

## **The city museum**

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The aims of this dissertation are as follows: to investigate the current reality of city museums, starting with an analysis of their history using some typical examples; to outline a somewhat innovative concept of the city museum; and to demonstrate the method of study used by reference to an actual case and at the same time invite reflection on the processes involved in establishing a city museum in a strategic location such as that of Turin.

According to the definition by ICOM, the International Council of Museums, a city museum can be defined as a centre of a co-ordinated movement whose objective is to represent the culture of a city population by means of: celebrating a common identity, researching its roots, valuing its various communities, identifying resources for carrying out activities for cultural development in the community; and instituting a co-ordination centre for the safeguarding and communication of cultural activities, past and present, of the community. The city museum is an institution which originated in the nineteenth century, although it is possible to establish antecedents both more remote and more recent (Picture 1).



Picture 1: the Museum of French Monuments,  
an antecedent to the city museum

In the twentieth century, the city museum had to face certain problems, difficult to resolve, including the dual concept of “conservation-production” - the decision on what to collect in the museum, given the impossibility of collecting everything, and the relationship between the museum and the region.

In order to understand more fully the current reality of city museums, it has been necessary to analyse typical cases of other contemporary city museums: the Museum of London, the Montreal History Center, the Musée Urbain Tony Garnier in Lyon, and the Museo di Roma.

It has been possible to establish a somewhat innovative concept of the city museum. In this concept, the museum becomes a guide to knowledge of the town and an instrument in urban planning. The internal management of the city museum has then been analysed, from the content of the collections and the choice of the museum location, to the directions for visits and exhibits.

An analysis of the different activities of the museum has shown that the museum should create contacts and connections with external entities: the “monuments” of the city; the cultural institutions in the city, especially its schools and universities (picture 2); and other city museums, with which it can create museum networks, becoming in this way an important node and pole of coordination.



Picture 2: learning activities for children in a city museum  
(source: Musée Carnavalet, Internet website)

What was discussed theoretically has been applied to a real case, that of Turin, starting with the context of Turin and the “challenge” for the future of the city.

Some possible exhibits for the museum of the city of Turin have been identified and some potential venues put forward, taking into consideration the requirements of centralization, accessibility and symbolic importance of the venue. They are the following (picture 3): the Cavallerizza Reale (1), the Curia Maxima (1), the Officine Grandi Riparazioni Ferroviarie (2), the Castello del Valentino (3), and the former site of the Michelin factory (4).





picture 3: areas proposed for the possible location of the museum of the city of Turin

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