

MUSEALISATION, MUSEIFICATION, MUSEUMIFICATION, AND/OR MUSEUMISATION?

Loredana VĂDUVA
Cornelia PETROMAN
Daniela VĂLUSESCU
Diana MARIN
Ioan PETROMAN

***Abstract:** The authors of this paper attempt at clarifying the meaning of four new concepts / notions in the field of tourism – musealisation / musealization, museification, museumification, and museumisation / museumization. The paper provides definitions of these concepts / notions and comparisons between them aiming at showing that, in essence, they refer to the same practice meant to enrich the palette of cultural tourism. It also offers a few ideas for tourism destination developers.*

***Keywords:** museum, musealisation, museification, museumification, museumization, cultural tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Musealisation / musealization has been defined as “the placing in the museum, or more generally, transforming a centre of life, which may be a centre of human activity or a natural site, into a sort of museum” (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2010), “the phenomenon of presenting and interpreting cultural groups and their representative tangible and intangible heritage” (Galla & Paulo, 2016), and “the process of making something suitable for exhibition in a museum; conversion to the status of a museum exhibit” (Wiktionary, The Free Dictionary). It can be approached from a cross-cultural perspective (Wan-Chen, 2012); it can be seen as a manifestation of “Absent Heritage” (Aykaç, 2023), as a process (Guedes, 2021), as a strategic component of urban transformation (Osterlund, 2013), as a strategy for the reconstruction of the past (Aykaç, 2019a), as an urban process (Aykaç, 2019b); it can be virtual (Cultraro, Gabellone & Scardozi, 2009); it can concern archaeological sites (Cafiero, 2014; López Marcos, 2014; Popa Daniela et al, 2010; Rață Georgeta et al, 2013; Ristea I. et al, 2018; Vădu-

va Loredana et al., 2018; Văduva Loredana & Petroman Cornelia, 2017), cities (Ansaari, 2017), objects (Bhagwati, 2013); it is associated with the concepts of museality (Nelle, 2009), education and preservation (Kwiecińska, 2016; Marin Diana et al., 2015; Marin Diana et al., 2013; Petroman I. et al., 2012; Petroman I. et al., 2010; Petroman I. et al., 2013; Petroman I. M. & Văduva Loredana, 2021, Petroman I.M. et al., 2015).

Museification, defined as “the death of territories when, inserted in the cultural tourism industry, they are transformed into open-air museums” (Ruy & Almeida, 2020), is an alternative form for museumification and a synonym for museumization (Wiktionary, The Free Dictionary). It can be related to art criticism (Patracho Sant’Anna, 2011); it can be territorial (Ruy & Almeida, 2020); it can concern migration (Torres, 2011a); it is seen as a cultural trend of our times (Assion, 2002).

Museumification is defined as “the process of conversion into a museum” (Wiktionary, The Free Dictionary). It can be digital (Zolotovskiy, 2021); it can be related to presentation and representation (Zhang, 2018); it can be seen as a promising mechanism for the preservation and presentation / representation of historical and cultural heritage (Zolotovskiy, 2021).

Museumisation / museumization is a synonym for museification and museumification and a key concept of museology (Galla & Paulo, 2016). It can be approached from a sustainability perspective (Anzani, 2013); it can concern migration (Torres, 2011b, 2014), stalagmites (Columbu et al., 2021); it is associated with the process of Disneyfication (Colini et al., 2008).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The material on which the analysis below is based consists in literature on the cultural process of musealisation / musealization, museification, museumification, and museumisation / museumization. The research methods used are the linguistic method (aimed at the analysis of the terminology) and the comparative method (aimed at identifying differences rather than similarities between the four terms above).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Musealisation / musealization:

- Blurs the boundaries between museums and historic urban spaces (Nelle, 2009; Aykaç, 2019b);
- Can bring numerous benefits to local communities;

- Involves transforming historical buildings, sites, and urban areas into museum-like spaces or incorporating them into the museum concept;

- Involves an urban context, in which (Nelle, 2009) museality is often used to describe heritage town centres (composed of historical buildings and public spaces protected and displayed not only for educational reasons but also because they contribute to local identity) that resemble museums; and museality patterns emerge in these town centres, and they serve as considerations for development plans;

- Involves an urban process, in which (Aykaç, 2019b) musealization extends the concept of museums beyond individual buildings to encompass entire historic cities: thus, as part of culture-led urban regeneration, historic buildings are repurposed as museums, and heritage sites become open-air museums; underlying motives (e.g., glorifying the past) impact the selection of heritage elements for preservation;

- Is a multifaceted process involving both conservation and intentional choices (Nelle, 2009; Aykaç, 2019a);

- Transforms historic urban spaces into staged artifacts for cultural tourism and preservation (Nelle, 2009; Aykaç, 2019b).

Musealisation can have several impacts on the local communities:

- Cultural impact (OECD – ICOM, 2019): cultural participation, educational opportunities, learning opportunities, research support, social inclusion;

- Developmental impact (Kelly, 2006): museums are transforming in response to social and economic imperatives at local, national, and global levels;

- Economic impact (OECD – ICOM, 2019): attraction of visitors, boost of cultural diversity, inspiration of creativity, regeneration of local economies, supply of revenues, support of local development;

- Social impact (OECD – ICOM, 2019): civic engagement, creativity, health, inclusion, innovation, place branding, social capital, social cohesion, urban regeneration, well-being.

The challenges of musealisation are (Kelly, 2006):

- Local context;

- Specific processes implemented;

- Specific programmes implemented.

The process of musealisation has had several implications (Galla & Paulo, 2016):

- It has led to the creation of stereotypes derived from past constructions of the “Other” (e.g., the freezing of indigenous minorities or peoples in

old anthropological time frames, the image of the Native American) (Galla & Paulo, 2016);

- It has been a concern in both heritage tourism and sustainable development;

- It has relied on tourism in the musealisation of local community values.

Examples of musealisation:

- Exhibitions without exhibits (Lin, 2017) are a unique form of musealisation; extract something from its affiliated context, give it a museal status, and transform it into a museum object; focus not on physical objects but on the representation of history and architecture.

- Fortification walls and castles in European cities (Nelle, 2009) are examples of the manipulation of the meaning of heritage for touristic / economic purpose and examples of the musealization of the built heritage.

- Historic towns (e.g., Bharatpur, Nepal; Bruges, Belgium; Hoi An, Vietnam; Kyoto and Nara, Japan) (Galla & Paulo, 2016) have undergone musealization to preserve their cultural and historical significance; and provide “authentic” experiences through interpretation and management strategies.

- Spanish-colonial world heritage towns (e.g., Trinidad, Cuba; Guanajuato, Mexico; Vigan, Philippines) (Nelle, 2009) allow the identification of a set of museality patterns that may serve in the development of the plans for heritage town centres.

2. Museification:

- Involves transforming aspects of daily life into curated exhibits, often within heritage sites, museums, or theme parks – spaces that mediate multiple meanings depending on the agency, dialectic between the host institution and source, or stakeholder communities of the cultural resource (Galla & Paulo, 2016);

- Is the phenomenon of presenting and interpreting cultural groups and their representative tangible and intangible heritage;

- Needs cultural regulation of affective and ethical dispositions that make politics and poetics of the museum forces possible;

- Needs to accommodate multiple voices and perspectives in the presentation of cultural heritage;

- Refers to the deliberate transformation of cultural elements into curated exhibits for public consumption and interpretation (Assion, 2002).

Museification has:

- Positive aspects (Galla & Paulo, 2016): it allows tourists and visitors to engage with history and culture; it provides “authentic” experiences for tourists and visitors;

- Negative aspects: it can freeze indigenous minorities and peoples in old anthropological time frames, and it can perpetuate stereotypes and colonial discourses.

3. Museumification:

- Can lead to oversimplification or misrepresentation of cultures (Yildirim et al., 2022);

- Indicates the act of making something (e.g., artworks, buildings, cultural artifacts) museum-worthy or adapting it for display in a museum context, i.e. taking a concept, object, or place and integrating it into the curated environment of a museum to preserve and showcase their significance for future generations;

- Transforms something into an artifact / exhibit within a museum setting.

Museumification has several significant impacts on cultural heritage:

- Education and awareness: educates the public about the importance of cultural heritage; provides a platform for people to learn about different cultures, histories, and societies (OECD – ICOM, 2019);

- Identity and cohesion: provides identity (by showcasing the unique aspects of a community’s culture and history) and cohesion to communities (OECD – ICOM, 2019);

- Preservation and protection: preserves cultural heritage for future generations by converting historical artwork, buildings, or cultural artifacts into museum exhibits (OECD – ICOM, 2019);

- Representation of local life and culture: local government and natives (sub)consciously represent their identity and tradition and produce localness through the decoration and reshaping of local living space (Zhang, 2018);

- Tourism and economy: boosts local economies by attracting tourists (Galla & Paulo, 2016).

Examples of museumification (10 Best Examples of Successful Creative Placemaking Projects, 2023):

- Favela Painting Project, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: an example of art transforming the facades of houses in the favelas into vibrant, eye-catching murals catalysing positive change within a marginalised community;

- High Lin, New York, USA: a former elevated railway turned into an

urban park, a serene escape from the bustling streets below;

- Museo Soumaya, Mexico City, Mexico: a striking design resembling a silver cloud;

- Nuart Festival, Stavanger, Norway: a street festival creating thought-provoking and visually stunning artworks;

- Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy: architectural design integrated with exhibitions hosted in historic buildings and pavilions.

4. Museumisation / museumization:

- Can perpetuate stereotypes and colonial discourse;

- Can play a vital role in preserving and sharing collective cultural heritage (Bhagwati, 2013);

- Intersects with race, gender, class, faith, and power;

- Involves creating spaces, such as museums, heritage sites, and theme parks, where visitors can engage with and learn about cultural artifacts, traditions, and histories;

- Makes efforts to unravel colonial discourse and promote participatory democracy;

- Provides opportunities for innovation and growth;

- Refers to the phenomenon of presenting and interpreting cultural groups and their representative tangible and intangible heritage.

Museumisation is challenged by (Galla & Paulo, 2016):

- Changes in customer preferences caused by the evolution of societal values and interests;

- Competition in the cultural sector with museums vying for funding, relevance, and visitors;

- Competition for limited public resources;

- Cultural marginalization because of not enough representation;

- Digitalisation: museums must navigate the digital landscape from digitizing collections to engaging with audiences online;

- Global events (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic) force museums to find new ways to engage with their audiences;

- Globalisation, climate change, migration waves need to address specific issues in exhibits;

- Reduction in cultural spending can impact available resources;

- Social cohesion changes in a diverse and rapidly changing society;

- Stereotypes and colonial discourse perpetuated in the representation of indigenous minorities and peoples.

Examples of museumisation:

- Ancient towns: Bharatpur, Nepal; Bruges, Belgium; Hoi An, Vietnam; Kyoto and Nara, Japan;
- Prominent historic interpretation sites: Colonial Williamsburg, USA; Pilgrim's Rest, South Africa; Sovereign Hill, Australia;
- The Smithsonian Institution, SUA, an educational and heritage tourism cultural space.

Conclusions

The authors of this paper have drawn the following conclusions:

- The definitions of musealisation / musealization, museification, museumification, and museumisation / museumization show that there is still no agreement on the topic between the different authors;
- Musealisation has its own features, impacts, challenges, and implications;
- There are numerous examples of musealisation all over the world;
- Museification has its own features and aspects (positive and negative);
- Museumification has its own features and impacts;
- There are numerous examples of museumification all over the world;
- Museumization has its own features and challenges;
- There are numerous examples of museumisation all over the world;
- There is no fundamental difference between musealisation / musealization, museification, museumification, and museumisation / museumization.
- The few minor differences are rather subjective ones and point to personal authors' preferences.

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Notes on the authors

Loredana VĂDUVA - Banat's University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I", Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Timisoara

Cornelia PETROMAN - Banat's University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I", Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Timisoara

Daniela VĂLUSESCU - Development Research Station for Raising Sheep and Goats, S.C.D.C.O.C. Caransebes

Diana MARIN - Banat's University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I", Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Timisoara

Ioan PETROMAN - Banat's University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I", Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Timisoara

Corresponding author's e-mail: loredana_heber@yahoo.com