

information heritage power  
forms become objects element often  
idea stable objects value  
particular continuity  
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memory may function  
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heterotopia Foucault  
cultural Museum  
instrument experience practice  
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Place world well perhaps  
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lived now work many meaningful towards  
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history theory new

# Space Museum

## Does Place Matter in Museology?

An inquiry into Michel Foucault's *heterotopia* for expanding current  
museological theory with a theoretical element of *place*

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## I. The object of this exercise

“What makes a true virtuoso is the profound understanding of the instrument.”

— Tomislav Sola

### i. Introduction

The museum is a miraculous place. It's a place of spectacle, of experience and understanding, but also a place of reflection, a mirror to the individual, and through the individual and his relations, in the end, to society at large. A place for confirmation, anchorage and recognition, but a place also for realisation, dialogue and change. As museological theory has emerged from a collection-based practice, it follows that in understanding how the museum arrives at its magic, the study of museums has made it a high priority to analyse and understand the treasures that museums hold, focusing intensively on the thing the museum *does* with its contents. As a result, the basic questions in museology are about the way the museum distils meaning from material and non-material cultural objects; how it maintains these objects in collections, and how it must serve its audiences by disclosing these collections.

It is not surprising that abstracting these core aspects of museum work into mental concepts that may not serve practice directly, tends to arouse suspicion among museologists. Many of them feel that a museology that does not contribute directly to the execution of museum tasks is a useless museology – or does not deserve the label ‘museology’ at all. Broad theoretical concepts on man's position in a socially constructed, meaningful world, would be too encompassing and too remote for resting museum practice upon, and were better left the domains of philosophy, psychology, semiotics, or sociology, archaeology and ethnography.

Museology is young as an independent science, and as it is still in the process of consolidating a solid, autonomous and self-sustaining body of theory, it needs to be critical in allowing infusion from adjacent fields' theorems. And it is not that museology does not have a lot on its hands to begin with. At any ordinary day, the average museum already deals with ‘life, the universe, and everything’ – hard enough to handle without conceptual book learning from armchair scholars. But refining and enhancing museum practice in a changing world urges the (ongoing) formation and adjustment of a theoretic framework.

At this point still, museological theory appears to consist of different views that are not always well aligned – to the point of being contradictory. Under the influence of pivotal social and technical developments like information technology, tourism, mobility, globalisation, individualisation, to name a few, museum practice has found itself accelerated in the past decades, and it seems that at this particular moment the theory falls short of expectations raised by the booming developments. It is felt that museological theory urgently needs re-adjustment, aligning and a new critique.

This is but one observation that is at the basis of the inquiry at hand. A more weighty finding may be the following. Undoubtedly, what a museum *does*, is of the greatest interest, but is it all clear what a

museum *is*, and *why* a museum does what it does? The analysis of what the museum, as one of society's vital organs of cultural signification fundamentally is, will not focus on its specialised departments or trained staff. Also, it does not deal exclusively with the museum's traditional nucleus: the museum object. Neither will it extensively probe the museum's concern with audiences, its aims for sustainability, or its visions for institutional reform. The key to an alternative way of looking at the museum for understanding its true identity rests on regarding the institute on a more abstract level, analysing it as a cultural tool of society that is finely tuned to do exactly what it is expected it to do, namely, to mirror that same society from the perspective of an unstable world from which stable images are constantly being replicated.

For understanding this process, the museum is best examined as an instrument, and at least partially, it is considered here as an *optical* instrument. It is this 'museum apparatus' that will be zoomed into in this inquiry. Therefore, the museum will not be cut up in different departments, core tasks or fields of expertise, but it will be regarded as a coherent system, a solidified 'directive for looking', and thereby a *format of meaning*. It is expected that by means of its refined integrative machinery, the museum not only alters its contents into 'objects', but it also converts its visitors into 'spectators'. In addition to Kenneth Hudson's famous maxim that 'a stuffed tiger in a museum is a stuffed tiger in a museum and not a tiger', it is analogously suggested that a visitor in a museum, likewise, is not a mere visitor, but *a visitor in a museum: an altered being*.<sup>1</sup>

In the museum-as-optical-instrument, an element of distance is undeniably present. It is exactly this element of distance, and especially its moral connotations, that has led to heated debate. The museum's application of physical and psychological distance is conspicuous for those who find that the museum operates as a tool of repression, wielded by a privileged class. At the same time, this distance that the museum undeniably applies is inconspicuous to many others – many museum visitors who docilely decode the institute they were 'programmed' to understand. It has to be handed to the critics that this often means *looking* instead of *touching*. And why would that be? The need for protection? Remnants of an elitist display of the untouchable's power? Or something else, something fruitful, an essential cog in the museum meaning machinery – the focal length perhaps in the optics of the museum-instrument?

Pursuing the idea of the museum as an optical instrument, the museum is understood to alter the view of the spectator by manipulating it. Images are created by a distinct process that is facilitated by the museum's setup and treatment. This operation is expected to incorporate techniques of *isolation*, but also strategies of *integration*, as well as *selection*, and means of *stabilisation* as well as *disruption* of meaning. This process, that I expect to be ingrained in every facet of the museum institute, is expected to be utterly physical, indeed a practical instrument that depends on 'distance' for its inner working. After all, in order to perceive an enhanced image, the observer is always on the *other* side of the lens, not in direct contact with what it is he is looking at. Certainly, seeing is not touching. Seeing is understanding and believing. But at the same instance, the visitor of the museum shares a spatial bodily here-and-now reality with the understood and believed 'image'. The *distance* of seeing and the *proximity* of a lived reality form the museum's presumed spatial meaning format, and, for that matter,

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1. Kenneth Hudson (1977), quoted in Peter van Mensch, "Towards a Methodology of Museology" (University of Zagreb, faculty of philosophy, 1992), p. 312, note 52.

the museum's paradox. An analysis of this spatial functioning of the museum, as well as the relevance of such an approach for museum theory, is what this thesis is essentially about.

New viewpoints are needed to perform this test to current museum theory. The call for analysing the museum as a predominantly spatial tool departs from the notion of the *heterotopia* by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, of whom I will come to speak elaborately. Foucault's concept looks into society's semipermeable, ambiguous places, and considers them as constructed, yet real, nodes in a network of meaning, places that connects all of society's 'other places'. This concept will serve as point of departure for this exercise. But first, a short account is given on how this project came into being, what it should do for museology and how the analysis is structured.

### More than objects and people

The archetypical place where a Western world society, in the past two or three century, assembles, researches and displays objects that are considered meaningful for society at large, would be a museum. As a result, the museum object, the (often physical) carrier of this cultural information – the beating heart of the museum –, has traditionally been the nucleus that museum practice has evolved around. However, as society has changed, the role of the museum in society has been in motion as well. These developments in museums are echoed by the changing role, significance and treatment of the museum object.<sup>2</sup> Most museums have started out by preserving cultural (historical) knowledge, building on the object as a container of cultural information<sup>3</sup>, and as a result, museum collections have necessarily become the cumulative result of past collection policies and past management decisions. Slowly, museums have seen their role shift from being fortresses, safeguarding precious objects for prosperity, into society's identity workshops which concentrate on a dialogue on significance with users in the present. Museums, of all institutes known, face the most fundamental problems when they long for change. No matter how drastically novel society's demands, and no matter how outdated the museum's current fashion, one of the qualities the museum must expire perpetually is continuity; to a degree it is always obliged to produce stable and comprehensible accounts of how we got from *there* to *here*, from *then* to *now*, from *them* to *us*. The museum as a portal between ourselves and the other (as a function of ourselves) must contain a bit of both worlds – and it must summon these two worlds in a controlled and stable way. As a result, the museum's impossible mission remains twofold: safeguarding the collections continuity and coherence *ad infinitum*, and at the same time answering to societies contemporary needs in a most flexible way. These two factors are understood to shape the museum's contents: the 'outside' dynamics of contemporary society and the 'inside' decisions made by the collection specialist (who can not be seen as isolated from the same society). Based on this dichotomy, the conclusion would be that the fundament of every museum and all museum practice follows from

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2. The dynamics of society's epistemological structures and the consequences for its dealing with heritage have been extensively elaborated upon in Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992).
  3. Ivo Maroevic coins the term 'cultural information' by which he refers to the invisible meaning that is part of an object. Together with the physically perceivable 'scientific information', these two dimensions of information are considered to be the basis of the information structure of the museum object. See for example Maroevic's reaction to a paper of Zelimir Laszlo in "Museology for Tomorrow's World : Contributions to the Unesco-Issom Symposium Brno/Brünn 1996" (Paper presented at the Museology for Tomorrow's World, Brno, 1997), p. 65-68.

the balance between the primacy of the *object as container of cultural information* and *society's contemporary needs*. This is the discussion that museology seems to have currently arrived at. But are these really all the forces at work?

There is reason to believe that museums are more complicated than that. From a perspective that is almost cynical, the continuous presence of the collection in such a meaningful place as a museum, is indeed a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a museum is the dedicated place where meaningful artefacts are kept, then *all* artefact contained in such a place *must be* truly meaningful. The dynamics of this 'stipulative' understanding of the museum is best illustrated by the unfolding of cultural significance of readymade artworks upon entering the gallery space. Surely, Marcel Duchamp's famous urinal *Fountain* must be mentioned as art history's landmark when it comes to exposing precisely this capacity of the museum space. But also objects and collections with a more mundane profile – material even from daily life, become authoritative emitters of culture when they are accepted in museum presentations. The museum is more than a new overcoat for formerly functional objects; it has fundamentally reconfigured the object's cultural role and altered its contents profoundly. Ergo, by their continuous role as cultural beacons, museums are more than the neutral containers of meaningful cultural elements: they are culturally meaningful entities in themselves, and by their setup and treatment they configure their contents in an authorising, stabilising and formative manner. As a result, objects in a museum not only refer to themselves and their 'own' significance, but also to their place in – and treatment by – the museum. As museum and object build on each other, they appear to start functioning as a system. But not without the 'eye of the beholder'.

From the field of semiotics comes another notion that connects to the museum 'meaning format'. The discursive approach towards the museum object forbids taking apart observer, object and meaning as autonomous entities, and prescribes how meaning arises only in the interaction between the spectator and the object. Edwina Taborsky, among others, explains that "you, and the object have to exist in some shared spatial and temporal area, and your interaction with it defines its meaning at that moment". In the same essay Taborsky mentions how "we must not forget that this discursive theory creates not only the existence of the object, but also that of the observer".<sup>4</sup>

The equation of the 'discursive object' does not involve the museum itself, which is more than remarkable, for the museum's filtered and encapsulated reality, its 'magical order', is expected to be a defining factor in bringing this dialogue about. It is therefore recognised that the museum *itself* and its spatial dynamics are not sufficiently explained by the isolated discursive interaction between the museum visitor and the museum object. But how is the museum's influence as 'discursive tool' or 'meaning format' analysed? And how does the museum's spatial setup fit in? What is the – possible – stance of museological theory in this matter?

## Museum theory: from object to audience

The current understanding of the museum institute is quintessentially expressed by a shifted focus

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4. The semiotics Taborsky refers to here is the poststructuralist interpretation of the theory of signs. Taborsky, E., *The discursive object*, in *Objects of Knowledge*, vol. 1, New Research in Museum Studies (London; Atlantic Highlands: Athlone Press, 1990), p.58, 64.

away from ‘matter’, the museum object, and towards ‘mind’, the museum visitor and society at large.

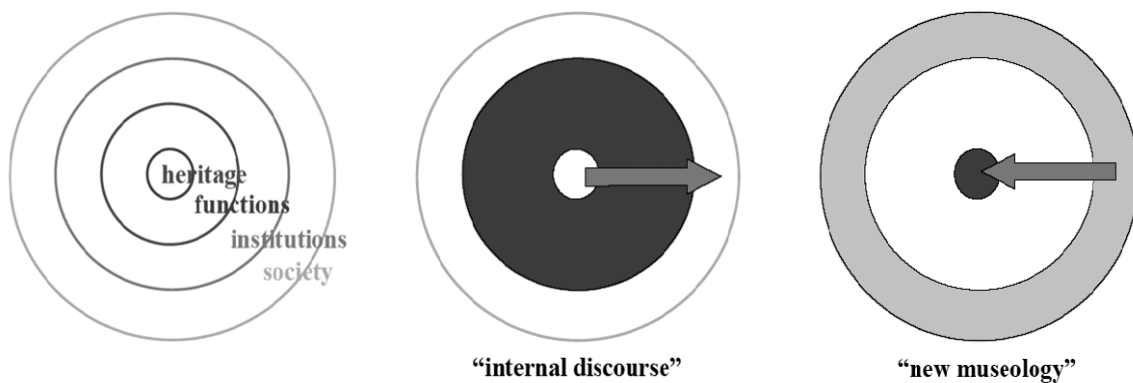
Before this shift crystallised in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the main museological project had been explaining the essence of the museum object. Up until recently, it was generally accepted that (through time) cultural information congeals into material objects, and that the amount of information that could potentially be related to an object would be infinite – at least, in theory. It is this ‘information carrying’ aspect of the museum object that a group of Czech museum theorists has explored and explained during the late nineteen sixties until the nineteen nineties.<sup>5</sup> According to these ‘Brno school’ museologists, who were leaning on information theory and archival science, the various (or limitless) connective possibilities of the museum object must be seen as ‘information layers’ that are disclosed by the museum environment and practice – in particular by means of registration and documentation. From the ‘raw’ object, that is characterised by its one-dimensional, functional information potential, the museum excavates the cultural document or archive, in order to establish the *musealium*. Subsequently, its documentary value or cluster of meanings, is solidified and disclosed on multiple levels: the object, the collection, the museum itself and de museum in its cultural and physical context.

In the last three decades of the twentieth century, the paradigm shift towards the *new museology* gradually entered the museology discipline. Since the early nineteen seventies, the primacy of the ‘valuable object from the past’ has been reconsidered, and has made room for the ‘meaningful experience in the present’. This shift from artefact to society, from authentic object to authentic experience, necessarily involved a shift in museum practice, from recreating the past in a museum-time-machine, towards offering a powerful tool for enhancing the collective and individual ‘self’ in the *here-and-now*.

Giving up the possibility of an intelligible ‘eternal truth’ that is held by the object, in favour of individual experiences, based on interpretation and construction by (members of) society, may be regarded as a shift away from a modernist museology towards a postmodern or, more specific, poststructuralist museology. It is logically assumed that the study of the dynamics of heritage should change accordingly by this newfound relation between man and matter; history and truth; signifier and signified. Naturally, the new paradigm has urged museology to studying society and society’s meaning-making in the present, instead of stable objects from the past – the formative qualities of the museum space being excepted theme within the study of the expression of society’s contemporary narratives. But, although museum *practice* has incorporated many society- and experience-oriented strategies already, curiously enough, the underlying museological theory still embraces the primacy of the *object as information carrier*. Even as museum theorists have massively adopted the idea that information is *attributed* to the object instead of it being an integral element of its manifestation, the museum object remains in the very centre of museological thought, enveloped by the museum as its interface to society:

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5. The most important Czech authors associated with the ‘Brno school’ of museological theory are Zbynek Stránský, Ivo Maroevic and Tomislav Sola. In the Netherlands it has been Peter van Mensch who is associated to the Brno school museology. Van Mensch, who has been a former PhD student of Maroevic, has developed the museological theory of the Brno school further, and has played an important role in making the systematic approach of the Czech circle of museologists available in the Netherlands and the anglophone community.



From: Peter van Mensch, "Museology and Management: Enemies Or Friends? Current Tendencies in Theoretical Museology and Museum Management in Europe" (Paper presented at the Museum management in the 21st century, Tokyo, 2003), p. 6-7.

This may (partially) be the result of the new museology manifesting itself as an idealistic attitude to museum practice, more than a theoretical structure.<sup>6</sup> But with or without a theoretical basis to found the new museology upon, an important question remains whether object-driven museological theory still fits the museum institute's new objectives – the implicit assumption of this thesis being that it does not.

A relevant development in the museum field that is worth mentioning, as it illustrates the need of revising the object-centred theory, is the growing attention that has been paid to *intangible heritage*. In this category of 'objects', cultural meaning and - value are connected to non-material expressions of society such as traditions, stories, (the execution of) crafts and so on. It is important to emphasise that these expressions, like objects, find their expression in space and time, so they can be *experienced* in reality. Another set of meaning carriers that is bound by space and time, and must be considered akin to the material and non-material cultural expressions mentioned before, is formed by the relation between meaning and *place* – often in connection with historic events. Such places are, for example: former battlefields, memorial sites, former market squares, historic houses and the like. The cultural 'evidence' is continued by a place, evoking an experience which is not necessarily flagged by objects or buildings, although combinations of the two are common. A network of these places unfolds a more complex meaning-matrix that may be regarded as an information layer of a whole area. Often such places, when they have not been formalised and encapsulated, have kept an element of fluidity, maintaining a link to 'real life', feeding them new new cultural input that may, or may not be rendered stable. This thought is typically explored by Pierre Nora in his concept of *les lieux de mémoire*.<sup>7</sup>

All these non-material expressions, that in their own right sustain and disclose cultural information, have undoubtedly become 'the stuff of museums' – although they are hardly taken into account by a coherent museological theory, only perhaps by stretching the theoretical cribwork of the true-blue material object to fit its new siblings. Again, the question is posed whether the current theory is still valid and in balance with what museums do – and aim to do in the period to come.

6. Peter van Mensch, "Towards a Methodology of Museology", p. 47.

7. Pierre Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire*, vol. 26 (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory), Representations (University of California Press, 1989).

‘Place’ as meaningful object or ‘spatial treatment’ as meaning enhancer?

When, as a prelude to this project of explaining the museum by its spatial machinery, the cultural ‘object’ of space is considered more closely, it must be emphasised that mere coordinates in space are essentially meaningless. *Place*, in the sense of ‘meaningful space’, can be regarded in two ways. Firstly, it may be understood along the lines of the current theory that explains objects. In this view it is seen as *source*, as direct proof, as one of reality’s stable manifestations of cultural information. In this approach, its three-dimensional aspect, which would be its coordinates, are linked to a given cultural referent, quite similar to the way in which the materiality of an object becomes an ‘information carrier’. In this view, a place, just like a material object, functions as a sign, and it contains a three-dimensional aspect that is continuous through time. From this capacity, place claims the same stabilising and connective capacity as does the material object. In this understanding, museological theory has been stretched to fit ‘objectified’ place.

Secondly, a place may be understood as a cultural *treatment* or experience, as a way to stress, enhance or enact meaning, whether this meaning originates from the place itself (for example an historical site), or from object (clusters) that were assembled from other places, only to occupy a dedicated, ordering space. In the latter capacity, in which a place is seen as an agent of meaning, it is regarded as a tool or format that enhances and even creates cultural information through its setup, structure and internal dynamics. Its contents dissolve in a spatial order it summons. Place as cultural treatment – or production – could be understood from theory on perception and interpretation, but it would be more fruitful to depart from an understanding what a place essentially *is*, followed by an analysis how the museum can be seen from such a spatial perspective.

It must be noted that the two aspects of ‘place’ as *objectified source* and as *continuous treatment* tend to get entwined. Places where meaningful objects were gathered gain meaning-momentum by themselves, and their premises are culturally structured accordingly. Battlefields become places of remembrance, temples become historic sites; memorial sites become museums and museums become their own musealised ‘object’. Places, as much as objects – in fact as much as any spatiotemporal cultural practice in the widest sense, may be shaped to function in a broader, signifying or symbolic context in which they are formally connected to cultural information. It is this spatial treatment and its properties that is addressed in this thesis. What form do these treatments assume and how do they direct the view and lead to the enhancement of significance?

### Heterotopia: a spatial treatment generating meaning

In a brief essay with the title *Of Other Spaces* (French original: *Des espaces autres*), the esteemed French philosopher Michel Foucault (15 October 1926 – 25 June 1984), introduces a view on culturally structured space that enforces and enhances meaning.<sup>8</sup> Foucault raises the term heterotopia (*hétérotopie*) to define this particular spatial format, and finds that it is characterised most of all by internal ambiguity and the defined relation to *other* (hetero-) *places* (topos). In *Of Other Spaces*,

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8. References from French source: Michel Foucault, “Des espace autres : Une Conférence Inédite De Michel Foucault,” *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984): 46-49, and two English translations in: Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22-27, and Michiel Dehaene, and Lieven de Caeter, *Heterotopia and the City : Public Space in a Postcivil Society* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 14-22.

Foucault refers to the museum as one of the cultural places he typically recognises as a heterotopia – or, as he nonchalantly adds: a ‘heterochrony’, as the museum is laconically presented as the sort of place that, by its setup, refers to an intricate network of ‘other times’.

For theorists of museums, the concept of the heterotopia rings a bell as it may be read to attribute to place an information structure that brings to mind the information-based theory of the Brno museologists, who recognised a parallel information structure in the museum object or *musealium*. Characteristically, the musealium, after a ‘life’ of a more or less serial repetition of contexts, is formally disconnected from its previous functions and at the same time *hyperconnected* to various bits of cultural information, forming a structure of relations to different times, places, people, or intricate human constructions like organisations, movements or even other artefacts.<sup>9</sup> Its representational function has become that of the complex document or archive.<sup>10</sup> In the context of information theory, the words used to describe the objects meaning format are: ‘information layers’, ‘information structure’ and ‘information complex’. But ‘ambiguity’ is something different than ‘structure’, and the positivist ideas of the Brno school museologists are at odds with Foucault’s (post)structuralist line of thought. Does the razor-sharp and rigid view of the information theory-influenced thinkers at all connect to Foucault’s ambiguous and fragmented heterotopia? Or does the heterotopia involve a reality that defies cerebral code and categories like language?

Comparing the heterotopia with the musealium is but one approach that will be elaborated upon. Also, the idea of the heterotopia will also be compared with the museum at large, sublimating the abstract musealium (not the object itself, but its documentary status) in its gyroscopic meaning-machinery. This necessarily leads to a new perspective on the musealised object’s identity within the museum. The museum, that is essentially providing for the object’s physical retreat and its new, multilayered, referential quality that is shaped by the museum treatment, then becomes the *generator* of the enhanced object instead of merely being its patron. When studying *this* musealium, the focus must shift from the object to its creator: the spatial system that formats cultural information in this particular way. Based on this line of thought, the central question in the analysis at hand would be whether the museum can be regarded as a cultural system like Foucault’s heterotopia; a *spatial information format* that orders, enhances, or even generates meaning in a typical way. Secondly, is it this approach that museologists need to fathom in order to better understand museums? In other words: Would it fortify museological theory to consider the museum as a exponent of Foucault’s heterotopia: a place that serves society at large by formatting and sustaining collective meaning by the creation and stabilisation of musealia? Is the museum-as-heterotopia in itself a musealia-engendering technique?

The way the question is raised points to a distinct approach to the museum institute already. The idea of the museum as neutral shelter for (im)material cultural highlights is abandoned completely. The museum is presented as a cultural tool, an instrument that directs the way humans look at (necessarily social) aspects of their world. As an instrument for objectification – an optical instrument – such an instrument must be taken apart without too much consideration for its specimens and its themes. The museum instrument is expected to *create* (the image of) the specimen, that is, the museum object, by

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9. Here, the term ‘hyperconnection’ is used to refer to the concept of museality: the musealium is removed from the daily, unstable network of meaning (its primary context), to be formally reconnected to a given number of information layers, constructed by the museum (its museum context).

10. Not to be confused with the *archival record* that is still functional in its primary context where it is vitally related to the work process it sustains.

means of a series of refined spatial strategies. It is therefore not the specimen itself, and its content matter discipline that is examined, but instead, the museum's physical and psychological layout, its 'optical theory' by which it creates and sustains its very particular cultural images.

## ii. Why is this important?

The investigation of the notion of the heterotopia, seen as a development in spatial theory, is expected to help enriching the general perception of what a museum essentially is, expanding the conception of the museum as a cultural tool, shaped according to society's contemporary and dynamic needs. These dynamic needs may, paradoxically, lie primarily in producing stability and continuity, producing a network of anchors to any form of cultural meaning that would otherwise be fading, slipping through our fingers as they do not remain in the here-and now, 'consultable' in the shifting present. Because of the focus on the spatial ingredients that Foucault elaborates upon, such as *demarcation*, *access* and *internal (dis)order*, this analysis should be particularly relevant for the ideas and aims of the new museology: the enhancing of the museum's accessibility and integration in society. If the cultural information that a museum produces is influenced, or even produced by its spatial format, what are the consequences for the ideals of the new museology, especially in terms of access and an audience-oriented approach? Does the elimination of thresholds lead to a more democratic and more accessible experience of heritage? Or does it maim one of the museum's most important agents for producing stable and far-reaching cultural meaning?

Apart from issues of access and the new museology ideas, this investigation aims on presenting the museum as a integrated instrument, all of its actions stemming from a unified concept of what a museum *is*. This approach seeks to providing the museum with a coherent identity, from which its dominant content matter specialism, as well as its auxiliary disciplines can depart (and stay in touch).

Finally, this enquiry is seen as useful in a process in which museums not only understand themselves better, but also explain themselves to society, enabling them to add to their presentations an element of discussion on what it means that museums exist and how they may build, manipulate or alter cultural reality.

## iii. Contents and structure of the analysis

In order to perform the intended comparison between current museological theory and the Foucaultian notion of the heterotopia, in the following chapter (II) the analysis will start off by briefly discussing museological theory and refining the museological angle that is adopted here. This section will touch upon the museum's various forms and categories, the museum functions, and the concept of the museum object as *musealium*. The key concepts of museological theory, *museality* and *authenticity*, are considered in some detail, and from their many inferences an interpretation is proposed.

Stepping away from museological theory altogether, the concepts of 'space' and 'place' are elaborated upon in chapter III, departing from the development of these concepts in the early twentieth century up until the present. Special attention will be paid to spatial theory based on human experience, as it first emerged from the work of three pioneering philosophers: Gaston Bachelard, Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger. It will be shown how the ideas of these intellectuals not only underpin Foucault's heterotopia, but set in motion a whole new way of looking at space that have inspired

theorists up until today. Also in this chapter, an account will be given of museological concepts that already involve an element of place,

This provides for a firm basis to discuss Foucault and his notion of the heterotopia in chapter IV, in which the concept is considered from Foucault's main ideas and perspective. With the aid of more recent reactions to the Foucaultian heterotopia, the concept is analysed, and an interpretation is proposed for a check with museological theory.

The possibility of a synthesis of museological theory with a spatial paradigm for considering museums ontologically is considered in chapter V. Questions that will be answered include: Does the museum fit Foucault's concept and what does this mean? (How) can the museum be seen as a coherent spatial tool? What are the museum's spatial strategies and how are their dynamics understood? What is the resulting status of the museum object and what does this mean for the concepts of the *musealium*, *museality* and *authenticity*? (How) is the museum paradox of distance and proximity reconciled with the ideals of the new museology? A summary of these findings in a series of principles on the spatial order of the museum is followed by the concluding chapter that will reflect on the analysis at large, proposing further lines of research on the subject of place and museology.

