

## ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКАЯ И ПРИКЛАДНАЯ МУЗЕОЛОГИЯ

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### A matrix for museological diagnostics and planning

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The article presents a theoretical discussion that provides support for the development of a methodological tool to assess and plan the activities of museums or musealisation processes. According to the author, a matrix for museological diagnostics, planning and management should be used to create or renovate small or large, conventional or unconventional museums. This work is the result of PhD research that produced a book already in its third edition in Brazil. For the creation of the matrix, an attempt was made to identify the common aspects among different types and museum models. The proposed concept includes a theoretical and conceptual discussion, as well as the establishment of a museological structure or tool to justify work in this field. These aspects will be discussed in this article, as well as the details of their contributions to applied research in museology and to the qualification of museums. The matrix resulting from this research can be used to not only carry out museological diagnostics or institutional evaluations of existing museums, but also as a reference framework for the creation of new museums and for musealization processes. In the article, significant attention is given to clarifying the use of the terms used in the matrix in order to allow its interpretation and application in a variety of cases based on precise museological thought. Thus, theory and practice are concerned with understanding and using this matrix for museological diagnostics and planning.

*Keywords:* museological diagnostics, museums planning, museology, theory, practice.

This article presents a methodological tool developed for museum evaluation and planning, applicable to either institutional or non-institutionalised processes of musealisation. Such a tool consists of a matrix for diagnostics, planning and management of museums, which draws upon my doctoral thesis in Museology, defended in 2012 in Portugal and first published in Brazil, in 2013 (third edition now).

The matrix is meant to be a helpful tool for the concept of a new museum or renovation projects in small or large museums. It is an ambitious idea based on the assumption that there are common aspects among museums of different types and sizes. Hence, an attempt is made to answer the question posed by Hernández-Hernández<sup>1</sup>: is it possible to elaborate upon standard tools that work for all the various types of museums?

During the development of the matrix, it was considered necessary to establish a framework for museological thinking (concepts, theoretical discussions, and to some extent, a glossary), in which to embed the evaluation / diagnostic and planning / management processes. Hegemonically disseminated concepts commonly used in museological literature or by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) are not necessarily adopted. They are considered, but other interpretations and new terms are proposed. The contribution of this work is to debate or to refute terms already established and those that have become common in contemporary museology.

Considering the field of museology, either in papers or discussions, it is important to stress the use of an adjective to qualify the term research. Applied research or museological research is preferred. In my opinion, there is a common misunderstanding in the idea of research presented in the ICOM's<sup>2</sup> concept of museums which is transposed to museological papers and consequently to museums' research programmes. The current work distinguishes two different kinds of research: basic research, related to the nature of tradition and its respective field of knowledge (research in the arts, history, natural sciences, etc.); and applied research, museological as such. By simply adopting the term research, considering it as one of museums' task, there is a tendency to ignore the fact that museal research is broader than museological<sup>3</sup>. In regard to the museum, there is the research focused on the interpretation of things and research that aims to improve the treatment given to things<sup>4</sup>. Only the latter refers specifically to museology.

It is necessary to find the common aspects of museology and their contribution to museological phenomena. If there are no common aspects, museology would be only an ancillary discipline to the main ones. As an independent science, it presupposes a general formulation that serves all museums and no other type of phenomenon. In the debate about the epistemological status of museology, it can be defined as applied social science, which examines a specific relationship between society and reality: heritage. Waldisa Rúsio defined it as a "museal fact"; in other words, the relationship between man and object in a scenery<sup>5</sup>. This meaning encompasses traditional museums, as well as museological processes. Conventional museums are understood as the place where the public or visitors are able to relate to a preserved collection inside a building and the museological processes as a relationship occur in a specific location, between the population that lives there and the cultural heritage the relationship produces itself — considering different spheres of heritage: tangible, intangible and natural.

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<sup>1</sup> Hernández-Hernández, 2006. P.88.

<sup>2</sup> The concept in force approved at the General Conference in Viena, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Museal is used to refer to the museum and museological in regard to museology.

<sup>4</sup> This is discussed by Bruno (2009). She argues that museology attributes relevance and manages the placement of things in the sense that museology not only determines what should be preserved, but also develops the scientific and technical procedures to do so, in such a way that these things reach different societies.

<sup>5</sup> Bruno, 2010. P.219.

The definition of museology provided above is not far removed from Sola's idea of a museology understood as *heritology*, which emphasizes the concept of a broad approach to heritage. According to Bruno, the role of museology is not only to study this relationship, but to qualify it through scientific and technical procedures. In other words, museology not only analyses the relationship between society and its cultural and natural heritage, but it interferes in this reality seeking to improve it. The scientific and technical procedures mentioned above refer to a museological chain of operations based on cultural and natural heritage safeguards and communications, which, in turn, consists of conservation and documentation, as well as expography and educational-cultural activities. The two facets of museology are theoretical and practical, and they complement each other. This idea and the one expressed in a conversation between Deleuze and Foucault are supported: "The practice is a set of turns from one theory to another, and the theory is a set of turns from one practice to another. A theory cannot be developed without facing a kind of wall along its path, and it is essential to practice to cross over this wall"<sup>6</sup>.

Based on this discussion and the existence of models and frameworks that inform about different aspects of management, inside and outside the museum, the results of the author's research are presented on a structure, a matrix, for museum planning and management. Each specific situation demands its own interpretation and adjustment. The matrix works as a lens for evaluation and planning, and therefore, it is an instrument for the eyes and intuition of those performing the diagnostics, duly referenced in their context, repertoire and experiences.

The elaboration and use of this matrix presuppose that there are manageable and measurable aspects to be analysed. It is suggested to those who intend to use it to consider quantitative and qualitative indexes in its interpretation. It also might be used along with other management tools such as SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in each of its components. The matrix makes it possible to highlight areas that should be reassessed in order to generate a balance between challenges and potential, preventing one aspect of the museum from overshadowing others and stimulating the analysis of the museum as a whole.

The purpose of this article is not to deepen the theoretical discussion that grounded the use of some museological terms. For those who are interested in this, it is suggested to consult the thesis or book already mentioned at the beginning of this article. The larger goal of the article is to present the matrix and its main ideas, as a starting point for dialogue with colleagues proposing methodologies and evaluation standards for museums, as well as with those concerned with terminology, theory, and museology courses since they also suggest a structure for professional training in the field (Fig. 1). Once a museum institution or museological process has been developed through the programmes mentioned above, in its own way and those able to achieve a balance between safeguarding measures and communication, the museum is responsible for adapting the procedures of selection, collection, safeguarding and circulation in regard to preserved heritage. In addition to some classical tasks as inventory and restoration, new categories must be included such as the development of participatory inventories, legal protection, database creation and maintenance, and the use of new technologies. It is understood that safeguarding measures and communication actions in a broader sense operate within the larger concept of

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<sup>6</sup> Deleuze, Foucault (*apud* Foucault, 1979. P. 69).

## PROGRAMME OR MUSEOLOGICAL PLAN

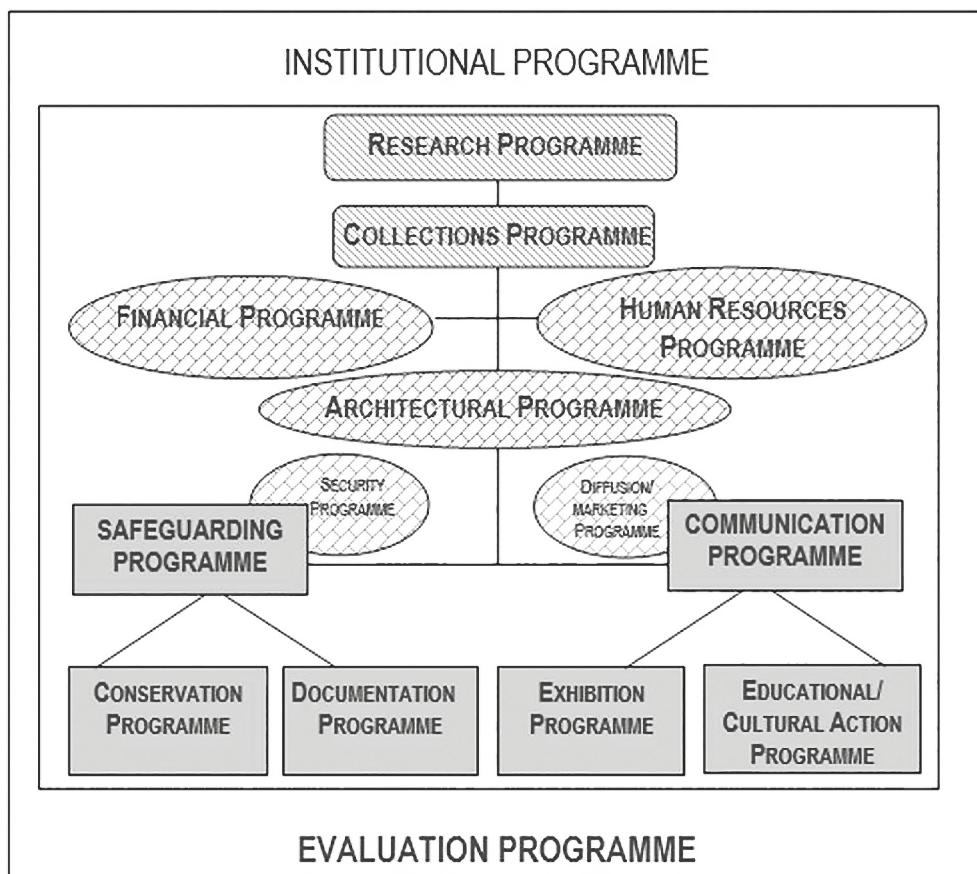


Fig. 1. Matrix for museological diagnostic, museum planning and management<sup>7</sup>

heritage, which is based on the notion that it is possible to apply to a musealisation process to everything, although each process of musealisation is specific.

Preservation is equivalent to the musealisation process as a whole, therefore, similar to 'heritagization'<sup>8</sup> (when it occurs outside the museum institution). It is known that the hegemonic concept defines preservation as the equivalent of safeguarding, but there are insurgencies against these hegemonic concepts, and we follow them: it is only possible to achieve preservation after the implementation of communication actions, once society is aware, values and partners with these initiatives.

The programme scientific-cultural project (SCP) or museological plan encompass a set of programmes organised as a plan of actions, activities or procedures in an environment of continual planning and evaluation. The Institutional Programme and Evaluation Programme are permanent, and there is no hierarchy or priority between them. The ma-

<sup>7</sup> Duarte Cândido, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> t/n — in the original: *Patrimonialização* — the socio-cultural, legal or political process by which a space, property, species or practice becomes an object of natural, cultural or religious heritage worthy of conservation and restoration.

trix stresses the hierarchical sequence of *museological plan* → *programmes* → *projects*, but it does not reach the level of describing the projects because it is not the scope of a general directive.

The museological plan is grounded in the definition of institutional mission supported by the cultural and natural heritage chosen for the musealisation process. It determines all the tasks performed by the museum and is the basis for its structure and scope: decisions on team profiles, architectural definitions of zones and workspaces, main activities, and fundraising must follow the type of heritage that the museum intends to preserve.

Museological diagnostics is the first step to be taken when planning or renovating a museum. It is composed by surveys and data analysis coming from technical visits, consultation with stakeholders, document and bibliographical research, in addition to research on the cultural and natural heritage available or desired for the musealisation process (the latter must be performed together with professionals from the respective areas). The issues the museum intends to address in connection to the heritage it wants to preserve defines its identity. These issues should comprise the basis for the programme formulation for a collection, including the identification of gaps and absences in the collection and guidelines for an acquisition and disposal policy.

Concerning the programmes mentioned above, research should be given priority. However, there are exceptions since institutional and evaluation programmes operate in a circular dynamic. Also, safeguarding and the documentation chain of operation, when their existence is in balance, creates a circular dynamic as well. This is not an operation line where one action precedes the other. In other words, it is important to emphasize the significance of defining which of the core issues are to be addressed by the museum prior to starting a collection. The definition of zones and workspaces, as well as the architectural programme, should not overlook these conceptual stages, which should guide the design of the spaces. When planning a new museum, a common mistake is to start from the identification of areas and architectural projects before museological planning. These elements should be known in advance, before determining the architectural program, because they provide an idea of the size of the enterprise or process of musealisation and, therefore, of the needed spaces.

The architectural programme does not refer necessarily to a building. It depends on the conceptual definitions and demands of the museum or museological process which drive its design. This may include on-site and remote areas, continuous or intermittent, real-world or digital spaces, encompassing large areas, multiple hubs, and other formats already quite common. But in most cases, the museum or museological process has a head office. The conception or adaption of this building in the architecture is necessary for the area of support<sup>9</sup>, although it might involve regional planning and others. Museology is responsible for establishing guidelines and parameters, as well as monitoring the entire process of preparation, construction or adaptation.

Museology is also responsible for resource allocation, optimising available human and financial resources, improving staff capabilities and establishing targets of growth, among others. The financial and human resources programmes have active components, in conjunction with the areas of support, in which museology usually does not interfere because in many cases an external agent has this prerogative.

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<sup>9</sup> In addition to basic and applied areas, Van Mensch (2004) defines the existence of support areas such as administration, marketing and architecture.

The museological chain of operation comprises safeguarding heritage and communication, operating in different ways in accordance with the musealisation models, which are not always traditional. When these models involve society/ cultural and natural heritage/ territory, instead of public/ collection/ building, the safeguarding procedures do not focus on the conservation of material objects and museological documentation, and communication can use other strategies apart from exhibitions and visitor services. When one thinks about intangible heritage, for instance, it is difficult to determine the borders between cultural heritage protection and the management of information concerning it. Therefore, the term 'safeguarding' expresses better the process as a whole compared to the steps of conservation and documentation.

Due to the relevance of security and distribution/ marketing programmes, from internet sites to museum stores, they deserve a specific place in the matrix, although they do not have the same importance as documentation, conservation, exhibitions and educational-cultural activities. Distribution and marketing programmes are one of the most pertinent areas in the museological chain of operation, and they are grounded much more in support areas than in museological knowledge.

It is important for the museum to maintain a balance between safeguarding and communication initiatives. Otherwise, it would look more like object storage and an exhibition gallery. This does not mean that the process should always begin by conservation and documentation. The museological chain of operation, as said before, is not an operating line; it implies circularity. There are many experiences of musealisation processes which started as educational-cultural activities or exhibitions. Once the process is initiated, all the links of this chain must be considered.

Documentation might include different procedures for labelling and marking objects, establishing inventories, cataloguing, marketing photographic documentation, and other media, designing and including information in a database, and a wide range of actions connected to the collection's data management. Documentation assists in the management of the information as a whole, referring to the musealisation process memory.

Conservation is understood mainly as actions taken to protect the physical aspects of heritage references; however, it may assume broader meanings according to the heritage references involved in the process. These may be natural heritage references, for instance. Intangible heritage conservation deals mainly with recorded materials or consists of protective actions related to the management of information<sup>10</sup>. In the case of traditional collections, it involves preventive conservation to restoration works, including cleaning, environment control, handling, packing, transport and security, storage facilities, conservation management — integrating documentation procedures, etc.

'Expography' is understood as planning, design, building, installation and management of short and long-term<sup>11</sup> exhibitions. Exhibitions are a synthesis covering all heritage items the museum preserves. Items in the exhibition demand extensive preparation and while on display they should be continuously evaluated, and subject to possible changes. Short-term exhibitions are temporary exhibitions displayed inside the museum

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<sup>10</sup> In these situations, legislation, mapping, registration, incentive to production, maintenance and dissemination of knowledge and know-how are as integral to conservation as they are to other parts of the preservation/ musealisation operating chain, which need to work in a more integrated manner and take the lead in regard to the material aspects of conservation.

<sup>11</sup> Formerly, permanent exhibitions.

or in touring exhibition. As well as the other parts mentioned above, it is essential to think about expography in the new context of musealisation: actions outside the physical building space, in remote areas, territories or intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, to address new challenges, new ways of working should be proposed such as working collectively with educational-planning activities, a team to design learning kits, exhibitions designed and built for car exhibitions, visual communication in large preserved natural areas, open-air shows, etc. More and more, an exhibit involves incorporating and to planning for new technologies and media, and new heritage contexts.

Educational/cultural action is perhaps the sector that is expanded the most in the matrix. In addition to traditional museum education services, such as exhibition visits — school visits, tours, self-led visits — the sector has sought to find creative ways to engage with new and different audiences, to experiment with inclusive practices, and to develop beyond partnerships with schools. The emphasis is no longer only in activities related to school visits, but also includes the elaboration of programmes and projects, teaching and learning materials, courses, and training activities for museum personnel as well as for multipliers. The education and cultural actions sector is in charge of the museum's programming, such as seminars, video shows, publications releases, etc. This sector also works in the organisation of exchange programmes and training courses. In traditional museums or museological processes contexts, it is responsible for the planning and execution of strategies between society and its cultural heritage, in dialogue with different interlocutors, such as social communities and multiple audiences.

There are so many ideas contained in this figure that it is necessary to isolate some of them to extract the implicit constructions and to better understand them (Fig. 2).

The supporting areas (financial and human resources) are not the only ones in charge of museums management. To reinforce a museological approach for museum management, the principle of subsidiarity is adopted, considering the entire museum personnel also responsible for managing the whole process. The decision making related to investigation/research and the collection programme should not be the sole responsibility of personnel tasked with safeguarding. In addition to the safeguarding sector, communication and the expanded area of management must contribute to it.

A strong characteristic of museum performance is interdisciplinarity. Some sectors have a direct connection to museology as applied research, while others are closer to the knowledge from primary areas related to the nature of collections or support areas. In Figure 2, through different patterns, changes in proportion between museology and other areas are highlighted. These are suggested in an attempt, when possible, to guarantee an interdisciplinary action, more than one conception or view incorporated into different sectors of the museum or on the museological plan programmes. In the safeguarding and communication sectors, a significant proportion of museology and a minor one of the basic disciplines and support areas are found. In the others, a reversed ratio, with the predominance of basic disciplines in the research and collection programmes, and support areas.

To clarify the distinction between the management comprising the whole museal work and the management of maintenance, physical spaces, human and financial resources, the term administration is used in a more restrictive form. Administration is considered in a way that allows the museum to perform its paramount functions, such as safeguarding and communication (strictly museological), and basic research. It is important to restate

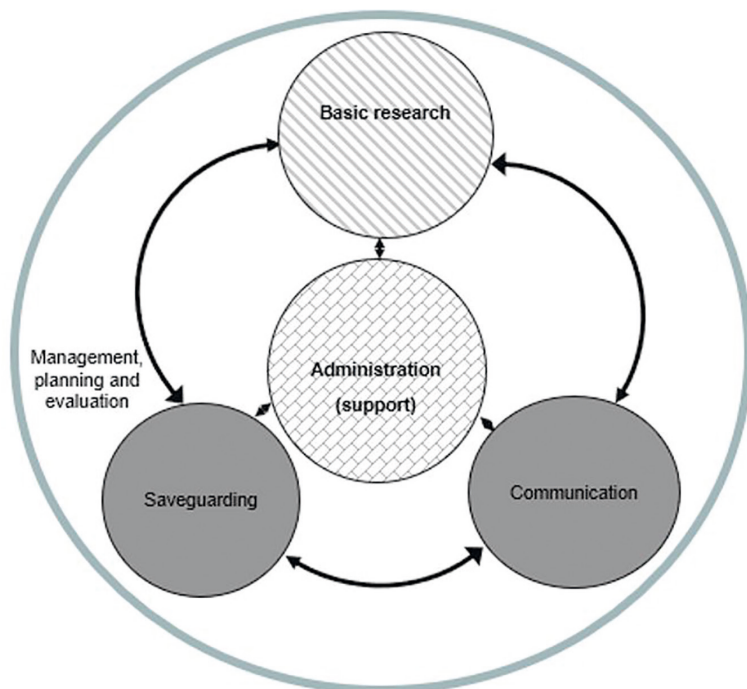


Fig. 2. Main areas of museal-making<sup>12</sup>

that research and knowledge are linked to institutional performance as a whole, especially when actions that fall under planning and evaluation demanding constant reflexion.

The idea of using an institutional planning and evaluation matrix presupposes a connection between theory and practice. The programmes which comprise the matrix establish more general concepts and the executive projects define the actions. In other words, the sequencing *museological plan* → *programme* → *projects* represents the passage from theory, discussions and conceptual definitions to practice.

The intention of establishing a matrix grounded on theory is to supply the museum with clear concepts for the entire team, allowing each one of them to understand its role and become involved reflexively in self-evaluation, planning and the development process. When each part understands its role in the operation of the museum, it is possible to elaborate upon, with collective participation, a handbook, as recommended by many other evaluation formats, including ISO standards. The handbook will be the primary management document of the museum, outlining a general matrix for each reality, ensuring all the specificities.

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<sup>12</sup> Duarte Cândido, 2019.



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## Методология музееологической диагностики и планирования

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В статье представлено теоретическое обоснование методологического инструмента, призванного служить оценке и планированию деятельности музеев или процессов музееализации. По мысли автора, специализированная матрица для диагностики, планирования и управления музееями должна применяться в целях создания или обновления малых или больших, традиционных или нетрадиционных музеев. Данная разработка стала результатом научного исследования, проведенного автором в рамках своей докторской диссертации. В процессе работы была предпринята попытка выявить общие аспекты различных типологий и музеейных моделей. Предложенная концепция включает теоретическое и концептуальное осмысление, а также предлагает читателям музееологический инструмент для обоснования работы в этой области. Этим аспектам уделено особое внимание в данной статье. Также подробно рассмотрена специфика применения указанной методологии в прикладных исследованиях в области музееведения и музеейной деятельности. Матрица, полученная в результате этого исследования, может использоваться как для проведения музееологической диагностики, так и для институциональной оценки существующих музеев, а также в качестве методологической основы для создания новых музеев и анализа процессов музееализации. Особое внимание в статье уделено разьяснению употребления терминов, используемых в матрице, чтобы дать возможность ее толкования и применения в самых разных случаях, но на основе точной музееологической мысли. Таким образом, теория и практика связаны с пониманием и использованием этой матрицы для музееологической диагностики и планирования.

*Ключевые слова:* музееологическая диагностика, музеейное планирование, музееология, теория, практика.

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