, *Așezarea sașilor în Transilvania* (Bucharest: Editura Kriterion, 1981), 123-128.

²² T. Morariu, I. Buta and A. Maier, *Județele Patriei. Județul Bistrița-Năsăud* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1972), 138.

consolidation of its soft power, the history of Bistrita is much more closely connected to the Borgo Pass. There is a belief among historians that it was the strategic proximity to Borgo Pass that influenced the choice for the location of the settlement, and then that of the fortress and the city, which today we know as Bistrita.²³

At the time of construction, Dracula's Castle Hotel was called Tihuta because of the communist authorities, who insisted on the use of the Romanian name for the Borgo Pass. Only after the Romanian Revolution, in 1989, the hotel was renamed Dracula's Castle Hotel.²⁴

These hotels were quite popular among tourists at that time, but their popularity was incomparable with the popularity of Juliet's House. The natural question that arises is *why*.

The answer lies in the approach to the construction of the hotels: the projects were a fairly ordinary multi-storey building, in the spirit of socialistic architecture and Ceausescu's megalithic projects of that time. There is no hint of a romanticized Gothic style, no mystery,²⁵ the invention of a place corresponding to the action of the novel and its laconic description, as it was in the case of the Juliet's House. The absence of the atmosphere described in the novel, as well as the absence of any stylistic attributes that would have facilitate an immersion in the Dark Ages, make the hotels rather ordinary and uninteresting to visit.²⁶ The local historians were, however, aware of the special eclectic style developed during Bistrita's "golden age," combining Renaissance main structures with later Baroque elements into a unique architectural ensemble in the city's historical centre.²⁷

Moreover, the construction site for Dracula's Castle Hotel was chosen too literally – the Borgo pass. In that particular location, there are no ruins of old castles or fortresses that could serve as a framework for the construction of a modern hotel. However, if the administration had involved historians or had employed any interdisciplinary expertise, the ruined Rodna Fortress, at a distance of only 50km from the Boro Pass, would have immediately brought forth and could have hypothetically been seen as the prototype for the location choice for Dracula's castle.

Despite the economic considerations for which the future Dracula's Castle hotel was located in the Borgo Pass, its architectural appearance could have been more gothic-like, to emphasize the dark connotations with the Dracula's character. The characteristic features of medieval defensive structures could be added, or using pseudo-spolies, copies of the original

²³ Paul Niedermaier, "Dimanica evoluției orașului Bistrița în contextual căilor de comunicație", *Revista Bistriței*, 1994 (VIII): 80.

²⁴ Ioan Baca and Cristina Rusu, *BORGO PASS. Semnificații geografice, istorice și culturale* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut2017), 112-118.

²⁵ Emilija Lipovsek and Smiljka Kesic, "Journeys beyond pages: The use of fiction in tourism," *Turisticko Poslovanje*, 2014(14): 56.

²⁶ Tuomas Hovi, "The Use of History in Dracula Tourism in Romania," *Folklore* (57), (2014): 69.

²⁷ Corneliu Gaiu and Șerban Popescu-Dolj., "Reabilitarea imobilului din Piața Centrală nr. 24. Bistrița. Studiu arheologic și de arhitectură," *Revista Bistriței*, XXVII(2012): 369-382.

fragments of medieval buildings from the museum collections in the region. In this case, the hotel would be much more credible, as is the case of Juliet's House.

Conclusions

Both Juliet's House and Dracula's Castle Hotel are essentially the results of Shakespeare's and Stoker's fantasy, which were later brought into reality by the local authorities in order to consolidate the soft power of the city. However, the authorities of Verona succeeded to a much greater extent, since the house and especially Juliet's balcony are already integral parts of the city of Verona itself.²⁸

Such differences in the results of local cultural and urban policy, despite their similar goals, are dictated by the local public administrations' different approaches to solving the tasks at hand; the reason for the differences could often be the different forms of previous training undertaken by the representatives as specialists.

In the case of Verona, there was a clear interdisciplinary approach to the development of cultural policies, for the valorization of Juliet's House and the consolidation of the city's soft power, with an emphasis on using historical sources for the sake of credibility. In the case of Bistrita, the local authorities' approach to the valorization of its cultural heritage and the attempt to create a landmark for the fans of Count Dracula was purely economic. Such a monodisciplinary approach to the project deprived it of a significant part of its attractiveness for the target audience, precisely because of the outright inaccurate image of the final building, thereby failing the attempt to consolidate the soft power of the city.

²⁸ S. Bassi, *Shakespeare's Italy and Italy's Shakespeare* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 143.