

## UKRAINIAN MUSEUMS: FROM DECOLONIZATION TO REVITALIZATION OF CULTURAL SPACE

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### INTRODUCTION

Overcoming the imperial and Soviet past in Ukraine today is taking place in two directions: renaming streets and cities, dismantling and transferring communist symbols and monuments to thematic museums, analyzing the historical past and, accordingly, changing narratives in school curricula, history textbooks, museums and memorials.

Today we are dealing with a classic example of an empire that goes down in history in the midst of violence, in the midst of war and in the midst of conflicts. From this point of view, the war between Ukraine and Russia is an imperial war, this war is the so-called “colonial war” and it should be presented in this way.

The question is not only about joining the EU, but about Europe in a historical context. According to Prof. Serhii Plokhii “...the modern Ukrainian political and historical revival is still about European values, it is about a completely different model of political organization, a different political culture... Such an orientation towards Europe has deep historical roots. This is essential for the emergence of Ukraine as an autonomous and independent ethnicity and an independent country”<sup>1</sup>.

The Russian occupation has under threat the preservation of Ukrainian museum collections. Museums carry out their work in such a way that their exhibitions reflect diversity according to the decolonization processes in modern Ukraine. There are a number of European museums, whose roots have a colonial heritage, because their collections were formed through wealthy patrons who acted in the interests of empires. For example, some collections of the British Museum were formed thanks to profits from slave plantations in Jamaica. Many collectors saw in their efforts an opportunity to preserve the past, believing that indigenous peoples would completely disappear.

It is also important to understand that museums in Ukraine have been under strict control of the authorities since Soviet times. The concept of multiculturalism and diversity of Ukraine was not visualized in museum exhibitions, so the history of the formation of Ukrainian identity, which had

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<sup>1</sup> Плохій С. Брама Європи. Історія України від скіфських воєн до незалежності. КСД. Харків, 2024. 496 с.

nothing to do with the concept of the “Russian world”, was very distorted. With the declaration of independence of Ukraine, changes occurred in many museums. However, narratives about Kyivan Rus as the cradle of three fraternal peoples, the kinship of the Ukrainian and Russian languages, the enslavement of the Ukrainian people by the Polish nobility, etc. remained in Ukrainian museums for a long time. After the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity, changes in exhibitions became more noticeable. Ukrainian became the language of exhibitions and lectures, and exhibitions were supplemented with topics such as the Holodomor, the Shot Renaissance, the dissident movement, the Samvydav, the OUN and the UPA, and Ukrainian statehood. Museum practices are changed. Museum workers have learned to build new ways of communicating with visitors. However, it is obvious that the path to overcoming colonial and post-colonial narratives is much more difficult.

### **1. Dilemmas of protection: Decolonizing museums**

Many well-known historians argue that it is necessary to rid the history of Ukraine of the “imperial legacy”, which is used for Russian imperial influence on Ukraine. The greatest influence on the writing of textbooks on the history of Ukraine was exerted by the Soviet Union and the neighboring aggressor country – Russia, which are quite skillfully using this for their own selfish purposes at the moment<sup>2</sup>.

The head of the UINP stated that after decolonization, the rewriting of history, it is very important that political decisions are also made that will fix new dates of founding of cities, changed historical facts, and reduction of material, based on historical research. And the process of decolonization itself, which is currently quite active, must become even larger in order to reduce the influence exerted on the writing of Ukrainian history by Russia as much as possible and to get rid of imperialism forever<sup>3</sup>.

V. Viatrovych notes that the first stage of decolonization is decommunization. It is necessary to separate from communist influence, totalitarianism, under which the Russian imperial past is often found<sup>4</sup>. Ukraine is very far behind in the process of decommunization unlike other countries that separated after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>2</sup> Громенко С. Декомунізація. Дерадянізація? Деколонізація! 2019. URL: <https://localhistory.org.ua/texts/statti/dekomunizatsiia-deradianizatsiia-dekolonizatsiia/> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

<sup>3</sup> Штогрін І. Навіщо переписувати українські підручники з історії? 2010. URL: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/1997853.html>. (дата звернення: 7.05.2026)

<sup>4</sup> В'ятрович В. Домовитися з минулим, а не долати його. 2022. URL: <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2022/01/24/160825/>. (дата звернення: 12.05.2026)

Decommunization was implemented only by social initiatives in Ukraine, there was no support from the ruling regimes in the early 90s.

The historian notes that the most active process of decommunization, decolonization took place only since the beginning of 2014, when the old regime was overthrown. Historians, relying on the experience of post-communist countries, or for example, relying on the experience of Germany, where the departure of the totalitarian regime was not easy, argue that in Ukraine the process of decolonization is not an easy phenomenon.

It is about decolonization that the so-called “decommunization laws” should be discussed. Communism has always been present in Ukraine and remains so, but already under the cover of Russian imperial hegemony.

Losev I. argues that it is very harmful and reckless to separate decommunization, decolonization from derussification because of today’s military events. After all, it is the Russian empire that exerts the greatest influence on Ukrainian culture and the nation in order to destroy it<sup>5</sup>.

The creators of the “decommunization” laws, namely the director of the Institute of National Remembrance V. Viatrovych, realize the true significance and essence of the decommunization processes in Ukraine as de facto decolonization. It is now that a very active separation from the imperial legacy is taking place, Ukrainians are asserting themselves as an independent and self-sufficient nation more and more every day<sup>6</sup>.

The English researcher R. F. Betts argues that decolonization for some British colonies was gradual and peaceful for emigrants, but violent for others, where the uprisings of local residents were fueled by nationalism. Most countries also faced opposition from the new superpowers, the USA, and the Soviet Union. That is, the process of decolonization is a global phenomenon that affects most countries<sup>7</sup>.

A movement is emerging within museums and museum organizations that takes on a social justice role in human rights; arguing that “museums are not neutral”<sup>8</sup>. Museums have never been neutral yet. The institution itself embodies the perpetuation of social, cultural, racial, and ethnic inequalities, adding to the complex social and economic injustices on a global scale. The contradiction between their supposed “neutrality” and the demands to

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<sup>5</sup> Лосев І. Історія України та міфи Росії: слова Путіна є промовистими. 2019. URL: <https://www.rad.iosvoboda.org/a/29720304.html>. (дата звернення: 7.05.2026)

<sup>6</sup> Козлюк С. Володимир В’ятрович: Деколонізація України – незворотна. 2015. URL: <https://tyzhden.ua/volodymyr-v-iatrovych-dekolonizatsiia-ukrainy-nezvorotna/> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

<sup>7</sup> Betts R. F. Decolonization: A brief history of the word. Leiden : KITLV Press, 2019. pp 23-36.

<sup>8</sup> Murawski M. Museums Are Not Neutral: We Are Stronger Together. *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 5, no. 2, 2019. pp. 113–124.

decolonize the museum is evidence of dynamic processes in the museum world.

Fabien Van Geert explores and nuances the terms postcolonial and decolonial museology. His analysis insists on the need to master and nuance these concepts. He also invites researchers not to oppose these two visions of museology. His interpretation of this movement is relevant because it is based on his dissertation project<sup>9</sup>, which allowed him to analyze in detail the movement of inquiry and transformation in the world of ethnographic museums.

The areas he has carefully explored allow him to demonstrate the need to clarify the concepts of museology and monument studies, which sometimes have a deeper meaning and require nuances depending on cultural aspects<sup>10</sup>.

Marilia Xavier Curie offers a reflection based on metamuseology, using the collections of the Kaingang Museum, which were assembled at the beginning of the 20th century in the context of the colonization of western São Paulo in Brazil. She questions the notions of “museums” and “museumness” through the context of a collection of objects that, as everywhere in America and on other continents, was carried out brutally. The study of these objects allows us to review the initial process of museification, as well as the rereading of these objects by the Kaingang groups, which suggests new interpretations. This type of approach, which can be observed in other countries of the world, shows that museology must integrate anthropological and sociological perspectives so that museum professionals can avoid ethnocentric or sociocentric approaches that promote the interpretation of the group to which one belongs to, to the detriment of others. Ethnocentrism usually leads to misinterpretations that can resemble forms of racism. Therefore, of course, museology must include in its general approach to open discourses, to the “other” and to differences, to where we get information from and from whom. In other words, an anthropological approach would make it possible to realize that one’s own culture cannot be the norm<sup>11</sup>.

Ruth B. Phillips argues that the colonial and decolonial dialectics are too polarizing. Instead, she encourages adopting a public museum approach where we could receive multiple interpretations in the exhibition itself<sup>12</sup>. This approach means that public museums should act as art museums and

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<sup>9</sup> Van Geert F. *Muséologie postcoloniale ou muséologie décoloniale? Réflexion sur la porosité des concepts*, ICOFOM Study Series, 49–2, 2021. Pp. 213–227.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Pp. 224.

<sup>11</sup> Cury M. X. *Paths to Indigenous Self-representation: the Round Table of Santiago de Chile 50 years later*. ICOFOM Study Series. 2022. 53-1. Pp. 132–144.

<sup>12</sup> Phillips R. B. *The issue is moot: Decolonizing art/artifact* *Journal of Material Culture*. 2021. 27:1. Pp. 48–70.

especially museums of contemporary art. Museum should not stand between the object and the visitor to exhibit objects without mediation on the basis that the work or object speaks for itself.

**The purpose of the article** is to analyze the specifics of the implementation of the strategy of decolonization of the cultural heritage of Ukraine using the example of museums.

**Presentation of the main material.** The question of decolonization also lies in how museums treat indigenous peoples and national minorities in the presentation of their exhibitions. After all, often works of indigenous peoples are located not in ethnographic museums, but in art museums. And this distinction helps to embody the idea that these cultures no longer exist and do not continue their traditions. Therefore, community involvement in museum activities can help overcome such sentiments and can show the resilience of cultures and traditions.

The impetus for the revival of interest among Ukrainian scholars in the decolonization of museums in Ukraine was the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022. The departure from the Soviet past and the transition to new forms of museum functioning should not be carried out with the help of ideological specialists of the aggressor country and their sympathizers. After all, in this way, the desired result may not be achieved, and the efforts and resources aimed at changing the museum will not contribute to raising patriotism and national self-awareness. For example, the memorialization of Babyn Yar was intended to integrate the history of the Holocaust into Ukrainian history and integrate Ukrainian history into world history. To this end, it was proposed to create two thematically separate museums in a single architectural space on the territory of the memorial park. However, given the public discussions of the project narrative, fears were expressed that it was created in the spirit of the Kremlin's memory policy, which wants to present Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians and other local populations as total anti-Semites. In addition, in 2019, the Russian director Ilya Khrzhanovsky was appointed as the art director of the project, whose approach to historical memory caused an ambiguous reaction from the Ukrainian scientific and cultural community<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, of course, decolonization should take place in a dialogue between different social groups (professional, confessional, ethno-national, age, gender). In addition, the blurring of the main ideas proposed by the museum or memorial complex can contribute to the upbringing of a sense of guilt or provoke conflict situations between social groups, incite aggression. Therefore, our society must avoid offensive content and discrimination.

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<sup>13</sup> Меморіальний музей пам'яті жертв Бабиного Яру. 2023. URL: <http://babiyar.org.ua> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

Another example of the presentation of decolonization processes in Ukraine is the National Memorial Complex of the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred – Museum of the Revolution of Dignity. Its head, Ihor Poshivaylo, emphasizes that memory needs infrastructure – a complex form for a communicative function that helps to avoid conflicts. Modern museums can be important and influential even without their own walls. Many museums, including in Ukraine, have luxurious buildings, but do not develop, are not popular with visitors and support from society, they are conservative and uninteresting. Therefore, today it is important for museum institutions to practice going beyond their own walls and glass display cases to new audiences – in the literal and figurative sense<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary to move away from the dominant approaches in totalitarian societies. Authorities and certain privileged groups shape memory at different levels (street names, state events, memorials, etc.) because some of political elites. In our opinion, the process should be approached thoughtfully, but also be open to experiments from which much can be learned. Decolonization is not an event, but a process, and it is not necessarily easy to achieve. After all, decolonization does not mean the destruction of the previous narrative, but only a revision and restructuring for independent development and a more successful formation of the cognitive process.

The war poses the question “do we have a future?” Imperial discourse works not only with space and time. We could hear this thesis is about the past by numerous times. The thesis that Ukrainians may have had a past, but have no chance for a future. So it is about an idea that we can characterize as “the idea of amputation of the future.” The past of Ukrainians, in the colonial discourse, is present in the description of the Cossack uprisings, the common history of the princely era, and the future will be imperial, will be different and it does not belong to Ukrainians and Ukrainian culture. And Russia in this sense is trying to present itself as a force of the future. However, international experience is evidence that empires are doomed<sup>15</sup>. And if the 20th century is a time of great de-imperialization, then Russia is the last empire on the territory of Europe. However, Russian colonialism is different from the British or Portuguese, which took place on other continents. After all, in relation to the inhabitants of remote territories, a hierarchical distinction was applied: “you will never be like us”. At the same time, Russia applied a model of identity to the neighboring state: “you will

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<sup>14</sup> The Ukrainians. Інтерв'ю. Ігор Пошивайло: «Нове для України явище – музеї, що ставлять складні та незручні питання». 2022. URL: <https://theukrainians.org/ihor-poshivajlo/> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

<sup>15</sup> Roland G. Political Economy of Northeast Asian Regionalism: Political Conflict and Economic Integration. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2008. 192 pp.

never be different from us”. And because of this position, such a mechanism involves assimilation. Therefore, the empire is waging a struggle against the Ukrainian language, a struggle against tradition, against culture.

Based on research conducted by Pak Laenui on decolonization processes, we can identify five phases in the decolonization process: 1) rediscovery and restoration; 2) mourning; 3) dreams; 4) commitment; 5) action<sup>16</sup>. Rediscovery and restoration is the process by which colonized peoples rediscover the process of mourning the ongoing attacks on the identity and social realities of colonized/oppressed peoples of the world. This is an important part of healing and leads to the next phase. Dreams is when colonized peoples turn to their history, worldview, and indigenous knowledge systems to theorize and imagine alternative possibilities – in this case, a different exposure. Commitment is when scholars/students become political activists who demonstrate a commitment to including the voices of the colonized, in this case, in the curriculum. Action is the stage where dreams and commitments are transformed into strategies for social transformation. In other words, the transformation of the museum is a catalyst for broader social transformation. Linda Smith<sup>17</sup> has identified the following elements of decolonization: deconstruction and reconstruction; self-determination and social justice; ethics, language, the internationalization of indigenous experiences, history and critique<sup>18</sup>. Deconstruction and reconstruction are about rejecting what has been miswritten and “the inquisitive distortion of people’s lived experiences, negative labels, theorizing of deficits, genetically deficient or culturally deficient models that pathologize the colonized... and the retelling of stories of the past and imaginings of the future.” Self-determination and social justice are related to the struggles of those who have been marginalized and the search for legitimacy for knowledge that is embedded in their own histories, experiences, and ways of perceiving reality. Ethics concerns the formulation, legislation, and dissemination of ethical issues related to the protection of indigenous knowledge systems. Language concerns the importance of teaching/learning/communicating in indigenous languages (in this case, Ukrainian) as part of the anti-imperialist struggle. Internationalization of indigenous experiences concerns international scholars sharing the common experiences, problems, and struggles of colonized peoples in global and local spaces. History, in this case, involves

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<sup>16</sup> Chilisa B. *Indigenous research methodologies*. Los Angeles: Sage publications, 2012, 343 p.

<sup>17</sup> Smith L. *Decolonising methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books, London and New York and University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1999. Pp. 48–49.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

the study of the past in order to reconstruct the history, culture, and languages of colonized peoples and use them to inform the present. Critique concerns the critical assessment of the disproportion in public discourse, schools, and museums between pro-European and pro-Russian styles of presentation in favor of the latter. In this way, museums should use the opportunity to reflect on their exhibitions and more deeply cover the events of their own history, make attempts to go beyond the previously established discourse, and become more open to visitors.

## 2. Cultural Value and Revitalization Strategies of Urban Historical Heritage

Certain aspects of the revitalization of urban space have already become the subject of research by a number of scientists. The issue of the revitalization of industrial facilities of the city (using the example of Ivano-Frankivsk) was addressed by Prof. S. Zapototsky. In his work, he highlighted the principles of revitalization of old industrial enterprises of the city, which provide for the restoration of industrial territories and reconstruction of premises, changing their functional purpose in order to create new public spaces and cultural objects for citizens<sup>19</sup>.

Methods of revitalizing public space in the process of revitalization of the urban environment are considered by O. Kryvoruchko. In her work, she focuses her attention on the example of conducting workshops on the revitalization of Mytna Square in Lviv<sup>20</sup>. Ways of transforming a museum from a permanent place of preservation of cultural heritage artifacts into an open and dynamic social space of social interaction were explored by N. Ivanova<sup>21</sup>.

Museums can act as a catalyst for the revival of urban space not only by attracting new visitors, but also by collaborating with public and cultural organizations in cities that strive for economic revitalization, as well as for public engagement and the development of social capital.

Modern museums act as vital urban anchors, that transform city landscapes into dynamic city forums. They often turn to dialogue with local public organizations to meet the needs of urban leisure. Therefore, today

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<sup>19</sup> Запотоцький С. Ревіталізація промислових об'єктів міста (на прикладі м. Івано-Франківська). *Часопис соціально-економічної географії*. 2016. Вип. 21. С. 102–106.

<sup>20</sup> Криворучко О. Ю. Методи поживлення громадського простору, на прикладі воркшопу з ревіталізації площі Митної у Львові. *Вісник Національного університету «Львівська політехніка»*. Архітектура. 2015. № 816. С. 125–132.

<sup>21</sup> Іванова Н. Актуалізація музею як культурно-освітнього центру та відкритого громадського простору (на прикладі Мелітопольського міського краєзнавчого музею). *Місто: історія, культура, суспільство. Е-журнал урбаністичних студій*. 2017. № 3. С. 123–135.

the main tasks of the museum in the process of revitalizing urban space are: 1) activating factors that influence social life in the city; 2) creating cultural and social capital; 3) improving the urban landscape; 4) improving economic viability and social life.

The restoration and reformatting of old industrial facilities into modern public spaces becomes possible thanks to active interaction, establishing social ties. According to the well-known American museum expert, L. Norris, an opportunity to renew the space, change the functional load and transform it into a museum can be the study of public opinion of potential visitors. And the next step for the museum to establish a dialogue with the community should be the formation of sustainable ties<sup>22</sup>.

Although the interaction of museums and communities can manifest itself in different ways, an important component of the interaction of the community and the museum should also be efforts aimed at the revival and regeneration of the city. Cultural institutions, including museums, are at the center of many programs for the revitalization of urban space, thanks to such phenomena as the Bilbao Effect, thanks to which large museums have become a favorable tool for the economic growth of the city.

In accordance with the idea of revitalization, a successful example of the arrangement and reconstruction of urban space is the creation in Lisbon (Portugal) of the Museum of Architecture, Technology and Art (MAAT), which is located on the site of a former thermal power plant. The design of the museum is harmoniously integrated into the environment, the facade of the building resembles the shape of an ocean wave, and at the same time serves as a public space. Inside the building there is now a permanent exhibition with a number of interactive elements; temporary exhibitions are also regularly held in another part of the building<sup>23</sup>.

Similar processes have taken place in the Czech Republic in recent years. A composting factory was revitalized Near the city of Ostrava, in the village of Dolní Vítkovice. Industrial facility now has a public space, a concert hall, a cafe and two museums as a result of the reformatting<sup>24</sup>.

Another example of successful reorientation is the premises of a former factory near the city of Łódź (Poland). Now its premises have become a huge shopping and entertainment complex, a museum, and a place where

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<sup>22</sup> Норріс Л., Тісдейл Р. Креативність у музейній практиці. Пер. з англійської А. Коструби, Г. Кузьо, О. Омельчук, С. Червоного. Київ : Видавець Чередниченко А. М. 2017. С. 118.

<sup>23</sup> Музей майбутнього: МААТ – Музей мистецтв, архітектури та технологій URL: <http://www.cedra.kiev.ua/2019/04/18/muzej-majbutnogo-maat-muzej-mistetstvarhitekturi-ta-tehnologij/> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

<sup>24</sup> Koudela P. Malík K. Konczynska D. Dolni Vitkovice Area. *Science, technology, education*. Brussel, 2018. 45 p.

temporary exhibitions are held. In the city of Herford (Germany), a textile factory was reformatted into an art museum<sup>25</sup>.

In recent decades, industrial sites and depressed areas have been reoriented in Ukraine thanks to the interactive, communicative and participatory participation of museums. The revitalization of abandoned places is also taking place in connection with the development of the cities themselves. Tourism departments, tourist guides, and cultural figures work every day to improve and expand excursion routes.

However, according to S. Zapototsky and O. Levytska, the main problems of the condition and perception of old industrial buildings can most often be called: 1) the Soviet heritage, as a rule, is not perceived as a value, and most industrial and military facilities belong to the Soviet period; 2) misunderstanding on the part of residents of the value of the facilities and approaches to their preservation; 3) low interest of investors in such projects due to the complexity of restoring old industrial premises; 4) the neglected condition of buildings and a significant need for investment<sup>26</sup>.

Let's try to analyze the realized possibilities of revitalization of historical and cultural heritage using the example of individual objects of the city of Lviv. Pidzamche is a separate district at the bottom of Zamkova Gora in Lviv, it has a strong potential for the development of tourist routes. Despite the fact that dozens of enterprises still operate in this area, dynamic changes have now begun in this area. The jam factory is a unique building in the Pidzamche district of Lviv, which dates back to the late 19th century. In 2015, the Austrian historian Harold Binder bought this building and, together with the Athelier company Stephan Rindler, developed a project that provided for the creation of a cultural center on this territory, the "Jam Factory Art Center" – a modern art space in the center of the industrial district<sup>27</sup>. Now a large exhibition hall of modern art for artists from Ukraine and other countries operates here. In this way, the revitalization of the space has created opportunities for building bridges for international cooperation between people in the cultural sphere. Lectures, master classes, and theater and museum events are also held here. As a result of the growing popularity of the art space, it has become more profitable to develop business here (catering establishments, hotels, etc.), which will make the area more actively developed and more attractive to residents and guests of the city.

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<sup>25</sup> Łódzkie fabryki wczoraj i dziś. Доступно на <https://culture.pl/pl/artykul/lozdzkie-fabryki-wczoraj-i-dzis> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

<sup>26</sup> Запотоцький С. Ревіталізація промислових об'єктів міста (на прикладі м. Івано-Франківська) / *Часпис соціально-економічної географії*, 2016. Вип. 21. С. 104.

<sup>27</sup> Фабрика повидла. URL: <https://sko4.com/ua/places/fabrika-povidla> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

Another example of changing the format and revitalization in Lviv is about the tram depot hangar at the intersection of Sakharova and Vitovskogo streets in Lviv. This facility now houses the Science and Technology Museum, which hosts musical concerts, contemporary art installations, and exhibits from the collections of the Lviv Historical Museum related to the development of science and technology<sup>28</sup>.

It should be noted that the number of tourists visiting Lviv during 2012–2017 increased to 2.6 million, but in 2018 decreased to 2.2 million. In our opinion, one of the factors behind the decline in the number of tourists is the gradual percentage decrease in the number of tourists from Ukraine: from 65% in 2015 to 43% in 2019<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, we believe that today the museum should be addressed to residents living in the city and respond to the needs of potential visitors; the museum should become a space for interaction between the public and museum collections, become a democratic and inclusive space, trying to avoid the transmission of meanings that destroy the image of the community.

We could see the following ideas and directions that will contribute to the renewal and reorganization of old industrial enterprises if we would take into account the successful experience of revitalizing industrial areas in a particular city: 1) outdated factories, plants and industrial facilities also belong to the historical and cultural heritage, which must be preserved and, if possible, reconstructed and restored; 2) old industrial enterprises can serve as an asset for the development of tourism potential, economic growth of the settlement near which they are located, as well as the owners of these industrial facilities, and not only as land plots and premises; 3) the successful social role of a museum requires going beyond the premises; 4) community support and its involvement in the process of revitalizing the museum affects the very image of the facility and the success of the planned project.

And although most cultural organizations will not see a profit immediately, due to the increase in the number of people arriving in the city, these indirect benefits are important. In this case, art organizations become a catalyst for activating the development of the city (small business development, increasing real estate values, implementation of city improvement projects, etc.). However, taking into account only quantitative costs and benefits does not fully illustrate the impact of cultural projects, which are also designed to educate, enlighten and change perceptions. Even

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<sup>28</sup> Трамвайне депо. URL: <https://inlviv.in.ua/lviv/u-lvivskomu-tramvajnomu-depo-na-perehresti-vulyts-saharova-ta-vitovskogo-vidkryly-muzej-istoriyi-nauky-i-tehniky> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

<sup>29</sup> У Львові підраховали звідки приїжджали туристи URL: <https://city-adm.lviv.ua/news/tourism/259981-u-l-vovi-pidrakhuvai-zvidki-prijizhdzhal-ta-skil-ki-vitrachali-turisti-u-2018-rotsi> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

considering the fact that in the 21st century the commercial functions of museums are becoming more noticeable, one should not forget about the combination of business narrative and historical and cultural narrative.

Cooperation of museums with certain public institutions can promote social interaction and cohesion of residents. For a more in-depth analysis of the possibilities of revitalizing museum space on the nature of social relations in the city, it is worth paying attention to:

- Current discourse in museum methodology;
- Individualized interviews with relevant museum specialists and residents;
- Changes in city improvement in recent years.

Whether a particular community needs a change in the landscape, an economic stimulus or the development of social capital, museums act as potential strategic partners in the processes of revitalization of urban space.

The relationship between the museum and the city is symbiotic. A museum complements the cultural and economic life of its city, but it also needs a convenient location to attract visitors. Museums have a vested interest in ensuring that even the outskirts of the city are attractive, and even when urban space is being redeveloped, cultural institutions not only help ensure the economic viability of the city, they can also feel even greater benefits when they are perceived as contributing to the economic well-being of the city<sup>30</sup>. Moreover, the narratives of museum exhibitions should develop the visual competences of the visitor, expand his aesthetic experience and knowledge.

Urban renewal combines physical, economic and social regeneration. Museum participation and initiatives occur at all levels. Physical renewal concerns the adaptation for reuse of buildings, the redevelopment of public space. Economic regeneration affects the attractiveness of the region for investors and the growth of tourist spending in the city, the creation of new jobs. Social renewal is aimed at reducing crime and antisocial behavior, increasing community participation in the life of the city.

It should be noted that urban renewal projects will not be completely successful if they are aimed only at improving the tourism industry. Thus, according to researchers of urban regeneration Plaza and Haarich, one of the necessary conditions for success in the regeneration of urban space is interaction with the local community. Museums and other social institutions must promote a sense of ownership among local residents if renewal projects are to achieve success and sustainability<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Норріс Л., Тісдейл Р. Креативність у музейній практиці. Пер. з англійської А. Коструби, Г. Кузьо, О. Омельчук, Є. Червоного. Київ : Видавець Чередниченко А. М., 2017. С. 88.

<sup>31</sup> Plaza B., Haarich S. Museums for urban regeneration? Exploring conditions for their effectiveness. *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*. 2009. Vol. 2/3. P. 266.

The use of museums for the revitalization of urban space can become popular due to the use of the so-called “Bilbao effect”. Unlike traditional approaches, when museums used mixed strategies for a small city or district, today’s museum projects indicate a fundamental change in order to overcome structural problems and increase competition, attracting investment. In general, the use of museums in urban economic revitalization strategies is becoming more complex, as it is necessary to take into account requirements, including growing visitor expectations, the need for increased self-financing and growing global competition. Investing in a museum can be a good way to restore the city’s economy. However, a number of conditions must be met to achieve the desired result<sup>32</sup>.

New forms of communication and the widespread use of new technologies encourage museums to make changes and expand the possibilities of visual narratives. However, it is also noticeable that not all areas of museum activity are fully realized (the possibility of becoming a center of creative thinking, a space for reflection, a space for discussions or new centers of the cultural economy). Today the issues of interaction and combination of value and entertainment elements are also relevant. And the same as use of mass media functions and interactive industries in the museum space; the influence of political forces and social processes; the implementation of inclusivity in the process of revitalization of public or museum space.

Modern Ukrainian museums often try to create a space for visitors to pay attention, to provide “added value”. An example of this is the Zhovkva Castle Museum, located in the city of Zhovkva, near Lviv. Right at the entrance to this museum are interactive panels that illustrate information for the visitor not only about museum exhibits and monuments, but also about prominent figures of the city. Another example of a museum space with “added value” is the Tustan History Museum, located in the village of Urych, Lviv region. Visitors can get acquainted here not only with the usual exposition, but also with a graphic reconstruction of a now-lost rock-cut building in 3D. Another type of communication in a modern Ukrainian museum is a virtual tour, which uses 3D glasses and special tablets. This technology is already used in the Tustan Museum<sup>33</sup>, the Museum of the History of Kyiv<sup>34</sup> and other museums. With the help of this approach, the visitor can get acquainted with augmented reality, immerse himself in the atmosphere or understand the nature of the question posed

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<sup>32</sup> Plaza B., Haarich S. Museums for urban regeneration? Exploring conditions for their effectiveness. *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*. 2009. Vol. 2/3. P. 264.

<sup>33</sup> Державний історико-культурний заповідник «Тустань». URL: [http://tustan.ua/tustan\\_3d/](http://tustan.ua/tustan_3d/) (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

<sup>34</sup> Музей «Становлення української нації». URL: <http://www.gloryukraine.com.ua/> (дата звернення: 12.05.2026).

by the exhibition. The use of three-dimensional graphics in this way makes it possible to examine objects that do not actually exist and open up a wide space for alternative knowledge and one's own interpretation.

Another extremely successful project in the Ukrainian museum information space was the electronic collection "Ukraine. Kyiv. Babyn Yar", presented by the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War. The exhibition contains digitized museum objects from the collection that highlight the tragedy of Babyn Yar, a tract in Kyiv where over 100,000 Jews, Roma, Ukrainians, and representatives of other nationalities were exterminated over two years (1941–1943). The collection presents documents, letters, and diaries that testify to Nazi crimes; photographs, books, and personal belongings of Kyiv residents whose fates were connected with the events of the Holocaust in Ukraine. Visitors to the museum's website have the opportunity to view the materials remotely. The resource contains digitized images, information about the object, its description, and information content<sup>35</sup>.

The spread of such innovative approaches to the revitalization of historical and cultural heritage creates an opportunity to supplement objective information with more lively narratives, stories about art and visual culture (in a personalized way, interdisciplinary approach, etc.), and the already established practice of exhibition with contextual research. The development that museums are experiencing today coincides with many other factors and, accordingly, new technologies are becoming a part of our everyday reality to such an extent that we could hardly imagine 10 years ago, they introduce new ideas for development and facilitate communication with the public.

According to the forms of existence of a virtual museum, they can be divided into 1) those that exist only on the Internet and 2) those that are a reflection of the activities of a real museum. According to our observations, museums such as "Territory of Terror"<sup>36</sup> and "Museum of Computer Technology"<sup>37</sup> can be attributed to the first type.

In virtual museums of the first type, there are a number of subcategories that provide an opportunity to independently comprehend the information, starting this process in an arbitrary sequence. An example of the second type of virtual museum, in which a visitor can independently examine

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<sup>35</sup> Український інститут національної пам'яті. URL: <http://www.memory.gov.ua/news/do-mizhnarodnogo-dnya-pamyati-zhertv-golokostu-prezentatsiya-robot-khudozhnika-zinoviya-tolkach> (дата звернення: 10.05.2026).

<sup>36</sup> Меморіальний музей тоталітарних режимів «Територія Терору» URL: <http://territoryterror.org.ua/> (дата звернення: 10.05.2026).

<sup>37</sup> Музей історії розвитку інформаційних технологій в Україні URL: <http://www.icfst.kiev.ua/MUSEUM/> (дата звернення: 10.05.2026).

the permanent exhibition and the most interesting exhibits of the collection using the Internet, is the “Varvara and Bohdan Khanenko Museum”<sup>38</sup> or the “Museum of the Liberation Struggle of Ukraine”<sup>39</sup>. In both of the latter museums, a visitor can choose any of two modes of virtual viewing of the exhibition. The first is a virtual guide: demonstration of the most interesting exhibits of the collection; the second is a free tour: independent movement through the halls of the museum.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the process of decolonization of the museum space, it is worth, first of all, shifting the emphasis and looking at the history of Ukraine in the context of global colonial and postcolonial history. This will not only allow us to understand our place on the historical map of the world, but also go beyond the struggle for decolonization and find allies among countries that may have had similar experiences. At the same time, these processes have local manifestations, so it is worth paying attention to the relations of control that are manifested in the museum through museality and musealization.

Although there are no simple or unambiguous answers to how best to deal with the colonial past, museum workers can choose exactly the tools that are necessary for experiments and the implementation of such methods that are necessary for their own needs and situations. The practices are divided by topic and include, among others, methods of decentration, improving transparency and increasing inclusivity. New approaches to communicating with visitors, of course, allow museums to take a different scientific, social and educational position, to enter into a permanent dialogue with those groups that in the past were forced to distance themselves from their cultural heritage. To decolonize museological thinking and museum practices, indigenous local residents must not only be present in museums, but also be able to take an autonomous position, playing a role that goes far beyond simple consultations and offering counter-hegemonic narratives.

In our opinion, new changes in Ukrainian museums are not only about a replacement of surnames and iconic events, but a reformatting of the very approach to the analysis of iconic events and phenomena of history and culture. Decolonization of museums is a complex phenomenon that means not so much about the issue of repatriation of objects or transformation of the exposition, but the direction of changes in the balance of power between the main centers of distribution of these narratives. Therefore, it is worth

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<sup>38</sup> Музей Ханенків URL: <http://khanenkomuseum.kiev.ua/> (дата звернення: 10.05.2026).

<sup>39</sup> Музей визвольної боротьби України URL: [http://www.lhm.lviv.ua/ekspozyciyi/muzej\\_vyzvolnoyi\\_borotby\\_ukrayiny.html](http://www.lhm.lviv.ua/ekspozyciyi/muzej_vyzvolnoyi_borotby_ukrayiny.html) (дата звернення: 10.05.2026).

talking not about glorification, but about the creation of an atmospheric space with sufficient information and an emotional environment; not dogmatic, but with the presentation of dominant and alternative discourses. This would make it possible to avoid a formal approach to covering history and develop a soft communicative memory, which should not only emphasize the past, but also help to pay attention to the future.

Today, while discussions are ongoing around defining the mission of the museum, its obligations and areas of activity are expanding. Museums continue to develop and be more socially active. In recent decades, objects of historical and cultural heritage have begun to be considered as important elements of the revitalization of individual districts and entire cities. Researchers of museum space since the end of the 20th century, began to rethink the traditional internally oriented approach of museum collections. Therefore, the implementation of public, social initiatives for the revitalization of museum space and historical and cultural heritage has become more relevant.

Now we could say that a virtual tour is available on many Ukrainian museum websites and can serve as an additional impetus for inspiration and the search for new narratives in the perception of the exhibition today. Such an approach, through the virtual environment, reveals new ones for updating and revitalizing the historical and cultural heritage.

Ukrainian museums (being a reflection of a progressive society) have successfully accepted these innovations, including them as another resource for their development. To a certain extent, the audiovisual “invasion” of museums has opened up unforeseen ways of communicating with the visitor, multiplying its pedagogical potential and revealing to many its ability to surprise, excite and reflect.

Of course, it is impossible to deny the scientific role of museum collections, but there is another way to determine its importance. The training and quality of personnel affect the improvement of visitors’ knowledge. Today, thanks to the tasks performed by museum workers, the visitor gets the opportunity to look at the museum from a different perspective, which differs from the opportunities that existed before.

In the future, we should expect an intensification of museum activities in the preservation of intangible heritage objects. In particular, this applies to such categories as: a) oral traditions and forms of expression, including language as a carrier of intangible cultural heritage objects; b) performing arts; c) customs, rituals, holidays; d) knowledge and customs related to nature and the universe; e) traditional crafts.

Thus, the described strategies show that there is no single way to attract communities, improve the external attractiveness or stimulate the development of urban space. Each community has its own history and

specific social needs, specifics, organizational activity. Therefore, it is necessary to use individualized strategies, resources and solutions that relate to the community. And although these ideas should be developed for the specific effective use of the museum's own resources, it is worth paying attention to some general trends, which can be outlined as follows: 1) the added value provided by the museum; 2) the city square or community gathering place; 3) the needs of the community; 4) the search for potential partners in community activation initiatives. Regular meetings with public, cultural, social, educational and other non-profit leaders; 5) use of the unique history and resources of your community. Events from a city or community's past can become the basis for creating positive change today; 6) Assessing the value of the museum to the local community beyond the museum collections; 7) creating a visible presence of art in the community, for example through small temporary exhibitions located throughout the city; 8) reviewing previous experience of museum-community cooperation; 9) establishing dialogue and meetings with potential partners related to the revival of public, social space: cultural, social, educational, etc.; 10) supporting the preservation of history.

In the process of revitalizing a museum, it is worth paying attention to their place and role in the community. Museum space can become public, a space for public discussions, gatherings. Each community has a unique history, specific social needs and a number of organizational assets. Accordingly, to actualize the museum space, it is worth reviewing the mission and institutional resources of the museum, exploring the needs of communities to determine how they can better interact with city residents.

## **SUMMARY**

The author focused special attention on ways to overcome colonial discourses in museums, on practices and methods that could help to move away from the approaches dominant in totalitarian societies and to analyze significant events and phenomena of history and culture in a new way. Decolonization of museums is a complex phenomenon, which means not only a matter of repatriation of objects or transformation of the exposition, but rather a direction of changes in the balance of forces between the main centers of dissemination of these narratives. The transition from the Soviet past to the new forms of museum functioning had to be carried out by exhibiting objects without mediation on the basis that the work or object speaks for itself and that the museum should not stand between the object and the visitor. It is necessary to move away from former dominant ideological directions; to move away from the time when political elites, authorities and certain privileged groups shape memory at different levels (street names, state events, memorials, etc.).

The creation of an atmospheric space with sufficient information and an emotional environment would make it possible to avoid a formal approach to the coverage of history and develop a soft communicative memory, which should not only emphasize the past, but also help pay attention to the future.

Actual aspects of the modern aspects of revitalization of historical and cultural heritage are analyzed. The experience of urban space recovery programs is generalized. The analysis of successful examples of audiovisual updates to the museum opens a new ways of communicating with the visitor, gives the opportunity to look at the museum from a different perspective. Conclusions were made about regeneration of urban space by establishing good cooperation with the city community.

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