

Muravska, Svitlana

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STUDIE/ARTICLES

TRANSFORMATION OF THE CONCEPT "MUSEUM" IN THE UKRAINIAN SPACE¹<https://doi.org/10.5817/MuB2022-1-3>

SVITLANA MURAVSKA

ABSTRACT/ABSTRAKT:

After the conference in Japan in 2019, museum communities of different countries discussed the transformation of the concept of "museum" and the need to change the existing definition. The article attempts to outline how the idea of "museum" was transformed among Ukrainian museum workers from the end of the 19th century till now. At this time, active museum life unfolded on Ukrainian lands, and activists sought to outline the museum's mission. The idea of this concept was modified given the change in the political situation. Special requirements for the museum as a tool of propaganda existed within the framework of the Soviet socio-political system. After Ukraine declared independence, theorists and practitioners of the museum business primarily evaluated the museum as an institution of social memory, indicating this direction's importance for Ukrainian civil society.

As an official representative of the Ukrainian museum community, the Presidium of the ICOM of Ukraine draws attention to the need to preserve the existing concept's critical characteristic

against the current debate's background. At the same time, ICOM Ukraine warned that purely formal compliance with functional criteria does not prevent the transformation of museums into a tool of propaganda. Russia's cynical war against Ukraine in 2022 demonstrates that this is what must avoid at all costs.

Proměna koncepce muzea v ukrajinském prostoru

Od konference konané v Japonsku v roce 2019 se mezi zástupci muzejní obce v různých zemích diskutuje o transformaci koncepce muzea a potřebě změny stávající definice. Článek se pokouší nastítnit, jak se měnilo pojetí muzea v představách ukrajinských muzejních pracovníků od konce 19. století až do současnosti. V této době se na Ukrajině rozvíjel čilý muzejní život a jeho organizátoři se snažili definovat poslání muzeí. Hlavní myšlenka tohoto konceptu byla modifikována s ohledem na změnu politické situace. V rámci sovětského společensko-politického systému existovaly zvláštní požadavky na muzeum jako nástroj propagandy. Od vyhlášení nezávislosti Ukrajiny je muzeum v teoretické i praktické sféře považováno primárně za instituci společenské paměti, což naznačuje velký význam tohoto zaměření pro ukrajinskou občanskou společnost.

Předsednictvo Ukrajinského výboru ICOM jako oficiální zástupce ukrajinské muzejní obce upozorňuje

na potřebu zachovat hlavní prvky stávající koncepce na pozadí současné situace. ICOM Ukrajina zároveň upozornil, že čistě formální dodržování funkčních kritérií nezabrání transformaci muzeí v nástroj propagandy. Cynická válka Ruska proti Ukrajině v roce 2022 ukazuje, že právě tomu je třeba se za každou cenu vyhnout.

KEYWORDS/KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:

*museum – discussion – concept – social memory
muzeum – diskuse – koncepce – společenská paměť*

1. Evolution of the concept "museum" in pre-soviet time

The history of the development of museum affairs in Ukraine traces its roots back to the traditions of princely collecting, which emerged back to the times of Kyiv' Rus'. These traditions were continued in collections of icons, decorative and applied arts, and portraits, which representatives of the Cossack nobility collected during the 17th and 18th centuries. The historiography supports the idea the first museum on Ukrainian lands was the cabinet of rarities at the Black Sea Hydrographical Depot in Mykolayiv. It was engaged in the sea coast's cartography and had its museum, founded in 1803. However, there are reasons to consider that the first museum on this land was the mathematical and

¹ Acknowledgements: I am so grateful to Natalie Dziubenko, Ruslana Man'kovska, Roman Czmelyk, Fedir Androshchuk and Iryna Diachuk for the consent to take part in the interview. Special thanks to the ICOM Ukraine Presidium, in particular to Kateryna Chuyeva and Anastasia Cherednychenko, for support in preparing the paper.

physical cabinet of Lviv University, dated 1744.²

In the Enlightenment era, people were encouraged to collect art. It also led to the founding of museums in Ukrainian lands. They were part of the Russian and Austrian empires in the 19th century – the first attempts to define the concept “museum” date back to that period. Traditionally, people who were actively involved in the activities of museum institutions and signified their activities formulated these sentences.

The museologists Mykola Biliashivskiy, Fedir Ernst, Fedir Shmidt, and Ilarion Swientsitski formulated the basics of museum affairs. They contributed to the museum’s development on Ukrainian lands. Mykola Biliashivskiy was the most renowned among museum professionals in the late 19th to the first quarter of the 20th century, organizing immense heritage protection activity. He supported the establishment of museums in Poltava, Chernigiv, the development of the museums in Kherson, Zhytomyr, and Horodok, Rivne region. He was the head of the Kyiv Art and Industrial Museum, one of the most prominent museums in Ukraine. According to Bilyashivsky’s program, the museum should have a purely scientific character. He wrote the museum’s collection should contain only objects whose exact origin is known. Bilashivsky considered “*the museum work is to preserve and research all the cultural achievements of the humankind. So that they would be a living and intangible source of inspiration for their creativity, and not lie as the dead museum objects in the*

state storerooms”.³ At the previous meeting of museum staff in Moscow in 1912, M. Bilyashivsky spoke about the essence of the museum. He formulated this problem by defining museum tasks. He also proposed to continue discussing at the next meeting “... *whether museums should be developed only for scientists or whether they should also have national and cultural tasks to educate the wider community?*”⁴

2. Modification of the concept of “museum” in the times of the USSR

After establishing the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as part of the USSR, museums were not immediately transformed into an instrument of ideological influence on the public. Till 1928, when the decree of the All-Union Central Executive Committee “On Museum Construction” was declared, museums continued to fulfill their mission to preserve, research, and display cultural heritage.

Museum theorist and practitioner Fedir Shmidt argued there are three main categories of museums – academic, educational, and public. They have different principles for organizing their activities and work for different audiences. In his opinion, public museums are places for informed strolls and mental relaxation, where people can cultivate higher abilities. It makes people human, and it also is a source of impurity.⁵

Another museum figure of the interwar period, Volodymyr Dubrovsky, who for some time was the head inspector of museums

and the preservation of cultural monuments activity in Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, wrote: “*Collecting and preserving natural and cultural artifacts [...] is the first and most important step towards the dissemination of knowledge among the general public and thereby to the improvement of public morale. A museum is a cultural and educational institution that collects, conserves, learns, and exhibits for general viewing natural and cultural artifacts.*”⁶ This formulation is very much in harmony with the modern definition of the concept “museum”. So, in this formulation one hundred years ago, there is the idea that museums work to improve public well-being.

On the western Ukrainian lands, scientific discourse developed in a different direction, referring to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Poland in the interwar period. The well-known museum figure on these territories, Ilarion Swientsitski, was inspired by the ideas declared on Museum Journal papers at the beginning of the 20th century. He stated the primary purpose of the museum is to serve the community. Instead, his definition of a museum was very philosophical: “*the museum is a treasure trove of national creativity linked to the world or an image of the world lifestyle. In the first instance, the museum serves the art for deepening and spreading a sense of beauty. [...] In the second case, the museum educates the visitor about the outside diversity of life and its internal uniformity through collections*”.⁷

6 DUBROVSKYI, Volodymyr. *Muzei na Ukraini* [online]. Kharkiv, 1929, p. 4 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <<https://elib.nlu.org.ua/object.html?id=532>>.

7 SVIENTSITSKYI, Ilarion. *Pro muzei i muzeinytstvo: narysy i zamitky* [online]. Lviv, 1920, p. 8 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <http://irbis-nbuv.gov.ua/cgi-bin/ua/elib.exe?Z21ID=&I21DBN=UKRLIB&P21DBN=UKRLIB&S21STN=1&S21REF=10&S21FMT=online_boo k&C21COM=S&S21CNR=20&S21P01=0&S21P02=0&S21P03=FF=&S21STR=00004392>.

2 MURAVSKA, Svitlana. *Muzejni zaklady u sy'stemi vy'shhoi osvity: Zaxidnoyi Ukrainy na tli svitovy'x tendencij*. Lviv: Tsentr pam'yatkoznavstva NAN Ukraini i UTOPIK, 2018, p. 64.

3 DIDUKH, Liudmyla. Mykola Biliashivskiy i rozvytok mistsevykh muzeiv v Ukraini. *Kraieznavstvo*, 2008, no. 1-4, p. 123.

4 Ibidem, p. 124.

5 SHMIDT, Fedor. *Istoricheskie, ehtnograficheskie, khudozhestvennye muzei: Ocherk istorii i teorii muzejnogo dela* [online]. Khar'kov, 1919, p. 38 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <<https://elib.nlu.org.ua/view.html?id=726>>.

In the 30's of the 20th century, the requirements of public authorities for museums have changed in the Soviet Union. This institution must represent the benefits of socialism in all spheres of life. Their most important task became propaganda.⁸ After the Second World War till the epoch of "thaw", the museum activity was ideologized in the Soviet Union. From the mid-1950s, museology issues began to study in the scientific department of museology at the USSR Historical Museum and the Department of Archeology and Museology at Taras Shevchenko Kyiv State University. In 1955 Professor Halyna Mezentseva established the Kyiv Museum Center.⁹ The year of creation is not accidental because, in 1955, the first Soviet textbook on museum studies was published. Their authors were the Research Institute of Local Lore and Museum Work team. It was the foremost institution in the USSR, dealing with museum affairs and cultural heritage protection. Later the textbook survived several editions. The analysis of changes demonstrates the transformation of museum studies as a science in the USSR, critical concepts in its structure, tasks, in particular under the influence of J. Neustupný's and Z. Stránský's ideas.¹⁰

In her textbook, G. Mezentseva reiterates the Soviet historiography idea that museums are research and cultural-educational institutions.

They collect, assemble, study monuments of the history of material and spiritual culture of humankind, natural-ethnographic and, memorial and other collections. The museums organize work through exhibitions, exhibitions, excursions, lectures, and different scientific and educational activities. They disseminate natural-scientific and socio-political knowledge in such way. Given the socio-political requirements, the researcher points out that museums help shape the Marxist-Leninist worldview and carry out the communist education of workers.¹¹ This statement echoes the characteristics of the concept given in the mentioned textbook in 1955.¹²

Yurii Omelchenko, a pupil, and later colleague of G. Mezentseva, was one of the most famous Ukrainian museum researcher of postwar times. He continued his activities already in independent Ukraine. Omelchenko saw the museum as an institution that emerged as a means of conscious and purposeful attraction of people to the cultural heritage of past times.¹³ The researcher's scientific heritage is rich in exciting ideas about the theory of museum work. For example, he presented an original concept, according to which museology is a three-level system of inheritance of historical and cultural values based on a museum object.¹⁴ At the same time, Y. Omelchenko proposed a definition of "museum"

that largely overlapped with the then-existing Soviet museology statement. In particular, he wrote, "*modern museology defines museums as research, cultural-educational and political-educational institutions, which compile, store, study, exhibit, popularize monuments of material and spiritual culture, natural-historical collections*".¹⁵ This wording is in tune with the description of the concept of "museum" in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia.¹⁶ Taking into account the ideologization of the public sphere in Soviet times, it is not strange that Omelchenko singled out the function of documentation and the educational function, quoting the words from the publication about the ideological-educational work at the museum.¹⁷

3. "Museum" in independent Ukraine

After the collapse of the USSR and the proclamation of Ukraine's independence, the social circumstances of the museum activity have radically changed. It inevitably reflected on the new formulation of museum theory. The Law of Ukraine "On Museums and Museum Affairs" was adopted in 1995. The first article of this Law defined museums as "*cultural, educational and research institutions assigned to study, preserve and use monuments of nature, material, and spiritual culture, involvement of citizens to the achievements of national and world-historical and cultural heritage*".¹⁸ The main

8 MANKOVSKA, Ruslana. *Muzeina sprava v Ukraini: teoretychni, praktychni ta antropologichni vymiry istorychnoho dosvidu (1920-ti rr. – pochatok XXI st.)*. Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi: Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi derzhavnyi pedahohichnyi universytet imeni Hryhoriia Skovorody, 2017, p. 138. Dysertatsiia na zdobuttia naukovoho stupenia doktora istorychnykh nauk.

9 Ibidem, p. 139.

10 ANAN'EV, Vitalij. *Rossijskaya muzeologiya vtoroj poloviny KHKH v.: paradigmy, napravleniya i struktury sovetskogo perioda razvitiya*. *Vesnik Belaruskaga dzjarzhavnaga universiteta kul'tury i mastactv*, 2016, vol. 25, no. 1, p. 222.

11 MEZENTSEVA, Halyna. *Muzeieznavstvo (na materialakh muzeiv URSR)*. Kyiv: Sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1980, p. 6.

12 *Osnovy sovetskogo muzevedeniya*. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo kulturno-prosvetitel'noy literatury, 1955, p. 11.

13 OMELCHENKO, Yurij and Larysa DANYLOVA. *Druha pidsystema muzeinytstva (istoriia, teoriia, praktyka)*. *Vita Antiqua* [online]. 1999, no. 2, p. 251 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <<http://vitaantiqua.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/30VA2omelchenko.pdf>>.

14 Ibidem, p. 251–257.

15 OMELCHENKO, Yurij. *Rozvytok uchbovykh muzeiv*. Kyiv, 1988, p. 4.

16 *Muzei*. In *Bol'shaya sovetskaya ehnciklopediya* [online]. [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <<http://bse.sci-lib.com/article078848.html>>.

17 *Kratkij slovar' muzejnykh terminov*. In *Muzej i pamyatniki kul'tury v idejno-vospitatel'noj rabote na sovremennom etape: sb. nauch. tr. / PII kul'tury*, vol. 126. Moskva, 1983, p. 126.

18 *Pro muzei ta muzeinu spravdu: Zakon Ukrainy vid 29 chervnia 1995 r.* In *Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy* [online]. 1995, no. 25 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <<https://>

museum tasks were also declared cultural, educational, and research activities, acquisition of collections, exhibition, fund, publishing, restoration, and monument protection activity.

In the 1990s and 2000s, not only in Kyiv, the universities in Kharkiv, Lutsk, Rivne, and later in Lviv began to teach the museum staff. The need for professional literature on the museum theory has become relevant. It has led to the emergence of a number of textbooks and appropriate formulations of basic concepts. In 2006, archaeologist Volodymyr Yakobovsky from Ivan Ogienko Kamenets-Podolsky National University published a manual. On author's opinion the main functions of the museum were the scientific documentation of natural phenomena and processes of society, cultural heritage protection, research and creating worldview of society members.¹⁹ Victoriia Shevchenko and Iryna Lomachynska defined the "museum" as a "historically determined multifunctional institution of social memory, through which the public realized their need to select, preserve and represent a specific group of natural and cultural objects perceived by society as a value that should be removal from the environment and transmit from generation to generation".²⁰ Dmytro Kepin noted this definition is similar to the term proposed by Mariia Kaulen and Evgenij Mavleyev in *Russian Museum Encyclopedia*.²¹

zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/249/95-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>.

19 IAKUBOVSKYI, Volodymyr. *Muzeieznavstvo: navchalnyi posibnyk-praktykum*. Kamianets-Podilskyi: PP Moshak, 2006, p. 272–275.

20 SHEVCHENKO, Viktoriia and Iryna LOMACHYNSKA. *Muzeieznavstvo: navchalnyi posibnyk*. Kyiv, 2007, p. 148.

21 KEPIN, Dmytro. *Navchalni vydannia z muzeolohii v Ukraini: krytychnyi analiz. Nizhynska starovyna: zbirnyk rehionalnoi istorii ta pamiatkoznavstva*, 2010, vol. 13, no. 10, p. 175;

The director of the Pedagogical Museum of Ukraine O. Mikhno in *Encyclopedia of Education*, the authors of *Sociology of the Museum*, Alla Kyridon, Oksana Salata in the training manual for students-historians *Basic of Museum Studies* also proposed similar definition.²² In 2008 Lviv researchers Mychailo Rutynsky and Olga Stetsiuk declare that museums are focused on work also with "monuments of spiritual culture", using the term from the text of the Law *On Museums and Museum Affairs*.²³ Thus, an analysis of textbooks published in Ukraine after 2000 on museum basics shows the researchers position the museum primarily as an institution of social memory.

In 2010, the National Institute for Strategic Studies prepared an analytical note about perspectives of museum activities. It was based on the analysis of the experience of foreign museums and indicated that museums are becoming important centers of education and training. It has also emphasized the ability of Ukrainian museums to provide interactive, subject and ideological platforms for deeper identity, nation and the world.²⁴

KAULEN, Mariya and Evgenij MAVLEEV. *Muzej. In Rossijskaya muzejnaya ehnciklopediya*. Moskva: Progress, 2005, p. 395.

22 KYRYDON, Alla. *Muzei yak instyutysii pamiaty. Ukraina – Yevropa – Svit. Seriia: Istoriia, mizhnarodni vidnosyny* [online]. 2015, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 193 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Ues_2015_16%281%29_23>; MIKHNO, Oleksandr. *Muzei. In Entsyklopediia osvity* [online]. 2021 [accessed 2022-01-28] Available from www: <https://lib.iitta.gov.ua/729368/>; SALATA, Oksana. *Osnovy muzeieznavstva: navchalno-metodychnyi posibnyk*. Vinnytsia: TOV «Nilan-LTD», 2015, pp. 64–65; CARPOV, Victor (ed.). *Sotsiolohiia muzeiu: prezentatsiia na tli prostoru i chasu*. Kyiv, 2016. 168 p.

23 RUTYNSKYI, Mykhailo and Olha STETSIUK. *Muzeieznavstvo: navchalnyi posibnyk*. Kyiv, 2008, p. 9.

24 *Rol muzeiu v kulturnomu ta sotsialno-ekonomichnomu rozvytku krainy: zarubizhnyi dosvid. Analitichna zapyska Natsionalnoho instytutu stratehichnykh doslidzhen* [online]. [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <https://niss.gov.ua/doslidzhennya/gumanitarny-rozvitok/rol-muzeiu-u-kulturnomu-ta-socialno-ekonomichnomu-rozvytku>.

In March 2013, the then president of the International Council of Museums Hans Martin Hinz, gave a lecture in Kyiv entitled *Challenges and Opportunities. Museums in a global world*. He stressed the role of museums as places of reconciliation, in which, at the same time, people do not try to harmonize history.²⁵ After the 2013–2014 and the military conflict in eastern Ukraine, the discussion on such museum role gained another round of relevance. In particular, Polina Verbytska researched the potential of the historical museum in overcoming the conflict of historical memory, which destabilizes modern Ukrainian society.²⁶

The strengthening of such museum mission has connected with the reset of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory due to the country's socio-political situation. If the normative documents of 2006–2013, which determined the directions of the Institute's work, don't mention the word "museum". After 2014 it is already indicated that the Institute "promotes the formation of museum and library funds for restoration and preservation of Ukrainian people national memory, preparation of museum expositions and educational programs".²⁷

Oksana Bondarets is one of the most authoritative Ukrainian

25 KHINTS, Hans Martin. *Muzei – tse instytut pryrennia suspilstva. In Istorychna pravda: informatsiinyi resurs* [online]. [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/514a3df8d8f1f/>.

26 See VERBYTSKA, Polina. *Istorychni muzei yak chynnyk pryrennia ta suspilnoho dialohu. Historical and Cultural Studies*, 2014, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 13–17.

27 *Deiaki pytannia Ukrainskoho instytutu natsionalnoi pamiaty: Postanova Kabinetu Ministriv Ukrainy vid 12 lystopada 2014 zi zminamy, vnesenymy zhghidno postanovy Kabinetu Ministriv Ukrainy № 799 vid 3. 10. 2018 r., № 885 vid 16. 10. 2019, № 561 vid 01. 07. 2020* [online]. [accessed 2022-01-28] Available from www: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/684-2014-%D0%BF#Text>.

researchers who conceptually studied modifying the concept of “museum”. She emphasized the importance of the museum as a symbol for a new perception of Ukrainian history and culture in general, as museum objects transmit a particular cultural code of the nation. The researcher believes the museums have a significant potential to restore national memory. *“Today, museums as institutions of memory rethink their mission and tasks, taking into account the analysis of the environment [...] where they work, as well as the special nature of the museum space as such one, the diversity of the museum world and other factors. [...] These are just some of the tasks of modern Ukrainian museum – the new approaches to building a narrative by museum means, the work with the traumatic past, using the experience of ‘complicated history’ in museums around the world, spreading knowledge about the free from myths and stereotypes history of Ukraine.”*²⁸

The *Ukrainian Encyclopedia of History* defines museums as institutions of memory next to archives, libraries, and cultural-historical preserves. Author considers these institutions bring the past up to date and preserve the historical sources for cultural reproduction. They see museums are seen as tools for preservation memory, communicators/mediators, bearers, places and the toposes of memory. To their minds, the museum can also be an information center of cultural heritage, an institute for socio-cultural adaptation, a tool to recognize cultural values of past epochs and modernity and interpret their

²⁸ BONDARETS, Oksana. Muzei: zberzhennia spadshchyny, osmyslennia mynuloho, formuvannia identychnosti. *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMA. Istorii i teoriia kultury*, 2021, no. 4, p. 110.

meanings for self-recognition and self-identification.²⁹

According to culturalist Serhiy Rudenko, the optimal socio-cultural purpose of the museum is based on the symbiosis of science and art in curatorial work. In his doctoral dissertation, the researcher argues the museum’s task is

- *“to accumulate socio-cultural experience (in the form of monuments that reflect the effects of spontaneous socio-cultural experiment and purposeful socio-cultural engineering);*
- *to make a socio-cultural design (verified data in museum-certified meetings);*
- *preliminary to test innovative socio-cultural technologies (integrated into the content of museum representations);*
- *to fix feedback on the results of socio-cultural innovations (synchronous museification as a factor of element-by-element socio-cultural engineering)”*.³⁰

The researcher considers due to this spontaneous socio-cultural experiment becomes controlled.

²⁹ DUBROVINA, Liubov, Alla KYRYDON and Iryna MATIASH. Instytutii pamiaty: arkhivy, biblioteki, muzei ta kulturno-istorychni zapovidnyky. In SMOLII, Valerii (ed.). *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy: Ukraina–Ukraintsi, knyha 2* [online]. Kyiv, 2019 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <http://resource.history.org.ua/cgi-bin/eiu/history.exe?Z21ID=&I21DBN=EIU&P21DBN=EIU&S21STN=1&S21REF=10&S21FMT=eiu_all&C21COM=S&S21CNR=20&S21P01=0&S21P02=0&S21P03=TRN=&S21COLORTERMS=0&S21STR=2.23>.

³⁰ RUDENKO, Serhii. *Sotsiokulturne pryznachennia ta instytutsiina spetsyfyka muzeiu* [online]. Kyiv, 2021, pp. 432–433 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <http://knukim.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Rudenko_Diss_KNUKIM_Druk.pdf>. Dysertatsiia na zdobuttia naukovooho stupenia doktora kulturolohii za spetsialnistiu 26.00.01 “Teoriia ta istoriia kultury”.

4. Discussion on “Kyoto” definition

Just before the conference in Japan, the popular magazine *Ukrainian Week* has published Yuri Jerzy Onuch’s exciting column. The curator and contemporary artist of Polish descent have associated with Ukraine for more than ten years of professional activity. His philosophical statements have foreshadowed a discussion later unfolded in Kyoto: *“And what was wrong with the previous definition? [...] Committees of experts have been working on descriptions for years, but it is difficult to see the benefits of their work. Not even worth mentioning the aesthetic beauty of the definition, if only recognize that it is in ‘planetary well-being’, whatever those words mean. I offer another profound to the committees rethinking what a museum is, as well as to those trying to understand what modern art is for modern societies a simple idea: ‘The dragon is hard to overcome, but you have to try’ and ‘The horse is as everyone sees it’. Well, except they doesn’t want to see... because doesn’t have the courage”*.³¹

After an active discussion of the concept of “museum” at the ICOM International Conference in Kyoto, in Ukraine, there was not a separate special scientific event – meeting at the national level. However, based on the results of the member’s survey and professional talking, the ICOM Ukraine Presidium formulated its recommendations for the “Committee Day”, organized by ICOM France together with ICOM Europe and ICOM Germany, as well as the Committee on Museology (ICOFOM) on March 10, 2020.

³¹ ONUKH, Yezhy. *Vyznachennia. Ukrainskyi tyzhden* [online]. 29. 08. 2019, vol. 615, no. 35 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from www: <https://tyzhden.ua/Columns/50/234509?fbclid=IwAR3nBzaG9riw4d_pJACetSF3anxPKICACZPr88oan-xWoNDWW3st-ezgrzQ>.

The written proposals from the Presidium of the Ukrainian ICOM proposed to leave the main characteristics/functions of museums in the existing concept, because they are the cornerstone for Ukrainian museums. In addition, this document emphasised on necessity to divide clearly museums and other type of institutions, which use the word “museum” in their title but their activities do not correspond with the museum definition and *Code of Ethics*. The ICOM Ukraine also drew attention to the following things. *“Taking into account the experience of totalitarian and post-totalitarian past of our country, we should warn that only formal compliance with functional criteria does not prevent museums from being transformed into the propaganda’s instrument of totalitarian and anti-human regimes. That is why it is important to provide a definition not only with a basic core, but also with a layer, in addition to the functional signs, that would express the essential landmarks and the values for which a museum should serve in a free and democratic society.”*³²

5. The interviews

As the paper task also is to highlight the unique positions of Ukrainian museum staff on the current concept “museum”, I have planned that one of the stages for the empirical collecting material would be a survey of directors of national museums in Ukraine (twenty persons) and the most well-known museum theorists. By correspondence during October–November 2021, I have asked participants to answer the following question: **Do you think that the new definition of**

the ICOM Museum, announced at the General Conference in Kyoto on September 7, 2019, is consistent with changes in the circumstances of the functioning of museums in the modern world and outlines their significance?

I have proposed to express an attitude to the concept as a whole and its separate parts and offer one’s definition if it was. I was inspired by the famous Polish researcher Dorota Folga-Januszevska’s methodology.³³ It should be noted I have received few answers, based on which it isn’t easy to make a qualitative comparative analysis. At the same time, the received answers of leading Ukrainian museum figures are essential to understand how this issue is also articulated in the Ukrainian museum space.

Ruslana Mankovska, Doctor in History, a leading researcher at the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences, researcher of Ukrainian museums, monuments and local lore. She has been researching the theory and practice of museum affairs for more than 30 years.

Because of transformation the museum in the XXth century – at the beginning of the XXI century, its basis should remain a museum object – a rarity, relic, original [...] The museum specifics are in the presence of artifacts. [...] It is also important to emphasize the modern museum is an alive social organism. As we see, it can respond to challenges: information technologies, pandemics, etc. It becomes an intellectual, social tool that affects the individual and shapes his consciousness, moral and ethical values (human function). Therefore, I would add to all

visions – a modern museum forms public consciousness!³⁴

Natalie Dziubenko, researcher of natural museology, director of the Lviv’s State Natural History Museum of the National Academy of Sciences, an active participant in ICOM NATHIST (International Committee of Natural Museums ICOM).

1. Several participants in the discussion³⁵ from different countries expressed a fair fear the new definition will to the fact that in those countries where there is domestic “museum legislation”, the new definition of ICOM will be very different from the existing legal one. It is impossible to use in the law. The museum can be called anything according to the new definition. It does not reflect the unique features of the museum and indefinitely expands the list of institutions that can self-identify as museums.

2. The new definition is a very relativistic one. It does not provide for the responsibility of museums for “academic” science-based presentation of both collections and research results.

3. Too many words. The new definition uses many phrases and fixed expressions that are very broad but meaningless. The first part, “Museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures” – more like a mission or a vision than a definition. References about the past and the future are very vague and unclear. It is also unclear how museums will be able

³² *What definition do museums need? Proceedings of the ICOM Committees’ day* [online]. Paris: Grande galerie de l’évolution (MNHN), March 10, 2020 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from [www: <https://www.icom-ce.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Whatdefinition-Proceedings-ICOM-France.pdf>](https://www.icom-ce.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Whatdefinition-Proceedings-ICOM-France.pdf).

³³ See FOLGA-JANUSZEWSKA, Dorota. *Dzieje pojęcia museum i problemy współczesne. Wprowadzenie do dyskusji nad nową definicją museum. Muzealnictwo*, 2020, vol. 61, pp. 27–45.

³⁴ MAN’KOVSKA, Ruslana. *E-mail to the author*, 30. 11. 2021.

³⁵ In the framework of the joint conference SPNHC (Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections) and ICOM NATHIST (International Committee of Natural Museums ISOM, June, 2020).

to ensure equal rights and equal access for all people to heritage. In general, the whole first paragraph of the definition is very broad, politicized, and unrealistic to implement. It is quite suitable as a core for formulating a vision/mission. In short, [...] it seems [...] the old definition from 2007 was quite good and can add about the cultural role of museums for communities and generations, and that will be enough. If we take into account all the related processes that affect the holders of collections today – decolonization, repatriation, Nagoya Protocol [...] It is hardly possible to give a single answer to the question “What is a museum?”, which would reflect all the processes taking place in the world and was suitable for legal documents.³⁶

Roman Chmelyk, Doctor in History, Director of the Lviv National Historical Museum, Vice President of ICOM Ukraine.

The definition of museums is quite voluminous and capacious. [The authors] tried to reflect both the traditional understanding of the museum, as an institution that collects, preserves, researches, and promotes, and to respond to today’s challenges of equal access for all groups of society as in the sense of social equality and according to the people with disabilities. From this point of view, its editing could deprive the museum of some critical components. At the same time, there is a feeling you read not a scientific definition of a term, but a populist slogan of some ideological platform, especially in “establishing social justice, global equality, and planetary prosperity”. It generally sounds like a utopian one. It isn’t easy

³⁶ DZIUBENKO, Natalie. *Facebook: Natalie Dzyubenko* [online]. 8 June, 2020 [accessed 2022-01-28]. Available from [www: <https://www.facebook.com/natalie.dzyubenko.9>](https://www.facebook.com/natalie.dzyubenko.9).

to imagine how museums could do this. The museum activities are a priori aimed at raising the cultural and educational level of visitors or society in general and establishing better communication both within it and between different ethnic, religious, and political communities. In this sense, museums should be platforms for dialogue. The interpretation function, which each government wants to use as an instrument to achieve its politically determined goals, is also a caveat.³⁷

Iryna Dyachuk, director of The Sergiy Korolyov National Astronautics Museum.

The topic [of the museum definition] is a very important one, especially for classical museums, which, unfortunately, in our time, renewing, lose their primary function – the preservation and transmission of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. [...] Today, museum specialists devote a lot of time to developing and implementing new forms of work with visitors, expanding paid services, introducing interactive methods, and more. All these things are important ones, but the basis of the museum is an authentic collection. This fact distinguishes it from other elements in the structure of culture. Nowadays, scientific and educational centers, cultural environments, and art spaces are often under the sign “Museum”. [...] Without diminishing the importance of such structures, I would like to emphasize they are not content-wise museums, although they perform similar functions in the socio-cultural information system.

The definition [proposed in Kyoto] considers the museum’s specific features, emphasizing its non-profit

³⁷ CHMELYK, Roman. *E-mail to the author*. 25. 01. 2022

and ideological orientation. I would increase the emphasis on the axiological function of the museum, which allows to accumulate and broadcast humanity cultural experience through the scientific acquisition of funds and the modern methods of museum collection visualization.³⁸

Fedir Androschuk, Ukrainian archaeologist, Doctor in History, General Director of the National Museum of History of Ukraine.

The definition [proposed in Kyoto] can be accepted, except that “museums are not for profit”. In Ukraine, the state makes financial support for museums in the following areas – wages, energy consumption, and security. Services for the latter are growing, and the budget amount remains the same and is not indexed. [...] This fact means the rest [money] the museums have to pay from their special accounts and forget about other essential things – updating the material base, capital expenditures, etc. In addition, some museums have debts due to court decisions, which must pay. Our museum has not received funds for capital expenditures for about ten years. Therefore, for a museum to function fully, it must earn money by selling services.³⁹

6. Conclusions

Thus such well-known Ukrainian museum figures as Mykola Bilyashivskiy, Fedir Shmidt, Fedir Ernst, and Ilarion Svetsitskiy made the first attempts to formulate the concept of “museum” in the late nineteenth century – in the first third of the twentieth century. However, the these figures mentioned above do not

³⁸ DIACHUK, Iryna. *E-mail to the author*. 9. 11. 2021.

³⁹ ANDROSHCHUK, Fedir. *E-mail to the author*. 9. 11. 2021.

exhaust this list. They focused on the research, educational and educational mission of museums. Volodymyr Dubrovsky's statement about the task of museums to spread knowledge and thus improve public well-being echoes the wording of the concept of "museum" proposed in Kyoto. The most famous Ukrainian museum of the Soviet era researchers Halyna Mezentseva and Yuriy Omelchenko focused on the educational function of the museum, as Soviet-Communist system required.

After the proclamation of Ukrainian independence in 1991 and the change of socio-political situation, the prevailing opinion in the museum space of Ukraine was the museum as an institution of social memory. This idea became more widespread after the Revolution of 2013–2014 and the war in the East. Now the researchers mostly talk about the potential of museums as sites for the restoration of national memory and Ukrainian identity. In the discussion after Kyoto 2019, ICOM Ukraine has taken the position of the need to preserve the key content of the preliminary definition. It also warns that purely formal compliance with functional criteria does not prevent museums from being transformed into a propaganda instrument for totalitarian and anti-human regimes. As I write these words, there is a cynic war going on in my country that could only be seen in the movies before. The idea of museums as spaces that should prevent war and help preserve Ukrainian identity makes unique sense.

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SVITLANA MURAVSKA

Department of History, Museology and Cultural Heritage, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine
svitlana.v.muravska@lpnu.ua

Svitlana Muravska, associate professor in the Department of History, Museology and Cultural Heritage of Lviv Polytechnic National University. Her research interests focus on the history, theory and management of university collections and museums. Her book *Museum institutions in the system of higher education of Western*

Ukraine against the background of world trends was published in 2018. For the last ten years, she is active in researching Museology and since 2019 she is D.Sc. in Historical Studies (specialization Museum and Heritage Studies). She has also worked in Museum of National University of Ostroh Academy (Ukraine) for 6 years. An ICOM member since 2013.

Svitlana Muravska je docentkou na Katedře historie, muzeologie a kulturního dědictví Lvovské polytechnické národní univerzity. Její výzkumná činnost se soustřeďuje

na dějiny, teorii a management univerzitních sbírek a muzeí. V roce 2018 vyšla její kniha pod názvem *Muzejní instituce v systému vyššího vzdělávání na západní Ukrajině na pozadí světových trendů*. Posledních deset let se aktivně věnuje výzkumu v oblasti muzeologie a v roce 2019 získala titul doktor věd v oboru historie (se specializací na muzejnictví a studium kulturního dědictví). Šest let pracovala v Muzeu Národní univerzity Ostrožská akademie v Ostrohu (Ukrajina). Od roku 2013 je členkou ICOM.

