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Metanarrative and Transnational in the Concept of Soft Power Architecture

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Abstract: Soft power is defined as the capability to attract and persuade without coercion and payments. Consequently, soft power architecture is viewed as its spatial manifestation. Soft power architecture is seen as an amalgamation of processes and outcomes that must be examined and explained as an indissoluble structure rooted in various narratives.

This paper explores theoretical understanding, mapping, and classifying the (re)production processes for spaces aimed at communicating the officially sanctioned images/messages of identity(-ies). Such displaced typologies share declarative values analogous to core messages and their delivery. The findings of this paper suggest a shared metanarrative that is universally applicable and will be decoded through rigorous observation of place-making strategies for displaced typologies and their impact on the built environment where they are placed.

The conclusion indicates that these processes will be instilled by a specific set of values. However, since they operate within a complex network of various stakeholders, the question remains regarding the surrounding processes that promote a specific value(s) as a dominant trait. The "finished product" (displaced spatial manifestation) will not always accurately reflect the prevailing (meta)narrative due to the intricacy of these processes, but it will have significant spatial consequences on the urban matrices as well as provide further insight into the spatial tug-of-war between nations.

Keywords: soft power, architecture, metanarrative, transnational, spatial displacement

1 Introduction

Soft power, a concept rooted in the ability to attract and persuade without resorting to coercion or financial incentives, has a tangible expression defined within the scope of a novel concept soft power architecture (see e.g. Filipović, & Vasiljević-Tomić, 2019, Filipović, 2021). This architectural phenomenon represents a fusion of multifaceted processes and outcomes that demand meticulous examination, forming an inseparable structure interwoven with diverse narratives.

This paper embarks on a multilayered exploration, encompassing theoretical comprehension, process delineation, and categorization pertaining to the creation and reproduction of spaces expressly designed to convey officially sanctioned images and messages of identity(-ies). These spatial constructs, often termed *displaced typologies*, share inherent declarative values that align with core messages and the methods used to convey them.

The key findings of this research work postulate the existence of a universal metanarrative, a common thread transcending borders and cultures, awaiting decipherment through in-depth scrutiny of place-making strategies employed in shaping displaced typologies and their resultant impact on the surrounding built environment.

However, within the intricate web of interconnected stakeholders, questions arise concerning the mechanisms that elevate specific values into dominant traits. This complexity stems from the fact that these processes operate within a convoluted network of diverse actors, each with their own motivations and objectives.

Consequently, the ultimate "finished product" – the tangible spatial manifestation resulting from these endeavors – may not always be an accurate reflection of the prevailing (meta)narrative. This discrepancy underscores the intricate nature of these processes, where competing interests and perspectives may distort the intended message. Nevertheless, it is imperative to recognize that these spatial manifestations exert a significant influence on urban landscapes and matrices, shaping the very fabric of cities and yielding insights into the ongoing spatial power dynamics between nations.

This text is utilized to explore complex ideas within the intersection of the concepts of transnationality, meta narrative and soft power architecture, by creating a hypothetical framework within these concepts are studied and analyzed within the broader theoretical context and its implications. As such, it will remain within the boundaries of theoretical investigation, without the presumption these concepts have a physical manifestation that would be suitable to be utilized as an exploratory model. Furthermore, any examples that are identified with specific aspects of this investigation in previous research are deemed as insufficiently illustrative to showcase and highlight the complexities of the presented theoretical investigation and as such will be omitted from this text, to be explored in future academic publications.

2 Soft Power

'Despite its growing importance around the world, a universal definition of soft power is yet to be found, except that it is a form of national power based on ideational and cultural attractiveness which is intentionally or unintentionally utilized by actors in international relations to achieve strategic imperatives' (Lee, 2011: 2)

This segment will revise the scholarly works systematizing the concept of soft power, more precisely, the works of Nye (2004) and Lee (2011), with the former introducing the concept of soft power and the latter giving a concise overview of its historical development and implications, which will be utilized as the necessary outline in this paper.

Soft power, a term coined by Joseph Nye in the late 1980s, is the ability to attract and convince others without oppression and payments. Although military force and economic prosperity typically serve as the backbone of national power, such hard power does not always mirror its influence. For instance, the U.S, world's superpower has spent a defense budget larger than that of other nations and it is the world's largest economic body. However, U. S's image and its influence dwindling, mainly due to its failure in seeking a global consensus on how best to pursue counterterrorism approaches and to address potential global challenges such as climate change. There have been many calls both within and outside the United States to restore its leadership through "smart" blending of hard and soft power (Lee, 2011: 1).

Other countries also increasingly recognize the importance of soft power tools, such as diplomacy, foreign (economic) assistance and communication in the processes of rousing support and enhancing one's national image. Western European countries have a longer tradition and spend more time on their respective public diplomacy approaches, useful as a supplementary strategy of soft power, exhibited in actions such as peacekeeping and humanitarian mission, international cultural relations and immigration policies. Japan, for example, has embraced the concept of soft power as an instrument of its foreign affairs and security policy under its constraints on the use of hard military power. Most countries in general tend to attempt increasing their capacity to "strengthen soft power and integrate it with hard power and economic strength" (Lee, 2011: 1-2).

Lee (2011) gives clear theoretical perspectives on soft power starting with the concept of power itself, defined as the ability to influence others to produce the outcomes one desires. According to Dahl (1957), A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something B would not otherwise do. Traditionally, a nation's power has been determined by the capabilities to influence the behavior of other states through coercion and economic incentives. The sizes of population, territory, military force, national resources and economic strength have therefore been key factors in assessing national power. Countries have tended to heavily rely on "the use of hard power that rests on force and inducements (sticks and carrots metaphor), because it was the most direct and tangible way of enforcing dominance in international relations" (Lee, 2011: 3).

While acknowledging the importance of military and economic power, Nye (1991) added a third concept pertinent in the global arena of international relations, *soft power*. Soft power is the ability to attract and convince, not just command and coerce. It enables a nation to appeal to others' values, interests and preferences rather than being dependent on utilizing force and inducements. Nye (1991) argues that:

[...] 'if a state can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow' [...] 'In short, the universalism of a country's culture and its ability to establish a set of favorable rules and institutions that govern areas of international activity are critical.' (Nye, 1991: 33)

In summary, compatibility with other nations' set of values and interests is as important as the exercise of hard power to obtain the desired goal (Lee, 2011). According to Nye (2004), in the global information age, all three sources of power – military, economic and soft – remain relevant, although in different degrees in different relationships. However, Nye argues that the importance of soft power is ever-increasing and gaining traction as countries engage in competitive policies of attraction, legitimacy and credibility. Nye suggests there are three major resources of a nation's soft power: culture which attracts others, political values, when it lives up to those values, both internally and externally, and its foreign policies when others appreciate them as legitimate and moral (Lee, 2011).

Lee (2011) makes an observation that Nye's conceptualization is not the only or the definitive explanation of power. To illustrate, prior to the works of Nye, Boulding (1990) utilized the terms "threat", "exchange" and "integrative" power for similar purposes, highlighting that, while the realists focus on the threat power of coercion, "the evidence is very strong that integrative power is the most important of the three." From this perspective, threat power is coercive and destructive and exchange power is based on the dynamics of trade, mutual contracts and reciprocal cooperation, while integrative power has a more emotional and organic base, where human relationships extend beyond respect into friendship and even love (Lee, 2011).

Similarly, Griswold and Carr (1941) discussed the importance of "power over opinion" and its close connection with the military and economic power of the nation. Similarly, one of Morgenthau's (1972) ways of exercising

national power lies in the politics of prestige, offering a hint for understanding the implications of soft power in the world of anarchy. Power, in itself, is not the end of the nation-state, but a means to achieve prosperity and guarantee survival. The state not only implements its will towards others by taking measures that follow the drive of resources on foreign soil, but also by relying on an international reputation that has sufficient intention and ability to use its power. Morgenthau (1972) stated that *‘in the struggle for existence and power, what others think of us [the image in the mirror of the minds of others] is as important as what we actually are’* (Morgenthau,1972: 73)

3 Quantifying Soft Power

Inquiries of successful deployment of soft power and the follow-up processes, noting its results presents a challenge for scholars and policymakers alike. The main question remains: can soft power be effectively quantified? This segment will provide a brief overview of an approach from a think tank Soft Power 30, in partnership with the University of Southern California’s Center on Public Diplomacy, endeavoring to deliver practical insights on soft power, public engagement and digital diplomacy. USC’s Center on Public Diplomacy brings academic rigor to the discipline of public diplomacy, and translates cutting-edge research into actionable insights for diplomats, policymakers and academics alike (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report: 12).

An important note is to be made at this juncture: the presented data on the Soft Power 30’s attempt to codify and quantify a country’s soft power potential does not extend into the spatial realm. Architecture, for example has not been addressed as one of the factors, only widely interpreted as one of the facets of the sub-index “culture”. The purpose of providing the theoretical concepts of soft power quantification in this segment is to illustrate the attempt to measure a concept that cannot be easily placed within the realm of definitively quantifiable data.

Countries most adept in using soft power facilitating positive collaboration will be better equipped to deal with the current uncertainty and geopolitical instability and ultimately shape global events. Referencing Nye’s (2011) model of conversion of soft power into a desired outcome comprises of five steps (see: Figure 1). As depicted, the process must start with a clear account of available resources and an understanding of where they will be effective. It is at this first hurdle – measurement – that most governments stumble. This, however, is understandable as the difficulty of measuring soft power is well documented (Trverton, 2005).

Nye (2004) has previously pointed to three primary sources of soft power: culture, political values and foreign policy. The Soft Power 30 framework builds on Nye’s three pillars, capturing a broad range of factors that contribute to a nation’s soft power. The given index assesses the soft power resources of countries by combining both objective and subjective data (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report: 30).

The objective data is drawn from a range of different sources and structured into six categories, with each category functioning as a sub-index with an individual score (see: Figure 2). The six sub-indices are: Government, Culture, Global Engagement, Education, Digital, and Enterprise. The framework of categories was built on a survey of existing academic literature on soft power (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report: 30).

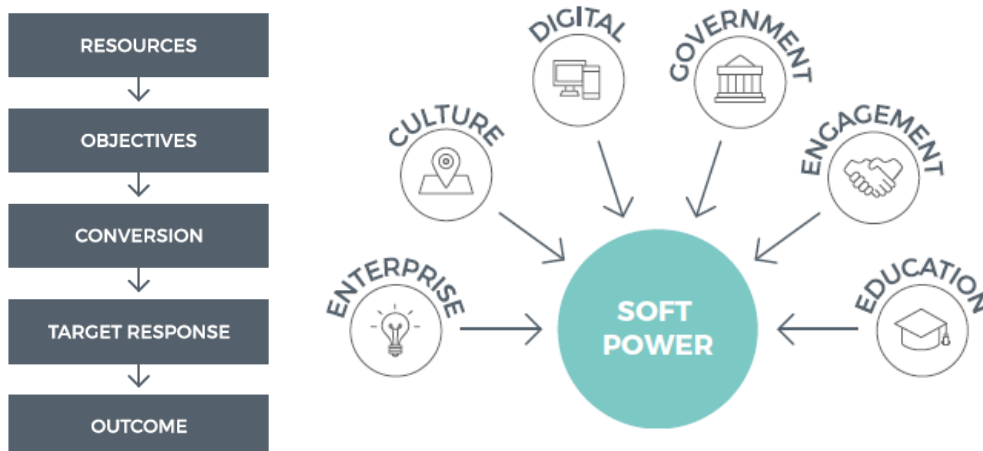


Figure 1 (left) Soft Power Conversion Process
Figure 1 (right) The Sub-Indices of Soft Power

For the *Government* sub-index, the Soft Power 30 Report (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report, p. 30) uses the postulations of Haass (2013), assessing a state's political values, public institutions and major public policy outcomes. Together with measures such as individual freedom, human development, violence in society, and government effectiveness, the Government sub-index measures the extent to which a country has an attractive model of governance and whether it can deliver broadly positive outcomes for its citizens.

Similarly, Nye (2004) argues that, when discussing a country's culture, if it promotes universal values that other nations can identify with, it makes said countries naturally attractive to others. The reach and volume of cultural output is important in building soft power, but mass production does not necessarily lead to mass influence. As a result, the Soft Power 30 index includes measures of culture that serve to capture both the quality and the international penetration of a country's cultural production. The *Culture* sub-index includes measures like the annual number of visiting international tourists, the global success of a country's music industry, and even a nation's international sporting prowess (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report: 30).

Another sub-index, the *Global Engagement* is utilized to measure a country's diplomatic resources, global footprint and contribution to the international community. It captures the state's ability to engage with international audiences, initiate collaboration and ultimately shape global outcomes. This sub-index includes metrics such as the number of foreign missions abroad, membership in multilateral organizations and overseas development aid (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report: 30).

For the next sub-index *Education*, the Report (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report, pp. 30-31) argues that the ability of a country to attract foreign students, or facilitate exchanges, is a powerful tool of public diplomacy, even between countries with a history of animosity. Similarly, Atkinson (2010) while presenting research on educational exchanges gives empirical evidence on accumulation of reputational gains for a host country when foreign student returns to their country of origin. Moreover, Olberding J. and Olberding D. (2010) discuss how foreign student exchanges have been shown to have positive indirect 'ripple effects' when returning students advocate on behalf of their host country of study. Metrics in the Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report (p. 31) for this sub-index include the number of international students in a country, the relative quality of its universities, and the academic output of higher education institutions.

Enterprise sub-index is noted as, not a measure of economic power or output, but rather, aiming to capture the relative attractiveness of a country's economic model in terms of its competitiveness, capacity for innovation, and ability to foster enterprise and commerce (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report). The Report section dealing with this sub-index that economic might is more often associated with hard power, but economic factors can contribute to soft power as well.

Lastly, the *Digital* sub-index is hailed as brining an important new component to the measure of soft power. As technology has massively impacted our daily lives and ways of interaction, the same can be said for foreign policies, practices of public diplomacy and soft power. This sub-index aims to capture the level of countries implementing technology, its connectedness to the digital world and their usage of digital diplomacy through social media platforms (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report).

Soft Power 30 group's Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report (p. 31) particularly addresses the difficulties of interpreting the *subjective data* for soft power; one of the biggest challenges is its inherently subjective nature. Rather than attempt to design against subjectivity, The Soft Power 30 index embraces such approach. Its inaugural report, launched in 2015, was the first to combine objective data and international polling. The following year (2016), adhering to the previously set framework, specially commissioned polling across 25 countries was utilized to analyze the subjective data for this index.

Drawing from the existing pool of academic literature of soft power, a series of short questions was developed, providing data on international perceptions based on the most common 'touch point' through which people interface with foreign countries. International polling for the index ran across a range of the world's major regions. In 2016 the polling was expanded to 25 countries, up from 20, and taking our sample size from 7,200 to 10,500. In 2017, the Soft Power 30 group ran polling of the general public in the same 25 countries. (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report: 31-32).

The following factors were covered in the polling (each rated on a 0-10 scale, where 0 represented a very negative opinion, and 10 represented a very positive opinion):

- Favorability towards foreign countries;
- Perceptions of cuisine of foreign countries;
- Perceptions of how welcoming foreign countries are to tourists;
- Perceptions of technology products of foreign countries;

- Perceptions of luxury goods produced by foreign countries;
- Trust in foreign countries' approach to global affairs;
- Desire to visit foreign countries to live, work, or study;
- Perceptions of foreign countries' contributions to global culture.

These eight metrics were used to develop a regression model, where "favorability towards foreign countries" was the dependent variable, and the remaining questions were independent variables. This measured the extent to which the remaining perceptions predict favorability towards a country in the dataset (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report: 34).

Soft Power 30 group acknowledges that the presented composite index, as it is expected for any index of this nature, the presented data comparably has its limitations and shortcomings. Moreover, the subjective nature of soft power is highlighted, making comparison across all countries difficult. Moreover, the total complexity of the dynamics of inter-state relations – where soft power is brought to bear – cannot be fully rendered by a comparative global index (Soft Power 30, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2017 Report: 36).

4 Soft Power Architecture

The concept of soft power architecture is an examination of its potential and effectiveness in influencing bilateral relations, offering concrete indicators of its underlying dynamics. Drawing from Joseph S. Nye's (2004) concept of "soft power," this framework introduces an additional element, positing architecture as a negotiating tool employed by various actors. Nye's definition of "soft power" is fundamentally rooted in the capacity to attract, with this appeal often resulting in compliance. It is achieved through the deployment of "soft" initiatives, such as cultural and intellectual exchanges, in contrast to "hard" power, which encompasses a nation's military or political influence on the global stage (Nye, 2004).

With soft power architecture, however, this can change, as interpretative stratagems can act and evolve differently within the diverse context and produce dissimilar consequences and meanings, not necessarily in synchronization with original intentions, as it happens with the export of architecture/ideology. One must underline that these "mutation" effects are applicable for any projected type of exported architecture, the ones communicating power and supremacy of the sending state and soft power architecture, representing the willingness for (an outward) display of deepening mutual understanding between countries. For the purposes of this research, the focus will be on the exported architecture that, in its conception, implementation and spatial consequences stages had the latter case of conceptualization, as the mechanisms that govern these processes are deemed to be more complex, when compared to the former.

Furthermore, implementation, monitoring and follow-up processes, if handled with care, either separately or as a set, can produce and/or sustain effects that are in line or differ from the original intentions. Again, the underlying value of management processes through inception, implementation and management cannot be stressed enough.

One must note, however, that soft power architecture alone cannot be used to fully examine and define ideologies and stratagems of the sending country, as its manifestations abroad are shaped both by internal processes and factors native to that environment and in many cases, ideological images and spatial manifestation must be amended to facilitate the requirements of foreign environments (even with the privileges awarded by the VCDR). Architecture is a system of construction of circumstances that do not exist independently from the contextual occurrences. Architecture, in fact, does not capture the entirety of, but rather constructs and legitimizes every societal reality and ideology (Ignjatović, 2007). Thusly, soft power architecture should be viewed as a snapshot (Czarniawska, 2002) of the conceptualization and implementation processes and policies of every actor involved, as well as its produced spatial effects.

Architecture that will be examined and that is defined as the architecture of soft power will be the one forged with the original intention to facilitate and enhance the sender country's interests abroad, with or without ulterior motives. The architecture of intimidation, showpieces of supremacy and might, is removed from this research, and a clear set of indicators will be put in place to separate and classify these typologies.

5 Meta-narrative

The term "metanarrative," also referred to as a grand narrative or master narrative, was introduced by Jean-François Lyotard (1979) to denote a theoretical framework that seeks to provide a comprehensive and all-encompassing account of various historical events, experiences, and social and cultural phenomena. These narratives are constructed on the basis of appealing to universal truths or universal values.

In this context, a metanarrative serves the function of legitimizing power structures, authority, and societal norms. It aspires to explain diverse historical events and imbue them with meaning by establishing connections

between disparate events and phenomena through the application of universal knowledge or a structured schema. The concept of grand narratives encompasses a broad spectrum of ideologies and worldviews, including Marxism, religious doctrines, the belief in progress, universal reason, and others.

However, Jean-François Lyotard critiqued the concept of metanarratives in his influential work, "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge" (1979). In this text, Lyotard introduced the idea of the "postmodern condition," characterized by a growing skepticism towards the totalizing nature of metanarratives or grand narratives.

As described by Stephens and McCallum (1998), a metanarrative is a global or all-encompassing cultural narrative schema that organizes and explains knowledge and human experiences. The prefix "meta" signifies "beyond" or "about," while "narrative" refers to a story. Consequently, a metanarrative can be understood as a story about a story, encompassing and elucidating other "smaller stories" within a comprehensive framework.

Lyotard's "The Postmodern Condition" marked the emergence of the term "postmodernism" in philosophy and introduced the idea of incredulity towards metanarratives. He argued that technological advancements, particularly in communication, mass media, and computer science, had rendered traditional metanarratives untenable. Techniques such as artificial intelligence and machine translation highlighted the shift towards linguistic and symbolic production as central elements of the postindustrial economy and the associated postmodern culture. This led to a proliferation of language-games, without any overarching structure, challenging the foundations of modern science and its metanarratives.

Lyotard advocated for embracing the plurality of small narratives that compete with one another, replacing the dominance of grand narratives. This perspective has often been interpreted as endorsing relativism, a characteristic feature of postmodern thought.

It's worth noting that "The Postmodern Condition" was originally commissioned as a report on the influence of technology on knowledge in the exact sciences by the Québec government. Lyotard later admitted to limited knowledge in this domain and even humorously referred to the text as a "parody." Despite his reservations, the work has become highly influential in the field of postmodern philosophy, shaping discussions on the role of metanarratives and the postmodern condition.

6 Discussion

A narrative, any narrative has an end in view, it is a program how something (in this case soft power architecture) is to be achieved. Particularly when architecture and urban planning are combined with soft power that is conceptually rooted in the future/future goals. The challenges with soft power architecture and consequently, with the claim of a meta-narrative, is that the framework that will clearly define its end goals to be achieved is yet to be defined, even in the broadest of strokes, as it is, by nature, in a state of constant flux.

The presumed points of a meta-narrative for soft power architecture share inherent declarative values that align with core messages and the methods used to convey them, most notably through previously established international relation approaches. However, these values will ostensibly shift to suit particular contextual demands, which will translate into the spatial realm. Moreover, additional shift will occur after implementation within the built environment context, correcting the previously presented meta-narrative. The observable values can then be extricated, either through comparative analysis or focusing on particular major modifications in the (meta) narrative for a particular context.

As per the poststructuralist approach, when a narrative is constructed, something is left out, when an end is defined, other ends are rejected, without necessarily knowing the alternative ends are. Researchers must keep asking, what is left out, can we know what is left out, we must know the limits of narratives, rather than establish them for the future, for the establishment of soft power architecture.

In the instance when observing narrative shifts, there is great potential to observe and codify the changes, as it is presumed, they will be circular (space vs. narrative), constantly corrected, although it is presumed that the narrative will have to work around the already built environment, as any further modifications in said environment are more difficult than in a virtual one.

Researching meta-narratives of soft power architecture and its subsequent shifts (corrections) must have a long-term strategic approach. The end goal would be to codify the usage of spatial manifestations and urban governance to achieve particular goals within a global arena of various stakeholders and constant geopolitical turmoil, claiming their inherent transnational traits. It is doubtful that such an undertaking is likely to be finalized, with clear-cut findings, but nonetheless serves as an important overview on how architecture and other disciplines are involved in building philosophical, as well as spatial narratives and outcomes.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper delves into the multifaceted concept of soft power architecture, which represents a novel approach to understanding how nations shape their bilateral relations through the built environment. It emphasizes the importance of scrutinizing the theoretical underpinnings, processes, and categorizations associated with the creation and reproduction of spaces designed to convey sanctioned identities and messages. The research posits the existence of a universal metanarrative within the realm of soft power architecture, transcending borders and cultures. This metanarrative is proposed to be discerned through a meticulous examination of place-making strategies and their impact on the built environment. However, the complexity of this endeavor is evident, given the intricate network of stakeholders, each driven by their own motivations and objectives.

The paper underscores that the tangible spatial manifestations resulting from these efforts may not always align with the intended (meta) narrative due to competing interests and perspectives. Nevertheless, it acknowledges the profound influence of these spatial manifestations on urban landscapes and the power dynamics between nations.

The discussion also introduces the concept of soft power, emphasizing its significance in contemporary international relations. Soft power, as defined by Joseph S. Nye, revolves around the ability to attract and persuade without resorting to coercion or financial incentives. It contrasts with hard power, which relies on military or economic dominance. The paper highlights the increasing recognition of soft power tools by nations worldwide, emphasizing the importance of diplomacy, cultural exchange, and communication.

Additionally, the paper explores the quantification of soft power, recognizing the challenges in measuring such a concept. It introduces the Soft Power 30 framework, which combines objective and subjective data to assess a nation's soft power resources. The framework includes categories such as Government, Culture, Global Engagement, Education, Digital, and Enterprise. However, it notes that this framework does not encompass the spatial realm, which is a crucial aspect of soft power architecture.

Lastly, the discussion delves into the concept of metanarratives, as introduced by Jean-François Lyotard. These grand narratives are theoretical frameworks that seek to provide comprehensive explanations of historical events and cultural phenomena based on universal truths. Lyotard's work, "The Postmodern Condition," critiqued the dominance of metanarratives in shaping worldviews and highlighted the growing skepticism towards their totalizing nature in the postmodern era.

In summary, this paper embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the intricate interplay between soft power, architecture, and metanarratives. It underscores the need for a long-term strategic approach to understand how nations employ spatial manifestations and narratives to achieve their goals in an ever-evolving global landscape. While challenges abound, this research provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of contemporary international relations and the role of architecture within this framework.

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