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FROM DEFENSIVE ARCHITECTURE TO CULTURAL ATTRACTION: DESIGN AND CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: MUSEO DE LA PIRATERÍA, LANZAROTE (SPAIN)

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ABSTRACT

The conversion of Castillo de Santa Bárbara in Lanzarote into the Museo de la Piratería constitutes a case of valorising a historic fortress through museum interpretation. This article examines how defensive architecture, the memory of raids, and tourist visitation are connected in the production of cultural and economic value. The study is based on an analysis of official publications and scientific literature on adaptive reuse, authenticity, dark tourism, and cultural entrepreneurship. The central argument is that the historical relevance between the building and the exhibition offers a strong basis for a cultural attraction, but its quality depends on how violence is presented and on how the monument is managed. The entrepreneurial dimension is examined as the organisation of services and partnerships that support the cultural mission. At the same time, the announced transition towards a Museum of the History of Teguise highlights the possibility of revising the site's thematic use. The analysis concludes with evaluation criteria that connect historical understanding, conservation, economic function and local community participation.

Keywords: Defensive Architecture; Adaptive Reuse; Museum Interpretation; Cultural Entrepreneurship; Dark Tourism; Lanzarote.

1 INTRODUCTION

Historic fortresses were built to protect people and places. Their location, entrances and interior spaces responded to needs of observation, defence and shelter. With the loss of their military function, their preservation requires new uses. Museum valorisation offers a way of connecting the building with contemporary society: spaces that once served protection become places of visitation and understanding of the past.

The Castillo de Santa Bárbara, in Guanapay, Teguise, began operating as the Museo de la Piratería in 2011. The opening announcement linked the new exhibition with the restoration of the protected building and the attraction of residents

and tourists [1]. The pirate theme had a clear relationship with the fortress's history. It therefore offered the possibility of explaining the reasons for its construction and use through a recognisable narrative.

This relationship forms the starting point of the article. The historical connection between the building and the exhibition can strengthen the understanding and attractiveness of the visit. However, interest in piracy does not guarantee that the visitor will perceive the consequences of the raids for the population. The research question is how a fortress is converted into a cultural attraction while retaining its historical significance and supporting services with economic prospects.

The study examines the pirate exhibition as a specific phase in the monument's life. In February 2025, the Municipality of Teguise announced the castle's reopening and the goal of converting it into a Museum of the History of Teguise [2]. This change allows adaptive reuse to be discussed as an evolving process. A monument's cultural value can be preserved while its exhibition changes, provided new narratives explain its historical trajectory.

2 THEORETICAL STARTING POINTS

Adaptive reuse is the adaptation of an existing building to a new function. In monuments, the process includes protecting the features that document their history. Bullen and Love [3] highlight the economic, social and environmental potential of reuse, as well as the difficulties of its implementation. Foster [4] connects it with the circular economy and the reduction of buildings' environmental impact. These potentials need to be assessed case by case, based on the work required and the function of the new use.

The reuse of Santa Bárbara has both a material and an interpretive dimension. The former concerns the conservation and adaptation of the building for visitors. The latter concerns the meaning the spaces acquire through the exhibition. A corridor can serve museum circulation while simultaneously explaining defensive organisation. This distinction helps to separately assess the appropriateness of interventions and the quality of historical presentation.

Heritage also includes decisions about which past is chosen to be presented. Smith [5] approaches it as a cultural practice, while Pendlebury [6] examines the role of institutions and values in conservation processes. On this basis, the choice of piracy as a central theme constitutes an act of public interpretation. It foregrounds certain stories and creates a specific relationship between the monument, residents and visitors.

In cultural tourism, the value of the visit is linked to what the visitor sees and how they understand it. Richards [7] highlights the field's expansion towards experiences and intangible heritage. Poria, Butler and Airey [8] show the importance of the visitor's personal relationship with heritage. For Santa Bárbara, this means that the same exhibition can acquire a different meaning for a resident, a student, or a traveller.

Authenticity likewise requires a clear distinction. Wang [9] examines the authenticity of objects and of experience, while Chhabra, Healy and Sills [10] connect perceived authenticity with cultural presentations. In the museum, a historic building, a replica weapon and a model have different documentary status. Their educational usefulness is enhanced when the visitor knows their origin and purpose.

The memory of violence connects the study with dark tourism. Stone and Sharpley [11] examine the tourist relationship with death, while Biran, Poria and Oren [12] and Light [13] highlight its overlap with heritage tourism. A place's violent history does not in itself prove specific visitor motivations. Here the term is used to discuss the presentation of raids and captivity, without attributing to visitors an interest in death.

3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article is a qualitative case study based on public documents. It examines the official description of the castle and the exhibition, the opening announcement, and municipal publications on restoration and change of use. The literature provides the interpretive framework. The analysis is organised around the relationship between architecture and history, the presentation of violence, and the preconditions for cultural and economic operation. Source verification was completed on 2 October 2026.

Institutional publications document the choices and intentions of the bodies involved, but do not provide a complete picture of the museum's operation. No fieldwork, interviews or economic analysis were conducted. Consequently, the study does not estimate visitor numbers, revenue, or learning outcomes. Management proposals are kept separate from the information confirmed by the sources. This distinction allows the possibilities for valorisation to be discussed without presenting developmental expectations as already proven effects.

4 THE FORTRESS AND ITS SUCCESSIVE USES

The location of Santa Bárbara in Guanapay is connected to the possibility of observing the surrounding area. The official presentation states that the castle functioned as a lookout, shelter and place of detention [14]. These uses explain why the architecture needs to be treated as part of the exhibition. The view, the entrances and the internal organisation offer starting points for understanding how the threat was confronted.

Reading the building, however, requires historical documentation. The form of a space does not by itself reveal who used it or how shelter was organised. Museum interpretation can connect observation with sources on residents' lives. A map, for example, would help to relate the fortress, the settlement and maritime access points. This connection is proposed as a way of explaining the function and does not constitute a documented outcome of the exhibition.

The official websites do not present entirely uniform dating of the early building phases. For this reason, attributing a single certain founding date is avoided. The historical description records later interventions, as well as the building's function as a museum of Canarian emigration from 1991, prior to the 2011 change [15]. This succession shows that the monument has acquired different cultural uses.

The study by Maniou, Mitoula, Manola and Tsatambassoglou [16] on industrial buildings in Lesvos and Limnos offers a comparative starting point. It examines the valorisation of built heritage and public attitudes towards visitation and participation. Although it concerns a different type of building, it helps to formulate a shared question: what relationships with the local community does a new cultural use need to support? Its findings are not automatically transferable to Lanzarote.

The shift from emigration to piracy changes the focus of public memory. The first narrative refers to departure from the islands, while the second refers to the threat approaching them. Comparing them allows discussion of the relationship between island life, mobility and insecurity. A section on the castle's previous uses would make these changes comprehensible, while also highlighting the history of the museum valorisation itself.

5 THE FORMATION OF THE CULTURAL ATTRACTION

The pirate exhibition was organised around Teguise and international piracy in the Canary Islands. The official description refers to a model of the settlement, sections on raids and occupations, historical figures and replica weaponry [14]. The content connects the place with wider maritime routes. The castle offers a material framework for the narrative, since its earlier defensive function explains its relationship with the dangers of raids.

This relevance constitutes the main advantage of the conversion into an attraction. The visitor is located in a space related to what is presented. The exhibition can therefore explain why walls, observation and shelter were needed. The value of this connection depends on the route and the interpretive texts. When exhibits are presented in a fragmented way, the visitor may retain the image of adventure without understanding the fortress's function.

Weaponry offers a characteristic example. Its presentation acquires greater historical significance when connected to users, practices and consequences. Similarly, a settlement model can explain the distribution of power and protection needs. The shift from the object to the relationship it documents constitutes a key interpretive goal. It allows the exhibition to present a society confronting danger, rather than being limited to the identification of weapons and famous figures.

A clear distinction between pirates, privateers and naval forces is also necessary. These categories are connected to different forms of authorisation and to political perspectives that need explanation. Using a generic pirate image may facilitate promotion, but it limits accuracy when it equates different activities. The exhibition needs to explain the terms through specific evidence. In this way the visitor also comes to understand how historical characterisations are constructed.

Attractiveness can be supported through images, reconstructions and activities suitable for different ages. Moscardo [17] connects effective interpretation with active attention and meaningful engagement. At Santa Bárbara, this approach could be applied through questions of observation and comparison. The visitor would be invited to explain the castle's location or to distinguish between an original item and a replica. Entertainment would thus acquire a specific educational purpose.

6 THE PRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE AND THE MUSEUM'S RESPONSIBILITY

The pirate theme includes experiences of insecurity and captivity. The official description refers to raiders seeking people for enslavement. This information needs a place within the interpretation, so that the history is not exhausted in naval battles and weapons. The presentation can examine the consequences for labour, families and the life of the settlement. Where sources are insufficient, gaps must be stated, and personal stories must not be invented.

Temporal distance from the events does not negate their significance. The exhibition needs to choose means of presentation appropriate to the content and the age of the audience. An orientation game can help understanding of the fortress. Captivity, in contrast, requires careful explanation of the human experience. Educational responsibility concerns the relationship between form and message: each activity needs to clarify what the visitor is called upon to learn.

Polyphony presupposes different historical positions and a clear description of power relations. Interpretation needs to avoid stereotypes about religious or geographic groups and to explain the context of each conflict. Smith's [5] approach helps to recognise that heritage includes choices of representation. The participation of historians, educators and local bodies can support the re-examination of these choices. The result should maintain documentation as a shared basis.

The relationship of residents with the exhibition requires separate investigation. A monument may have local significance that exceeds its touristic use. School visits, historical research activities and discussions about the memory of the place could broaden participation. Evaluation would examine whether residents recognise their own history in the exhibition. Increased participation has value when accompanied by the capacity to contribute to the content.

7 CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECONOMIC FUNCTION

The conversion of the monument into an attraction creates needs for organising services. Cultural entrepreneurship here concerns the development of activities that connect knowledge and the protection of the castle with economic resources. Klamer [18] places the realisation of cultural values at its centre. With this logic, entrepreneurial activity is assessed by its capacity to support the site's mission. The existence of tourist interest is a starting point for planning, not proof of sustainable operation.

For Santa Bárbara, guided tours, educational workshops and partnerships with cultural venues in Teguise could be considered. Each service needs a clear audience, content and cost. A school visit, for example, requires different planning from a brief tourist tour. Developing activities based on these differences could broaden the museum's use. These proposals represent possibilities for evaluation and do not describe a confirmed business model of the operating body.

Economic operation depends on revenue and expenditure. Tickets or organised activities may generate resources, while conservation, staffing and documentation require continuous funding. The municipal announcement on restoration works records substantial public investment [19]. Therefore, assessing the return on reuse needs to account for the support provided by public resources. Self-financing cannot be assumed without evidence.

Local economic impact is a different question from the museum's revenue. The visit may be combined with catering, transport or other cultural services. To document the benefit, data on visitors' actual routes and expenditure are needed. This distinction prevents confusion between overall tourist interest and an outcome specifically attributable to the museum. It also allows examination of which local actors participate and how opportunities are distributed.

The study by Maniou and colleagues [20] on Lesvos examines local perceptions and highlights constraints of funding, infrastructure and seasonality. For Santa Bárbara, the relevance lies in the evaluation parameters it proposes, without documenting equivalent conditions at the Spanish destination. The comparison reinforces the need to examine resources, partnerships and social participation together.

Commercialisation creates tensions when the easily recognisable element determines all the content. The pirate image may enhance promotion, but its repetition does not replace historical quality. The choice of services and products needs to be connected with the monument and with its educational content. Cultural entrepreneurship therefore makes sense when economic organisation supports well-documented experiences and maintains resources for the care of the site.

The pivotal and constructive role of digital technologies within contemporary cultural entrepreneurship education warrants systematic integration rather than peripheral acknowledgment. As creative markets digitize rapidly, traditional frameworks fail to equip emerging creative entrepreneurs with requisite interdisciplinary competencies. To fortify this field and cultivate resilient innovators, academic institutions and policy-makers must strategically deploy

advanced digital modalities across all curricular levels. Educational frameworks must systematically absorb established technological paradigms from other educational domains. Mobile learning environments [24] democratize access to instructional resources, enabling flexible learning beyond traditional classroom boundaries. Concurrently, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) [25-26] provide the infrastructure for interactive simulations and digital marketplace modeling. Furthermore, integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and STEM Robotics [27-31] cultivates algorithmic thinking and technical fluency—skills indispensable for commercializing creative outputs within automated market landscapes. Rather than merely digitizing content, these advanced paradigms fundamentally optimize core educational mechanisms: evaluation, targeted intervention, metacognition, emotional intelligence, and personalized instruction [32-34]. Embedded within curricula, these modalities facilitate a transition from static instruction to adaptive learning pathways tailored to individual cognitive profiles and skill gaps.

8 CONSERVATION AND NEW MUSEUM DIRECTION

Museum use needs to be adapted to the possibilities of the historic building. Exhibition structures, lighting and installations must allow the older elements to remain recognisable. Where technically feasible, the reversibility of additions facilitates future changes of use. The adaptive-reuse literature supports evaluating these choices together with operating costs [3, 4]. Protection and economic operation need joint planning.

Access includes both the possibility of movement and of understanding. Technical solutions for circulation need specific assessment, while texts in different languages, resting points and digital reproductions can broaden participation. Technology is useful when it explains something not directly perceptible, such as a space's successive uses. The choice of media needs to take into account conservation and their actual usefulness for the public [21].

Maniou, Mitoula, Laloumis and Astara [22] examine the possibilities of cultural entrepreneurship at the Italian monuments of Kos. The connection between earlier and present-day use that they set out offers a useful comparative perspective for the castle. The use of new media needs to maintain this connection and to support specific needs of historical understanding.

The proposal for a Museum of the History of Teguise appears in a 2023 municipal announcement and recurs in 2025 [2, 23]. The publications declare a planned direction and do not prove the completion of the new exhibition. The broader theme offers the possibility of connecting piracy with other aspects of the place's history. It may also include the history of the museums housed in the castle, explaining the changes in cultural priority.

The transition does not by itself allow the conclusion that the pirate-themed use has failed. It does, however, highlight the importance of adaptation. A monument can retain its public value with renewed content, provided the changes are explained. Consistency of information across websites and partner bodies is necessary, so that visitors know what is offered at each phase. Historical theming therefore requires regular revision alongside care of the building.

9 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND CONCLUSIONS

Evaluation must connect the cultural mission with its operation. For historical understanding, one can examine recognition of the defensive use, the distinction between an original item and a replica, and understanding of the consequences of the raids. Satisfaction with the visit requires separate measurement. A visitor may enjoy the view without understanding the history. This distinction helps identify specific needs for improving the exhibition.

Economic evaluation requires data on operating costs, funding and service use. Social evaluation requires the views of residents, educators and partner bodies. Likewise, the condition of the building must be examined through technical inspections. Comparison between different periods needs to refer to the specific exhibition and its operating conditions. The different dimensions of evaluation cannot be reduced solely to ticket numbers.

The case of Santa Bárbara highlights the possibility of connecting defensive architecture with cultural visitation. The main advantage is the historical relationship between the building and the theme. Its valorisation presupposes interpretation that explains the social experience of threat, distinguishes between objects and representations, and recognises the monument's different uses. Cultural entrepreneurship can support this process through appropriate services and partnerships.

The announced transition towards a Museum of the History of Teguise shows that reuse remains open to change. For comparable monuments, the critical issue is the connection of attractiveness, documentation and conservation. Economic operation acquires a stable basis when it serves a clear cultural mission and is assessed with data. In this way the fortress can remain a place of knowledge and public use, while the new activity sustains its care and its relationship with the local community.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

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The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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