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Management of the House Museums in Slovenia: A Study

ABSTRACT: House museums represent a distinct type of cultural heritage monument, distinguished by their authenticity as memorial sites associated with notable individuals or co-creators. The fundamental design of such memorial sites originates from spaces defined by natural and humanistic characteristics. These spaces, globally stable yet constantly changing in details, hold significant potential for preserving the link between the past and the present. Experiencing the space where historical events occurred enhances the understanding of their true value and thus objectifying potential memory. This underscores the important social and political role of house museums, which indirectly influence the relationship with the local community, the preservation of collective memory and heritage in its original environment.

In Slovenia, the most common type of house museums are those associated with notable personalities and are categorised as representative historical houses. The first publicly accessible house museum in Slovenia, converted in 1939 in Vrba, was the birthplace of Slovenia's greatest poet – France Prešeren. Subsequent house museums followed the musealisation concept implemented in Prešeren's birthplace by Fran Saleški Finžgar. However, there is a lack of museological research and studies related to house museums in Slovenia, which affects their naming and evaluation, as the distinction between individual houses remains unclear. Various terms such as 'house museum', 'memorial house', 'birth house', 'literary museum', 'historical house', 'biographical museum', 'ethnographic house', 'homestead', and 'memorial room' are used interchangeably, and these museums are often labelled as museums, open-air museums or monuments.

This research focuses on the management of house museums in Slovenia. A questionnaire was devised to be completed by the managers of thirty house museums, the aim of which was to: compile a list of all publicly accessible house museums in Slovenia, collect basic management information and, most importantly, examine cooperation between managers, museums, house owners, the Ministry of Culture, municipalities, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, and the interested public.

Keywords: Historic House Museums; Cultural Heritage Management; Slovenian House Museums; Museum Interpretation; Cultural Identity Heritage Preservation

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Topic

House museums represent a unique category of cultural heritage monuments that encompass far more than merely architecturally significant buildings. Their primary characteristic is the profound connection to both tangible and intangible heritage (Risnicoff de Gorgas 2001). This means that not only is the focus on preserving the structure, but also on caring for objects, collections, authentic furniture, and the stories and memories associated with former residents or events that took place within the house (Maroević 2020, 238). The fundamental difference between a historic house and a house museum is that the latter is open to the public and goes beyond mere preservation, as it incorporates the interpretation of historical events, personalities, and the cultural environment in which the house is situated.

House museums are recognised as an important tool for interpreting the history of a specific place, as they shed light on the societal events and personal lives that unfolded within their walls. Their evocative power allows the past to come alive, offering visitors an insight into the social, cultural and political context of a particular period (Pinna 2001, 7). By preserving collective memory and heritage in its original setting, house museums acquire significant social and political value.

Figure 1: A black smoke kitchen in Prešeren's birth house in Vrba. Photo credit: Aleš Košir, 2024.



Effective management of house museums plays a key role in maintaining their authenticity and ensuring public accessibility to cultural heritage. The management process involves planning, restoration, exhibition setup, visitor guidance and selection of interpretative approaches. Contemporary models, as advocated by organisations such as UNESCO, emphasise a holistic approach that interweaves systematic management with bottom-up governance (UNESCO 2013).

This approach is based on a cyclical model, wherein the outcomes of one management cycle are measured and used to improve subsequent cycles (Pirkovič 2022, 44). Each house museum is unique – both in terms of its historical value and its surrounding environment – and thus requires a tailored museological concept that considers the type of connection with historical events, social groups or personalities, recognised significance, local values, educational goals and communication strategies.

Figure 2: Finžgar's birth house in Doslovče. Photo credit: Aleš Košir, 2024.



Given their complexity and deep connection with the local community, house museums are crucial for the preservation of collective cultural identity (Šola 2015). They serve as spaces where community members recognise their own history and identity, a function that is especially significant in the

era of globalisation, when local distinctiveness faces the challenge of homogenisation (Pinna 2001, 5). Consequently, the management of house museums is not merely a technical task; it demands a profound understanding of the history, culture and the needs of contemporary society.

1.2 Research Objectives

The decision to conduct a survey on the management of house museums in Slovenia was based on the recognition of the key role that effective management plays in preserving, presenting and ensuring access to cultural heritage. The first house museum in Slovenia, converted in 1939, is Prešeren's birthplace in Vrba, and subsequent institutions have largely followed this model, predominantly encompassing the birthplaces of literary figures, which are classified as representative historical houses (Koman 2024).

However, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive museological research in Slovenia, which is reflected in the ambiguous nomenclature and evaluation of house museums. Terms such as 'memorial house', 'birth house', 'literary museum', 'house museum', 'historical house', 'biographical museum', 'ethnographic house', 'homestead' and 'memorial room' are frequently used interchangeably, leading to confusion and an unclear definition of these institutions.

The challenges in managing house museums in Slovenia are not limited to terminology; they also manifest in the areas of interpretation, presentation and conservation regimes. Often, the strict conservation measures imposed on these houses are not suitable for their specific characteristics, which adversely affects both the interpretation and the visitor experience. Furthermore, despite their significance to Slovenia's cultural heritage, these institutions are not sufficiently integrated into community life nor do they fully serve scientific, educational and tourism purposes. This is primarily due to financial and technical constraints and a lack of professional staff, as well as insufficient knowledge, understanding, passion and practical implementation (Domšič 2014, 211). Additionally, there is a notable absence of cooperation among related institutions and a lack of comprehensive museological approaches in the development of holistic interpretations.

1.3 Purpose of the Research

The research on house museums in Slovenia is based on the identification of specific challenges encountered by their managers, particularly due to the lack of a systematic approach to the research, management and interpretation of house museums. As a special type of heritage, these houses carry significant cultural and social importance, which is currently insufficiently explored in the present context. The social and cultural-political role of house museums has a significant impact on the local community and shapes the public's attitude toward preserving collective memory and heritage (Perko 2022, 138). The role of museums should be to serve local communities and remind them of who they are, what they are, and how they change (M. H. 2014).

Given that house museums in Slovenia have not been sufficiently researched or addressed, a new paradigm is needed that recognises and addresses their unique requirements. This research is based on a survey conducted among managers and curators of house museums across Slovenia, with the aim of identifying the key challenges and proposing possible improvements. A comprehensive approach to the study is expected to contribute to raising management standards, enhancing the understanding of the needs of cultural heritage, and strengthening its role within the Slovenian context.

1.4 Research Questions

This research focuses on several key areas that are essential to understanding and improving the management of house museums in Slovenia. The main research questions include:

Existing Management Practices: What are the most prevalent management practices among house museums in Slovenia?

Primary Challenges: What are the main challenges faced by the managers of house museums? Are these challenges related to legislation, lack of funding, inadequate professional staff, or difficulties in involving local communities and visitors?

Overarching Acts and Regulations: Is there an overarching legislative act governing the management of house museums in Slovenia, or is this area left to the individual creativity of each manager?

Role of Conservators: Do conservators include house museum managers in the development of the cultural heritage conservation regime for house museums?

Public Involvement: How is the public, including local communities and interested individuals, involved in the management of house museums?

Collaboration Between Decision-Makers and Managers: How does collaboration between decision-makers (e.g. local authorities and other responsible institutions) and the managers of house museums take place? Are there established channels of communication, and what are the main obstacles to this cooperation?

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Method and Instrumentation

In this study, I have employed a survey method to collect data on the management of house museums in Slovenia. The survey was designed to cover the key aspects of house museum management and consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, with some open-ended ones included for additional insights – a total of 31 questions. This structured approach allowed predominantly quantitative data to be gathered, while also capturing qualitative perspectives, providing a well-rounded understanding of management practices, challenges, public involvement, and collaboration with conservators and decision-makers. The length of the survey was optimised to ensure detailed insights while minimising the burden on respondents.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

In line with the aims of this study – to identify challenges and opportunities in managing house museums in Slovenia – several hypotheses were formulated to guide the research and interpretation of the findings. The research was guided by the hypothesis that house museums require distinct management models compared to traditional museums due to their spatial, interpretative, and institutional specificities.

H1. The management of house museums in Slovenia is significantly influenced by conservation restrictions, which limit the ability of managers to develop interpretative and educational activities.

H2. Heritage professionals and decision-makers in Slovenia do not fully understand the specificities of managing house museums, resulting in inadequate institutional support and insufficiently adapted conservation policies.

H3. The absence of systematic research and a formal policy framework negatively affects the development of effective management models for house museums.

H4. Continuous education and specialized training for professionals can significantly improve the quality and sustainability of house museum management.

2.3 Data Collection Method

The survey was administered via the online platform SurveyPlanet, which facilitated straightforward data collection and processing. SurveyPlanet supports a variety of question types and enables efficient response analysis; however, one limitation is that respondents cannot modify their answers after submission. To complement the survey data, additional information on house museums was gathered from museum websites (where available), direct conversations with managers conducted in person or by phone, and from the Register of Immovable Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Slovenia (*Register nepremične kulturne dediščine*)².

Moreover, this article draws upon insights and practical experiences gained during a 10-year tenure as the director of the Žirovnica Institute for Tourism and Culture, an institution that manages several house museums, including the birthplaces of France Prešeren, Matija Čop, and Fran Saleški Finžgar, as well as Anton Janša's Apiary. These experiences, coupled with the author's doctoral research on the management of house museums in Slovenia and abroad, provided valuable context and enriched the interpretation of the collected data.

Data collection was conducted over a defined period, from the beginning of June to the end of August 2024.

2.4 Sample and Data Collection

The study identified and contacted more than fifty house museums in Slovenia. However, at the time of writing, completed surveys had been received from thirty-eight house museums. These institutions were selected based on the following criteria:

- Houses that have been converted into museums (house museums) and are open to the public.
- House museums whose interpretation includes content related to living cultures or important individuals who were born in or lived in the house.
- House museums where museum items related to the house are exhibited and are intended solely for exhibition purposes.
- Gallery houses – galleries were excluded as they do not meet the criteria for this study³.

Respondents were drawn from the pool of managers and curators in these house museums. Contact information was obtained directly or via details available on museum websites. The survey was distributed electronically, ensuring wide reach and efficient data collection.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

To protect all participants, this research adhered to strict ethical guidelines. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from each respondent, who was assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

2.6 Data Processing and Analysis

After collecting the survey responses, the data were compiled, verified, and prepared for analysis. Simple descriptive statistics were used to summarise key trends in the data – including frequencies and averages – and to explore relationships between different variables. Open-ended questions were thematically analysed by reading through the responses, group-

³ Gallery houses, which do not display residential culture or former inhabitants of the house, but instead use the space for gallery activities.

ing similar ideas, and identifying recurring themes. This straightforward analytical approach enabled a clear interpretation of the findings and supported the formulation of meaningful conclusions about the management of house museums in Slovenia.

3 Results

The results are presented both verbally and with illustrative tables and figures. Each display is used uniquely to avoid duplication of content. The main findings relating to statistical data, management practices, financial resources, programme types and stakeholder collaboration are summarised below.

3.1 Statistical Data

The survey covered thirty-eight house museums. Table 1 summarises key statistical characteristics such as staffing, annual attendance, ownership and conservation status. For example, ten museums employ two to three staff members, eight employ one person, eight have no employees, seven report mixed staffing arrangements, and five employ more than three staff members. Annual visitor numbers vary significantly: 19 museums report 500–2,000 visitors, while three museums report over 14,000 visitors. The majority (30) are owned by municipalities, with a smaller number held by private (4) or state (3) entities. In terms of conservation status, 27 are declared as monuments of local heritage, five as monuments of national heritage, four as registered heritage, and two have not been formally declared.

Table 1: Statistic Characteristics of House Museums (N=38). (This table includes columns for Ownership of House Museums.)

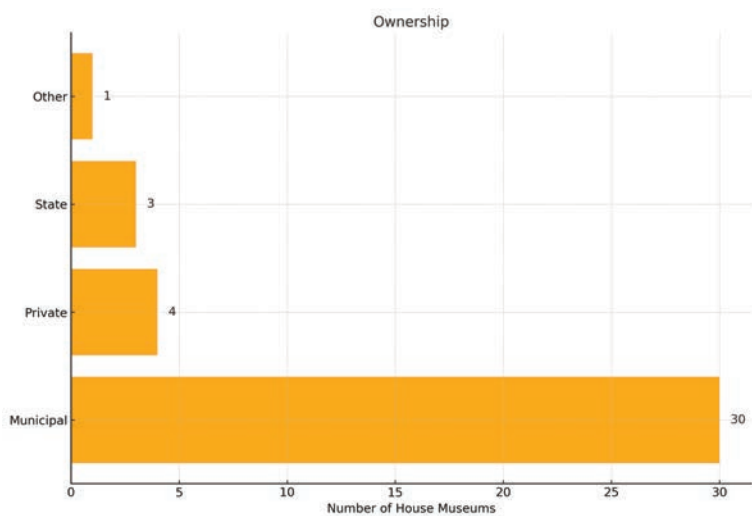
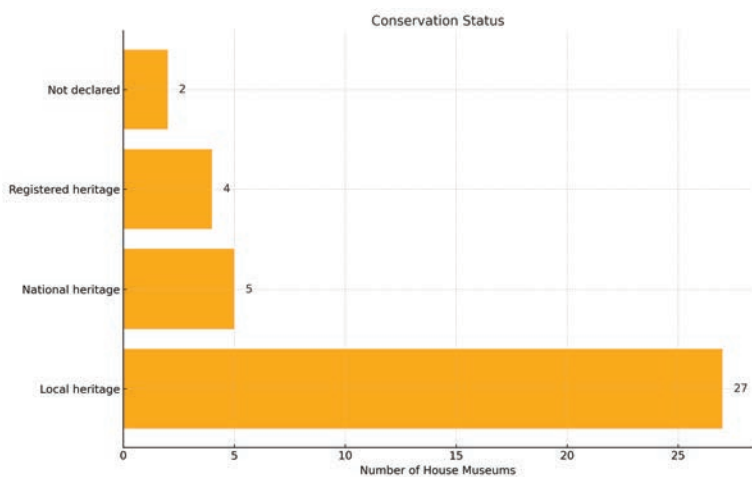


Table 2: Statistic Characteristics of House Museums (N=38). (This table includes columns for Conservation Status of House Museum.)



3.2 Management Practices

Management practices are quite diverse and can be grouped into three types based on the manager: museums, municipal institutes, and privately owned facilities. Figure 1 schematically represents these models along with their main advantages and challenges.

Museums: These house museums, managed under centralised systems with stable public funding and professional staff, benefit from quality programming and preservation efforts. However, they can be deprioritised compared to wider museum collections, which affects maintenance and visitor experience.

Municipal Institutes: These institutions integrate house museums into local cultural and tourism programmes using regular local funding and strong community ties. These are typically local public institutions established by municipalities, which manage cultural and heritage activities, but in most cases do not hold formal museum status under national legislation. This distinction often influences their operational frameworks, access to professional resources, and eligibility for specific funding schemes.

Privately Owned Facilities: Private management allows for a personalised and flexible approach that can provide highly authentic visitor experiences. However, financial sustainability and staffing limitations often require reliance on alternative sources of revenue, which may affect accessibility and professional collaboration. These facilities generally do not hold formal museum status.

Table 3: Schematic Representation of Management Models and Their Key Challenges. (This figure depicts a diagram outlining the three management models, highlighting the advantages and challenges of each one.)

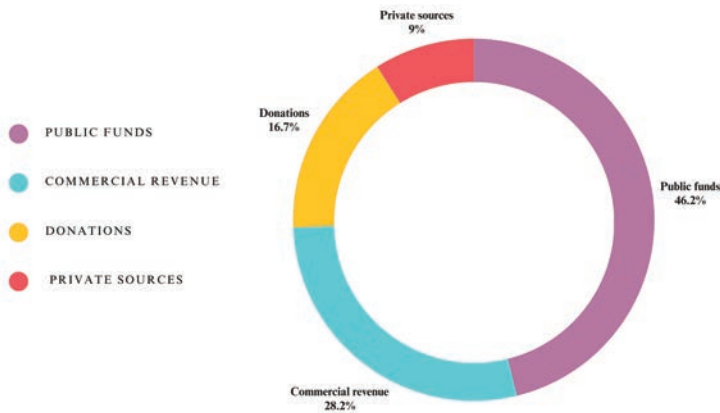
MUSEUMS	MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS	PRIVATE OWNERS
<p style="text-align: center;">Stable funding</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Professional staff</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Quality programmes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Low priority</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Limited visitor focus</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Regular local funding</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Community ties</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tourism integration</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Limited financial sources</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lack of museology training</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Personalised approach</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Flexible management</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Authenticity</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Funding issues</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Staffing limitations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Limited accessibility</p>

3.3 Financial Resources and Programme Types

Financial support for house museums is diverse. As shown in Table 2, respondents reported multiple sources of funding:

- public funds: 36 house museums
- commercial revenue: 22 house museums
- donations: 13 house museums
- private sources: 7 house museums

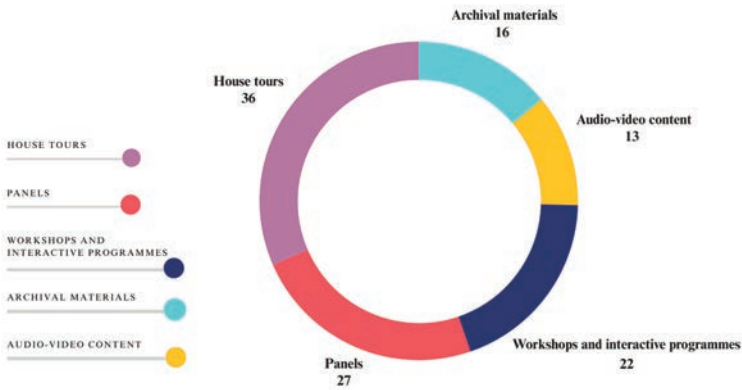
Table 4: Financial Sources Utilised by House Museums. (This table details the number of museums using each type of financial source.)



3.4 Programme Type and Interpretation

In terms of programme content, house tours (36 museums) and panels (27 museums) are the most common, followed by workshops and interactive programmess (22 museums), archival material (16 museums), and audio-video content (13 museums). These findings indicate a reliance on traditional methods while, also revealing a gradual adoption of digital and interactive approaches.

Table 5: Programme Types Utilised by House Museums. (This table details the number of museums using each type of programme. Multiple responses were allowed.)



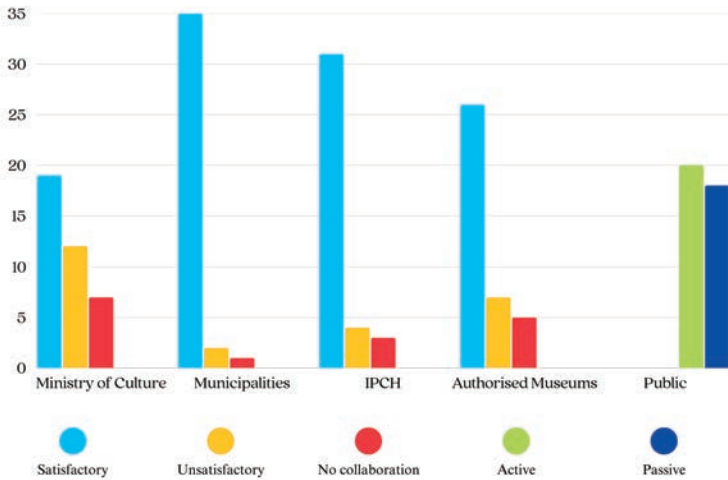
3.5 Stakeholder Collaboration

Collaboration with stakeholders is critical for effective management. Table 3 summarises the levels of satisfaction reported by respondents:

- Ministry of Culture: 19 respondents rated collaboration as satisfactory, 12 as unsatisfactory, and seven reported no collaboration.
- Municipalities: 35 respondents found collaboration satisfactory, two reported it as unsatisfactory, and one reported no collaboration.
- Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage: 31 respondents rated collaboration as satisfactory, four rated it as unsatisfactory, and three had no collaboration.
- Authorised Museums⁴: 26 respondents found collaboration satisfactory, seven had no collaboration, and five were dissatisfied.
- Public Involvement: 20 respondents actively involved the public in programme development, while 18 reported only passive engagement.

⁴ The term 'authorized museum' refers to regional or national museums officially recognized by the Ministry of Culture.

Table 6: Stakeholder Collaboration Ratings. (This table lists the satisfaction ratings for collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Culture, Municipalities, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Authorised Museums and the Public.)



3.6 Spatial Distribution of House Museums in Slovenia

An interactive map (Figure 3) was created to illustrate the geographic distribution of house museums across Slovenia⁵. On this map, house museums whose managers completed the survey are marked in blue, while those that have not yet completed or received the survey are marked in pink. By clicking on any museum icon, users can view detailed information about the institution, including:

- Protection Status: (e.g., monument of national importance, local importance or registered heritage)
- Type: (e.g. home of a significant figure, rural house, bourgeois house, etc.)
- Heritage Registry Number
- Name of the Managing Institution

This spatial representation provides insight into regional patterns in museum management and cultural heritage distribution, complementing the

⁵ The map is available at the following link: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1Zlfs78Q29yJ8I-noXBMK7ZImW9Z7My0s&usp=sharing>.

allenges and opportunities encountered by these institutions. This discussion interprets and compares key findings with existing research, analyses hypotheses, and describes limitations and recommendations emerging from the study.

4.1 Lack of Formalised Guidelines

A striking 79 % of respondents expressed a desire for a formal framework or recommendations for managing house museums. This overwhelming majority indicates that current practices are fragmented and vary considerably between institutions. The absence of standardised guidelines results in inconsistent management, making it difficult to coordinate conservation, interpretation, and programming across the sector. This finding supports the hypothesis that a formal framework would contribute to improved and harmonised management practices.

4.2 Need for Specialised Educational Programmes

An even higher proportion (94 %) of respondents indicated that additional educational programmes or seminars tailored to the management of house museums would be beneficial. This result reflects a strong perceived need for capacity building among heritage professionals. Many managers appear to feel ill-equipped to handle the complex challenges inherent in managing these unique cultural institutions. The demand for specialised training underscores the gap between current practices and international best practices in heritage management.

4.3 Developing Models for Managing House Museums in Slovenia

This research highlights the need to develop effective management models tailored to the unique characteristics of house museums in Slovenia. Unlike traditional museums, these institutions are deeply intertwined with personal histories and local cultural narratives, which necessitates models that address both conservation and interpretative challenges. The findings of this research revealed significant variations in management practices between institutions run by established museum organisations, municipal institutes and private owners. This divergence underscores the urgency for unified guidelines and tailored management models that incorporate:

- Integration of Best Practices: adapting international standards to the specific requirements of house museums to balance rigorous conservation with dynamic, visitor-focused interpretation.
- Standardisation and Legal Frameworks: establishing an overarching act or detailed recommendations to standardise procedures and ensure consistent protection of cultural heritage.
- Stakeholder Collaboration: promoting cooperation among museum managers, conservators, policy-makers and local communities to build inclusive management strategies.
- Capacity Building and Research: investing in specialised training and continuous research to refine management practices and develop innovative solutions for sustainable operations.

4.4 Identification of House Museums

A key insight from this study is the varied perception among managers in relation to their institutions. The majority (58 %) identify their properties as 'house museums' – a designation that signifies a departure from the traditional museum model. This label is not merely semantic; it reflects a nuanced understanding of the dual role these institutions have in preserving tangible heritage and narrating personal and localised histories. In Slovenia, the multiplicity of terms – ranging from memorial house and birthplace to literary museum – further complicates management practices. Recognising house museums as distinct entities is essential, as it directly informs the management, interpretation and preservation strategies tailored to their unique operational and cultural contexts.

4.5 The Importance of Categorisation, Typology and Terminology

Effective management of house museums depends on a systematic understanding of their inherent diversity. Establishing clear categorisation, typology and terminology is crucial for several reasons:

Categorisation helps to classify house museums based on their functions and historical contexts (e.g. memorial houses, birthplaces, literary museums), enabling managers to tailor conservation strategies and operational practices accordingly.

Figure 4: Permanent exhibition in Čop's Birth House in Žirovnica. Photo credit: Aleš Košir, 2024.



Typology allows for a deeper analysis of the different types of house museums, leading to best practices that address the unique needs of each type – whether they are primarily educational, focused on preservation, or designed for community engagement.

Terminology is fundamental for clear communication among stakeholders. A standardised lexicon ensures that all parties – from museum professionals to policy-makers – share a common understanding of what constitutes a house museum. This consistency is vital for internal management, policy formulation and academic research.

4.6 Stakeholder Collaboration and Public Engagement

Collaboration with key stakeholders – including the Ministry of Culture, municipalities and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage – varies significantly. While a majority report satisfactory cooperation with municipalities (35 house museums) and the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (31 house museums), only 19 house museums find their relationship with the Ministry of Culture satisfac-

tory, whereas 12 express dissatisfaction and seven report no collaboration at all. In terms of collaboration with authorised museums, 26 respondents rated it as satisfactory, while seven reported no collaboration and five were dissatisfied with the level of cooperation. Public engagement also remains limited: 20 house museums report active public involvement in shaping and implementation of programmes, whereas 18 describe public participation as passive, meaning that the public primarily observes rather than actively contributes.

This pattern suggests that, according to Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, most house museums in Slovenia operate primarily at the consultation level, rather than engaging in true partnerships with the community (Arnstein 1969). Strengthening collaboration mechanisms and fostering greater public involvement could enhance the sustainability and impact of house museums.

In addition to institutional challenges, the findings point to the importance of heritage communities – individuals and groups who identify with, use, and help maintain house museums. Their participation remains only partially developed, often limited to attending events or volunteering on an ad hoc basis. However, according to the Faro Convention (Council of Europe 2005), heritage communities are essential partners in the co-management of cultural heritage. Actively involving them in decision-making, programming, and day-to-day operations could alleviate staff shortages, strengthen social ownership, and enhance the relevance of house museums for local life. The development of participatory management models that integrate community knowledge and enthusiasm thus represents one of the most promising directions for future practice.

4.7 Conservation and Collaboration with Authorised Museums

The findings indicate that nearly half of the respondents (44.7 %) experience challenges due to rigid conservation restrictions, despite 71 % acknowledging the necessity of such measures. The limited involvement of house museum managers in developing these conservation policies is a significant concern, with 53 % reporting no participatory role. Additionally, while collaboration with authorised museums is generally

satisfactory, nearly 30 % of institutions either do not engage in such collaboration or express dissatisfaction with these partnerships, which may hinder access to professional expertise and resource sharing.

4.8 Comparison with Existing Research

The results of this research align with previous studies that have highlighted the challenges of managing culturally significant but resource-constrained institutions (e.g. Bryant and Behrens 2007; Butcher-Youngmans 1996; Vagnone and Ryan 2016; Pinna 2001; Domšić 2014). However, this study extends these findings by quantifying the need for formal guidelines and specialised training specifically in the Slovenian context. Notably, to date, no studies have been done in Slovenia that focus on the management of house museums, thus making this research a unique contribution to this field. The high demand for standardised frameworks and education mirrors international trends that emphasise the professionalisation of heritage management. Additionally, the varied experiences with stakeholder collaboration in this study reflect the broader issues noted in cultural policy research, where strong local support often contrasts with the bureaucratic challenges imposed by national institutions.

4.9 Limitations

This study has several limitations:

- *Sample Size and Scope*: the survey was completed by managers of 38 house museums. Although this number is substantial, it may not fully capture the diversity of institutions across Slovenia. The limitation in diversity stems from the fact that management practices in Slovenia are highly specific, with very few distinct management models in use; the private sector is particularly minimally represented.
- *Data Collection Method*: the reliance on self-reported data via an online survey may introduce bias. Additionally, many house museums lack a dedicated manager, accessible phone numbers, working email addresses or updated websites, making it difficult to contact them.
- *Survey Platform Constraints*: using SurveyPlanet for data collection also introduced limitations. The platform limited the way questions and responses could be formulated, which required the author of this re-

search to adjust or exclude certain questions that were initially intended for inclusion.

- *Cross-Sectional Design*: the findings represent a snapshot in time, limiting the ability to assess trends and changes over longer periods.
- *Preliminary Nature of the Study*: as the first study focused on the management of house museums in Slovenia, this research may be considered basic and general, underscoring the need for more in-depth and nuanced future investigations.

4.10 Suggestions for Improvement

Based on the survey results and the challenges identified in the management of house museums in Slovenia, several measures can be proposed to enhance management practices. These recommendations address the unique needs of these institutions and aim to establish a robust framework for their long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

4.11 Develop Categorisation and Typology

A clear classification system is needed to differentiate between types of house museums (e.g., memorial houses, birthplaces, literary museums, and hybrid cultural spaces). This would enable tailored management practices and facilitate benchmarking and comparative analysis. In the future, this process could also lead to the formulation of a definition of the house museum that would reflect the specific cultural, historical, and institutional context of Slovenia.

4.12 Enhance Understanding of Specificities

It is crucial that decision-makers, cultural heritage experts and museum managers gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges of managing house museums. Targeted educational initiatives, such as seminars and workshops, can bridge the gap between current practices and international best practices.

4.13 Encourage Collaboration

Strengthening collaboration among museum managers, conservators, local authorities and cultural institutions is essential. Joint initiatives and participatory processes would help to integrate diverse per-

spectives, improve resource sharing and enhance overall management effectiveness.

4.14 Strengthen Research

Expanding research into the management of house museums is necessary. Future studies should include in-depth analyses of management practices, financial models, visitor engagement and conservation challenges. Comparative international studies could also offer valuable insights and innovative approaches applicable in the Slovenian context.

In summary, by developing a robust framework for categorisation, deepening the understanding of the specific challenges, fostering broader stakeholder collaboration and reinforcing research efforts, the management of house museums in Slovenia can be significantly improved. These measures will not only enhance the quality of heritage preservation and interpretation, but also ensure that these culturally significant institutions remain dynamic, sustainable and relevant for future generations.

5 Conclusion

The study demonstrates that house museums in Slovenia operate within a complex and often fragmented management environment, where practices are largely shaped by individual initiative, professional experience, and the constant negotiation between conservation and accessibility. Despite differences in ownership and scale, these institutions share several common challenges, including limited financial and human resources, restrictive conservation frameworks, and insufficient institutional recognition of their distinct character. As Maroević (2020) emphasizes, the heritage field is not merely a matter of preservation, but of interpretation and communication – and this tension is at the heart of managing house museums.

The findings confirm that house museum management requires a more nuanced and adaptive approach than the one typically applied to traditional museums (Macleod, Hanks and Hale 2012). While 71 % of respondents consider conservation restrictions justified, nearly half report that these measures limit their interpretative and educational activities. This underlines the need for policies that enable greater flexibility while safe-

guarding authenticity – a balance long emphasized in Slovenian heritage discourse by Perko (2023), who advocates for a holistic and context-sensitive approach to heritage protection and management, grounded in collaboration with heritage communities and acknowledging the living and experiential nature of heritage spaces.

A striking 95 % of respondents believe that there is insufficient research on house museum management in Slovenia, and 79 % express the need for a formal framework or guidelines. This lack of systemic support and academic inquiry aligns with Pirkovič's (2023) observation that heritage management in Slovenia often suffers from institutional fragmentation and insufficient integration between theory and practice. Addressing this gap through targeted research and policy development would not only strengthen professional standards, but would also contribute to the long-term sustainability and visibility of house museums as vital cultural institutions.

Equally important is the need for education and dialogue. The overwhelming majority of managers (94 %) call for specialized training programs focused on the specificities of house museum management. Such initiatives, as Finlay (2008) and Hems and Blockley (2006) argue, are essential to strengthen professional competence, advance interpretative knowledge, and ensure the long-term sustainability of house museums. At the same time, improved cooperation between managers, heritage authorities, and local communities can foster a more participatory and collaborative approach to heritage care – one that reflects the principles of shared stewardship and collective responsibility (Vagnone and Ryan 2016), and ultimately redefines the role of house museums as living spaces of cultural dialogue.

Finally, the research highlights the under-explored role of heritage communities in the management of house museums. Encouraging their structured participation – beyond occasional volunteering – could transform house museums into genuinely shared cultural spaces. Such participatory governance would not only respond to limited staffing and funding, but would also align with the broader European principles of community-based heritage management, as promoted by the Faro Convention (Council of Europe 2005).

This research contributes to strengthening the theoretical and practical

understanding of house museum management within the Slovenian museological context. It is my hope that this will encourage further research and dialogue, inspiring a deeper, museological and heritological exploration of house museums in Slovenia – spaces where heritage, memory and identity continue to evolve.

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