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Communication of Holocaust Memorial Sites in Lithuania From Mid-20th Century to Early 21st Century

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SUMMARY

Relevance. Even though the topic of Holocaust has been gaining considerable speed since the proclamation of Independence, it should still be noted that the research of the Holocaust memorial sites is still largely underdeveloped, and it mostly focuses on the works of the chronological, statistical and biographical nature. The increasing attention to the Jewish heritage is also mostly reflected through fragmented representations of the culture and trauma, thus subsequently shaping fragmented and stereotypical understanding which – due to mostly being only factually based and best recognized through the official events of commemoration – does not promote any empathy and/or involvement of the society.

Even though – today – the image of the Holocaust sites is becoming part of the historical consciousness of the country as well as the public discourse, along with the fact that the Holocaust memorial sites are protected by the State, and the National Memorial Day for the Genocide of Lithuanian Jews has been included into the list of memorable dates of Lithuania, and a higher number of mass murder sites have been included in tourist routes, and local municipalities are holding commemorative events, which allows to perceive an evident shift in the Lithuanian society, however, we may still wonder whether the sincerity of enforced commemorations as if a survivor of the enforced State festivals dating back to the Soviet times can actually evoke empathy and provide the opportunity to reflect the traumatic events by relating them to the modern world. Isn't it happening by chance – the way it was with the legitimation of the second occupation during the Soviet times – that the emphasis is laid on the 'declarative patriotism' based on the reproduction/reliving of the historical trauma and the fulfillment of political objectives instead of the education of a citizen who is looking for personal relationship with his/her own state and who is resistant to propaganda and populism? The research sets off with the need to highlight the still underexplored and insufficiently

revealed issues of the communicative nature: the community whose traumatic experience is being communicated was exterminated; whereas for the dominant non-Jewish part of the community, in most cases, Holocaust is not a traumatic experience. It is notable that the communication of the memory of Holocaust in the contemporary Lithuania is multilayered in terms of narratives. Usually, it is of the simulacrum nature, and therefore it is frequently abused as a topic of information wars.

The research was conducted with the aim to identify the communicative narratives of Holocaust memorial sites in Lithuania and to research how the Holocaust memorial sites are communicating in the context of being framed by the overlapping different narratives in the semiosic behavior while also creating creolization spaces as an opportunity for a dialogue and a way of promoting empathy in the society.

In order to achieve this aim, a methodology model based on the grounds of the Semiosphere Theory as developed by Yuri Lotman was created. It enabled to identify the semiosic behavior and the creolization spaces of the narratives communicated by the overlapping official semiosphere and the semiospheres of the communities by deconstructing the actions of the overlapping narratives. The research indicated that the narratives functioning at the theoretical level – although they might be existent in the practice – have mechanisms of operation acquiring some highly specific features in the real life. An assumption was made in the course of the research that, at different periods, some specific narrative(s) could have adopted a different mode of activity, yet, the empirical research indicated that neither the shift in the cultural attitude nor any political developments had a decisive impact on the change of the attitude towards Holocaust memorial sites. The Soviet period presupposed the communication of mass murder sites as sites of the victims of Fascism/Hitlerism. Yet, it still bears some impact on the contemporary society by adapting

semantic meanings for the contemporary needs. It could thus be claimed that the contemporary historical consciousness is overlapping, and that different individual, collective and cultural memories were making impact in a variety of ways and by employing a broad range of means. This is the actual impact which affects the contemporary society. Yet the narratives of overlapping memories are framed by the dominant discourse have preserved different experiences (de)coded by standards of double memory, they incited – however, they failed to secure – the dialogue-type relationship with the traumatic heritage as they only continued the possibility of evolution in a conflicting unity. By employing archival, iconographic and interview materials, the author of the present thesis deconstructs and discusses the motifs of the semiosic heritage of different narratives and expands the target of communication of the Holocaust memorial sites.

Overview of historiography and sources. It is notable that, in the general context of the historiography devoted to the historical period explored in the present thesis, works covering the aspects which are relevant for the present research are scarce. However, valuable insights are provided regarding some specific aspects by the research covering closely related areas as Holocaust factology and registering of sites, Holocaust memory and the memory of mass murder sites, or the efforts of the Jewish community to perpetuate their traumatic experiences. The factographic database of the Holocaust sites has been developed in Lithuania since the 1990s by Arūnas Bubnys (1998, 2003, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014), Valentinas Brandišauskas (1999, 2011), Christoph Dieckmann (2006, 2007, 2011), Saulius Sužiedėlis (2001, 2014), Stanislovas Buchaveckas (2009, 2010, 2011), Alfredas Rukšėnas (2001, 2006, 2014, 2015) and Neringa Latvytė (2002, 2012). The research of registering Holocaust memorial sites which contributed to the identification and actualization of Holocaust sites has been conducted by Josif Levinson (1997) and Milda Jakulytė (2011). Similar research of registering Holocaust sites has been conducted in Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine. A broad array of research

can be attributed to the research that is relevant in the context of the present thesis. This includes the databases of the Yad Vashem the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Latvia or Berlin Memorial to the Killed Jews of Europe open access database registering Holocaust sites. Information on the heritage preservation current state of the mass murder sites can be provided by the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania. Holocaust memory research started gaining popularity in the 1980s–1990s when more attention started being paid to the importance of historical memory. In the context of the research of Holocaust memory, the following works should be mentioned: Violeta Davoliūtė (2021, 2022), Stanislovas Stasiulis (2018), Gintarė Malinauskaitė (2019), Giedrė Jankevičiūtė (2021), Odeta Žukauskienė (2014), Šarūnė Sederavičiūtė (2016, 2021), Milda Jakulytė (2013), Zigmas Vitkus (2019), Irena Šutinienė (2002, 2003, 2011, 2013), Danutė Gailienė (2015, 2021), Ruth Reches (2020), Ekaterina Makhotina (2018), Hektoras Vitkus (2006, 2007, 2017), Christine Beresniova (2017), Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole and Alberto Giordano (2014), Odeta Žukauskienė (2014), Jessica Rapson (2015), Volha Bartash (2017, 2019, 2022), Hannah Pollin-Galay (2018), Rebecca L. Golbert (2004), Karina Barkane-Vincane (2021), Anja Tippner (2018), Jay Winter (2000), Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider (2006), Marianne Hirsch (1996, 2012), Stefan Rohdewald (2008), John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic (2013), and Michael Rothberg (2009) have pursued a variety of routes in exploring Holocaust experiences, their representation and commemoration, geopolitical context, transfer of memory, controversies, issues of the use of the Holocaust memory, and the different strategies of reception in Eastern Europe, Western Europe, United States of America, and Israel. Emphasis should be made on the analysis of the developmental shifts regarding the memory of Holocaust sites in the former Soviet Union by highlighting the works of Arkadi Zeltser (2011, 2018), Mordechai Altshuler (2002, 2009, 2012), Zvi Gitelman (1990, 2005,

2012), Andrej Kotljarchuk (2016, 2022). The significance of the works oriented towards the regional research of Holocaust sites by Samuel Barnai (2012), Marek Kucia (2016, 2017), Alexandra Tcherkasski (2012, 2013, 2022), Bella Zisere (2005), Leonid Smilovitsky (2012, 2014), Sarah Garibov (2017) should also be highlighted. A separate mention should be dedicated to works related with the communication of various narratives of memory, including Jose van Dijck (2007), Rimvydas Laužikas (2017, 2019), Rūta Šermukšnytė (2014, 2019), Monika Frėjūtė-Rakauskienė (2018, 2022), Andrius Marcinkevičius (2018, 2022), and Neringa Klumbytė (2018).

It may be claimed that the research of the communication of Holocaust memorial sites during the times of the Soviet occupation, and even somewhat later, was not being implemented in Lithuania to any significant extent. In the best-case scenario, some foreign authors only occasionally mentioned the Holocaust sites in Lithuania and the locally implemented commemoration practices (mostly, the memorials of Paneriai and the Ninth Fort of Kaunas Fortress were taken into consideration). Since the 1990s, studies have been oriented towards factological research revealing the circumstances of the planning and implementation of the mass execution of Jews, as well as to some circumstances pertaining to the more generalized contexts. The more recent exploration of the traumatic heritage of the Jews and the relevant memory is more fragmented; however, scholars are already attempting to focus on the issues of the Holocaust sites memory communication. Still, attention is mostly directed towards the issues instead of focusing on the causes.

Academic issue targeted in the thesis. Most likely, there are several different and conflicting memories of Holocaust in Lithuania (see the variety reflected in Šutinienė, 2003, 2013, 2022; Gailienė, 2004, 2011; Davoliūtė, 2021, 2022; Reches, 2020; Nikžentaitis, 2013; Mažeikis 2014; Liekis, 2013, 2014; Sužiedėlis, 2014; Čepaitienė, 2008; Beresniova, 2017; Staliūnas, 2005; Jonutytė, 2014; Vanagaitė, 2016;

Foti, 2022), and this mismatch has already been spanning over a lengthy period. Therefore, an assumption can be made that this protracted process is a consequence of the misunderstood processes of conflicting memories. The problem cannot be resolved without perceiving the mechanisms first. The conflicting memories are fractionizing the society, and this may be employed for the promotion of information wars, anti-Semitism and/or propaganda. In order to empower the different memories of Holocaust to establish a positive dialogue, their mechanisms of action should be explored and perceived first.

Object of research. Communication of Holocaust memory sites in Lithuania from Mid-20th Century to Early 21st Century.

Aim of research. To identify the communication narratives of Holocaust memory sites in Lithuania, and to establish the factors which triggered their initial manifestation and which support their presence in contemporary communication.

Questions raised in the present research:

1. How do the mechanisms of overlapping narratives function and operate?

2. What are the principles of the action of overlapping narratives? What are the elements of their recognition?

3. What are the mechanisms of the contact between different narratives and their distinction in the society?

4. How do the overlapping narratives frame the positioning of Holocaust site?

The questions of the research allow raising the following hypotheses:

H1. The Soviet communication of 'Holocaust sites' as 'sites related with victims of Hitlerism/Fascism' still has an impact on the contemporary society.

H2. The present-day historical consciousness is overlapping, and a significant number of the society behavior norms have been inherited from the Soviet times. The supporting factors are also related with the ideas taking their origin in the Soviet period. Due to a variety of reasons, a number of actors used various methods and strategies to make an impact, i.e. they were/have been spreading various ideas which have maintained their vitality until the present day.

H3. The overlapping narratives, although they are framed by the dominant discourse, have preserved different experiences (de)coded by double memory standards. They have encouraged – yet failed to ensure – the dialogue-based relationship with the traumatic heritage.

H4. With the increasing chronological distance from the traumatic experiences, Holocaust sites are becoming more intimate.

H5. Traumatic experiences are limiting the communication discourse and serve for the escalation of anti-Semitism.

Statements to be defended:

1. The model of semiospheres by Yuri Lotman can be employed for the analysis of the communication of Holocaust memorial sites.

2. In the communication of Holocaust memorial sites, there are no pure narratives; all narratives are overlapping.

3. The Soviet period-originating schemes of Fascism/Hitlerism sites still persist as the main model of the communication of the Holocaust sites even nowadays.

4. The overlapping narratives have preserved differently encoded practices; however, they have not ensured a dialogue-based relationship with the traumatic heritage.

Structure of the thesis and thesis methodology. The thesis consists of an introduction, two chapters covering the attitude to the research, the research proper, conclusions, a list of bibliographic references, and appendixes.

Chapter One deals with the selected topic mostly at the theoretical level. It overviews the forms of Holocaust memory and the narratives construed on these grounds, singles out and analyzes the narrative(s) of the official ideology and the narrative(s) of the Jewish community which experienced Holocaust regarding the sites of mass murders. This chapter also introduces the communication aspects of Holocaust memorial sites.

Chapter Two is based on the theoretical insights obtained in Chapter One. It explicates on the research model of the Holocaust memorial sites communication in Lithuania. The core of this model is construed with the Theory of Semiospheres by Lotman and the Theory of Communication as Practice by Robert T. Craig. This model allows exploring and revealing the possible connection, interaction, overlapping and the problem aspects of the dominant narratives regarding the two communication systems – the state and the community semiospheres – as well as their alteration at different periods regarding Holocaust memorial sites. Chapter Two also presents the research methodology and the process of data collection and analysis.

Chapter Three of the thesis discusses the conducted research in the course of which the communication of Holocaust memorial sites which is manifested in practice is revealed, multilateral and polysemantic narratives are identified while also outlining their specific manifestations and target audiences. The collision of different

elements of memory, their tension points, evaluation and interpretations are highlighted.

A separate section of the thesis serves for the presentation of the conclusions generalizing on the entire work which are followed by a list of bibliographic references and appendixes.

1. Previously Existing Holocaust Memory Forms in Lithuania and the Narratives Constructed on their Basis

It was the ambition of the totalitarian regimes operating in Lithuania to reinterpret the past by creating a homogenous and undoubtedly 'correct' image(ry) to serve for the establishment and justification of the current 'power' that had a major impact on the main memory forms manifested in Lithuania as well as on the narratives constructed on the grounds of these memory forms. The discussion of the different aspects of the starting points of the collective and cultural trauma which are necessary for the perception of collective experiences (Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann, 1995; Hirsch, 1996; Slezkine, 2010; Rubavičius, 2014) in the space framed by traumatic events (Čepaitienė, 2007; Starikovičius, 2015) while employing the concept of semiosphere as developed by Lotman (2004) allows for identifying the interactions of the overlapping of the Holocaust memories of different periods. Overlapping (or layering) is the structuration of memory in an effort not to stifle the previously existing facts by presenting the dominant facets of the memory while having insights regarding the creation of added values through concepts, which serves for raising and maintaining the empathy of the society for the traumatic experiences and the historically painful storylines of the past (Hoheisel, Knitz, 2018). The semiosphere by Lotman is an all-embracing synchronous structure of the systemic nature which evolves in time and space whose main functions are related with certain mechanisms of the memory preserving and communicating elements of the past and the present and creating new information. This structure is filled with various and different connections of elements of the semiotic nature (structures, signs,

narratives) which communicate in between themselves in different ways. This is also a global semiotic system integrating all possible signs, texts, interpretations, symbols, information, knowledge and its representations, as well as the interrelationship of all the above mentioned factors and the formational semantic phenomena of the systemic nature. Its harmonious interaction is only possible in a certain semiotic continuum filled with semiotic constructs of various nature and various organizational levels. The sense/meaning of a semiosphere can only be perceived after assessing all the interrelationship of the network nature and considering the interaction at the systemic level between the specific elements and their entirety.

By applying the theory of semiosphere in the context of the research of giving a meaning and communication, we could employ a presupposition on the continuity of cultural processes which allows to perceive the past (as an experience) and the present (as progress), as related parts of the same continuum which is fragmented neither in space nor in time, but which does not function as an opposition between the past and the present (in the sense that the present is something that negates the past). From the point of view of this research, the opposition between traumatic experience and memory is perceived not as two factors mutually negating each other, but it is rather an interaction of two factors of the same semiosphere denoted by an interaction of the systematic and mutual nature. The traumatic experience, the act of giving a meaning to it, and the sciences exploring the two phenomena may be perceived as the structures of a semiosphere which are dependent on a specific culture, which are open, always changing and progressing, however homogenous and systematic. They interact (i.e. they manage to establish a dialogue) with other semiotic structures (for instance, with other sciences or other traditions of giving a meaning) and with fragments of the semiotic structures (cultures) of the past 'wandering' in the semiosphere.

When discussing the relationship between heritage (the past) and memory (the present) manifested by Holocaust memorial sites in the context of the theory of semiosphere by Lotman, it is possible to observe the permanent evolution of cultural processes regarding both the past and the present as some parts which coexist in the same space and time. This is an opposition between the past and the present (between rituals and counter-rituals) which may be interpreted not as two factors mutually denying each other, but as an interaction of two semiospheres via some creolized spaces, for which the communication of Holocaust is important (for instance, these may be Lithuanian, Jewish or Roma/Romani communities). However, they are also semiosic spaces which remain separate, thus making the so-called communication bubbles (e.g. Lithuanian, Jewish, Roma civil communities or Lithuanian, Jewish, Roma ethnic communities; the state-recognized official communities and the alternative communities, etc.). All of that could signify that the way Holocaust memorial sites are being perceived *now* is a phenomenon of some natural process whose interpretations the society takes over and adapts according to the needs of the society development, whereas a Holocaust site as a site of traumatic heritage in the present-day culture is enacted via communication which renders a meaning to other functions: information (heritage accumulation and preservation) and further research which would be impossible without preserving information. The communication of Holocaust sites is exceptional in the sense that it is impossible without an object of heritage, scholarly knowledge on artifacts and the interpretation of these artifacts, as this is the only way how heritage is related with the present and begins to act not as an object coming from the past and representing the past, but as a tool of the contemporary culture which acts through ideas uniting communities (Lotman, 2004).

We can generalize that Holocaust memory forms were framed by different totalitarian experiences, the ways of overcoming these experiences, and the interpretations of memories which were

construed on these grounds. Even though attempts were being made to maintain the empathy of the society to the historically painful sequences of events of the past, however, the traumatic experiences of the Jewish community were consciously and deliberately 'attenuated' by covering/overlapping them with the marking elements of the propaganda nature, and thereby establishing the dominants of the official point of view. Despite that, the experiences and the memory of the Jewish community have survived as it was being passed from generation to generation as a major part of the Jewish identity. However, it must be recognized that it is symbolic not only for the Jewish communities.

Concepts of Holocaust Memory formerly operating in Lithuania

The continuity of the present-day collective memory of Litvaks which was interrupted by WWII and which was censored during the second Soviet occupation is usually perceived through symbolic manifestations of the traumatic memory which are more about testifying about the fear of losing the memory than about the encouragement of perception, emotional bonds and a dialogue with the local community. For the development of this manifestation of traumatic experience, the sociopolitical environment made an impact: the post-war period, extreme poverty, weak social solidarity, etc. Meanwhile, the concept of the trauma itself at the socio cultural level was perceived in a variety of ways: the Soviet Government was shaping the 'mass' (i.e. lumped) memory of the losses of the 'Great Patriotic War', whereas for those who have survived the Holocaust, the limit was imposed with the definition of the phenomenon of the Jewish collective trauma. In this context, the non-Jewish community was fundamentally rejecting the clichés imposed by the Soviet Government, whereas the traumatic experiences of Jewish and other communities were not relevant at all. It may thus be claimed that the Holocaust memory in Lithuania was being framed by several essential circumstances (Barnai, 2012):

1. The pursuit/ambition of the survivors to rebuild the community and to perpetuate the Jewish cultural heritage and the memory of the killed ones.

2. The process of Jewish migration which was affected by the complex aspects of the creation of relationships among ethnic communities, by the policy implemented by the government which refused to recognize the special nature of the Jewish traumatic experience, and the Lithuanian national movement of resistance which was escalating the hostility of the local population against the surviving Jews.

3. The image of 'a Lithuanian collaborator and slaughterer of Jews' enabled by all the above listed circumstances.

In the framework of these circumstances, the official memory affected by the ideological norms which was being construed during the Soviet times was developed. Whereas, the Jewish community as a survivor of Holocaust was seeking to establish the traumatic memory through the activities of the post-war Jewish Museum in Vilnius in an institutionalized way. However, when there was no more Jewish population, the survivors of Holocaust had no real medium in the society for self-expression so that their experiences would be perceived and accepted. The Soviet ideology was seeking to exploit the activities of the Jewish Museum by turning it into a propaganda outlet. However, when this trick failed, the museum was closed, and the memory of the community was supported in the space of double memory frames.

In the mid-1940s, the societies of Eastern Europe were faced with the devastating discovery of the mass killings of Jews and the interpretation of these sites dictated by the totalitarian state. Although Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (2004) singled out the tradition of *Zakhor* (en. Remember) as an exceptional element of the Jewish memory, however, in the context of the traumatic experience, the survivors of Holocaust were not always allowed to frame the sites of mass murder

with the above discussed tradition. The exterminated Jewish community of Lithuania, despite its efforts, was unable to commemorate more than 230 sites of mass murder. Meanwhile, the Communist Government of the Soviet Union and the local government bodies of the Lithuanian SSR were in no hurry to do that as, essentially, there was no clear-cut policy regarding this particular issue. The only thing which was feared was that the sites of mass murder would not turn into the sites of uniting the community on the national grounds. In the perspective of the 'Hitler crimes against peaceful Soviet citizens', they had to mobilize the society as martyrological memory markers of the 'Soviet patriots' which were intended to reload/recharge the live memory of the local community.

During the period of Khrushchev revival, the moderate granting of reserved Lithuanian nationalism was one of the means to control the moods of the population and to ensure the development of some tighter bonds between the Soviet Government and the 'people', thereby ensuring the recognition of the government (Mikailienė, 2013). The prominently localized ethnographic Lithuanian peasant culture as a typical culture of the exploited class of the society was convenient for the Soviet ideology which was promoting the connection with the place in which one resides while simultaneously expressing loyalty to the Soviet system. This went in stark contrast against the 'un-localized' but rather urban-based (*shtetl*) Jewish culture dating back to the Independence years which was of far more 'bourgeois' than the 'proletarian' nature.

In the course of time, the shifts of the concepts of memory were affected by both the official and the unofficial channels of the significance of historical events, and also by the choices which the people were making by themselves. The trends of radicalizing the memory, and the creation of the significance of 'objective' events in the past were – and still remain – in confrontation against the stories of ethnic Lithuanian and non-Lithuanian communities. In the process

of the formation of these stories, manifestations of the hybridization of memories can be detected when different memory groups were supplementing their stories/narrations with details from the narratives of other groups; however, instances of marginalization are still frequently raising their ugly heads (Šutinienė, 1998).

It can thus be stated that, overlapping in the same space, there existed both the official and the alternative narratives where the points of contact were (de)coded with double memory standards. Even though under the conditions of totalitarianism the overlapping memory and the narratives it was construing was one of the most successful forms of communication (despite having some features of Aesopian communication), however, it frequently allowed to create a fake illusion of community and empathy which, according to Gintaras Aleknonis (2011), for a part of the society living in the censored environment was perceived as something coded and rendered into a language which was understandable only to that specific part of the society; therefore, it was equaled to the opportunity of thinking freely. The official concept of Holocaust memory as 'Hitler crimes against peaceful Soviet citizens' was seeking to exploit the commemoration of the Jewish victims to validate the legitimacy of the Soviet occupation. It overlapped with the alternative concept of Holocaust memory which was seeking to honor the Jewish victims, and, via the memorialization of the mass murder sites, it is possible to detect the opportunities for a dialogue coded by Aesopian communication which is perceived differently by each party of the dialogue, but which, ultimately, is still understandable to both. Of course, it should not be forgotten that the Jewish community of Soviet Lithuania found itself in a certain trap distorting and blunting the traumatic experience. The feasibility of escaping this trap depended on the level of consciousness of this society while balancing between the Soviet myth and the preservation of the Jewish identity.

Holocaust returned to the public discourse during the years of the regained Independence. Initially this happened in the integral context of the confrontation between the victims of WWII against the crimes of the Soviet genocide. When the archives were opened, contexts of collaboration were also considered. Yet, ultimately, it was in dissonance against the experiences of the participants of the anti-Soviet resistance during the years of WWII. When more and more space was opening up for the narratives of the traumatic memory, more attention got devoted to the stories of the survivors which were competing against the memory of those exiled to Siberia. However, it should be noted that the exile from which the Jewish community also suffered remained in the margins of memory of the Jewish community, and the non-Jewish community alike. The traumatic experience of the Roma remained as a secret of the families of those suffering from sweeping extermination.

Narratives of Official Ideology construed for Jewish Mass Murder Sites

In the Soviet narrative, the narrative of the mass murder of Jews as 'peaceful Soviet citizens' was established as early as in 1942–1943. The nationality of the murdered ones was intentionally and expediently hushed. Consequently, the exceptionality of Holocaust was mitigated (Altman, 2002). In the public space, the sites of mass murder were referred to as "brotherly graves of innocent victims," graves of "Lithuanian residents," "hundreds of thousands of killed Lithuanian people," and, in exceptional cases, "Jewish, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian," or "graves of not only Jews, but also Russians, Lithuanians, Belarusians and other Soviet patriots" (Laukaitytė, 2012). The traumatic experience of WWII, the burden of losses, and the propaganda slogans disrupting the historical truth shaped for a long time the shared/general attitude to the 'Great Patriotic War' based on the ideological clichés of the Soviet – Communist Party style. The

memory of the war was completely subjugated to the needs of the Soviet Government.

The concept of 'Fascist bourgeois nationalists' which was established after the war deliberately relativized by thus naming not only the real collaborators with the Nazi and war criminals, but also members of the Lithuanian resistance, and also all individuals who were expressing some non-Soviet attitudes. This presupposed some collective responsibility inflicted upon anyone doubting the policy of the Soviet Government and the Communist ideology. It should not be forgotten that the development of the topic of Holocaust was undoubtedly affected by the establishment of the State of Israel and all the related "fight against cosmopolitanism" with the resulting anti-Zionist campaign, in the course of which, the Jewish anti-Fascist Committee was closed down. Even if it was ambiguous in its assessment, it was still the only institution representing the Holocaust survivors in the Soviet Union at the official level. In the course of that campaign, the Jewish Museum in Vilnius was closed down as well (Latvytė, 2017, 2018), and the activity of education and training/development institutions was banned. The memorial to the Jewish victims in Paneriai which had been constructed in 1948 with the funding by the survivors of Holocaust was rebuilt (Vitkus, 2019). It was later followed by the case of 'traitors physicians' followed by the case of 'currency speculators'. This influenced an even stricter framing of the discourse of Holocaust along with the stigmatization of the Jewish victims and all topics related with the history and culture of the Jews. The Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults at the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union was adhering to the policy of limitation. Thus it was controlling the limited religious activity of the Jewish community.

The break in the memory policy when attempting to create the direction of Lithuanian Socialism was observed in the 1960s when a search was initiated for topics which would be attractive, relevant and painful to the society, of course, without getting distanced from the

Great Narrative (this included the Pirčiupiai massacre, the cult of the 16th Rifle (Lithuanian) Division, and the highlighting of the role of the "defender of the people" against the anti-Soviet resistance). In pursuit of the impact in the West and as a reaction to the process of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel while also shaping the ideologically convenient discourse of 'the crimes of Hitlerism' by manipulating the body of documents (Vitkus, 2017), a series of booklets was published in the 1950s and 1960s which was dedicated to the anti-Nazi resistance in Kaunas Ghetto and also to the sites of the most prominent mass murders in Lithuania, including Paneriai, the Ninth Fort of Kaunas, where the information on the mass murder of Jews was still in limited supply, and it is presented in the context of 'bourgeois nationalists' exterminating 'peaceful Soviet citizens'. In an attempt to establish the narrative of the 'crimes of Hitlerism' even further via the memorial-monumental propaganda, the two sites of the most horrible mass murders in Lithuania – that is, Paneriai and the Ninth Fort of Kaunas – were set up as museums. Throughout Lithuania, a number of sites of the mass murder of Jews were market with monuments to the 'victims of Hitlerism/Fascism', which was as if the marking of the territory with official symbols and creating a niche of harmless spaces to provide some honoring to the victims by appealing to their social status while imposing an official 'arrest' on the right of the Jewish nation to mourning (Wóycicka, 2014). It should also be mentioned that, during this period, collections of documents were being printed in Lithuania which were describing the period of Nazi occupation. They were translated into English and intended to be distributed abroad (Documents Accuse, 1970). This was an attempt of triggering conflicts within the Lithuanian diaspora abroad with the objective to distract them from the anti-Soviet activity.

In the 1970s–1980s, attempts were being made to relate the memory of Holocaust with the escalation of the image of 'Zionists imperialists'. Supposedly, the western countries where the perception of the extermination of Jews as an exceptional category of genocide

was already shaping were seeking some financial interests in the East. By manipulating the memory of Holocaust, attempts were being made to discredit the efforts of repatriation of Jews as some elements who lack gratitude to the Soviet Government (Vitkus, 2017). The ideas of perestroika of Mikhail Gorbachev brought bright hopes to the Jews of Lithuania regarding repatriation, more liberality with their identity, as well as the issues of the promotion of heritage and culture in Lithuania. In 1988, the Initiative Group of the Support of the Jewish Culture in its cooperation with several state-representing memory institutions, in the Picture Gallery of M.K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art held the first exhibition (after the four decades of public silencing) introducing the Jewish heritage *Jewish Fine Arts in Lithuania* which was received with a great interest of the society. The meeting of the Society of Culture of Lithuanian Jews held in March 1989 was of great importance. It was there that the honorary chairman of Sąjūdis, Prof. Vytautas Landsbergis, acknowledged the participation of Lithuanians in the mass murder of Jews. In September 1989, under the initiative of the survivors of Holocaust and their family members, the State Jewish Museum was established (presently, Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History) whose initial exhibition called *Katastrofa* (en. Catastrophe) was devoted to the topic of Holocaust in Lithuania. This was the first time when someone officially spoke not only about the victims, but also about the collaboration of the locals.

To generalize, the narrative of the Soviet Government coded the mass murder of Jews as "the fight of the Soviet citizens against Fascism" while shaping an opinion based on the social status, i.e. the ones who were murdered were ordinary representatives of the working class and/or intellectuals who were fighting for their ideals which were the ideas of the Communist Party. It is the fight, and notably the fight of the social classes in the ghettos (the worker as the prisoner in the ghetto versus the capitalist as a representative of the administrative body of the ghetto) that served as an important element of the Soviet narrative in which the surviving Jews, according to the Soviet

ideology, were not represented as victims. Even though major efforts were being made, yet the narrative of the 'Great Patriotic War' indoctrinated by the Communist propaganda did not take root in Lithuania. In the collective memory, the imagery of the Independent Lithuania was still persisting, and they were in stark dissonance against "the new Soviet order." This was realized by the Soviet Government, and the period of Independence was being considered, but only with the objective that "the unfavorable Soviet representatives" would not gravitate into the dissident level. However, gradually, the generation born in the post-war times developed in the Soviet society which had the official discourse as the main source of the cognition of the traumatic experience. It shaped moral indifference and insensitivity towards Holocaust. A paradoxical situation developed: even though the society realized the extent of Holocaust (as the memory still retained live stories of the events of the war – which were being ideologically framed), but it deliberately chose to keep it to itself. Under the conditions of the totalitarian regime, this was as if the normalization of the challenge of the *dissonant memory*, however, certain schemes of this semiosic behavior transformed into the construction of the narratives of the period of independence.

Narratives of the Jewish Community Construed for Holocaust Sites

For the Jewish survivors of Holocaust in Soviet Lithuania, it was essential to institutionalize the losses of the members of the community, along with the cultural and spiritual losses, as, at the time, for them this was the only opportunity of establishing themselves as a community, legalizing their traumatic experience in the face of the policy of hushing everything up. A variety of forms of the negation of the fact of the mass extermination of Jews were manifested, and the 'Jewishness' of the victims was being erased by attributing them to the category of the 'peaceful Soviet citizens'. The Soviet Government was thus framing the traumatic discourse of the Holocaust experience

while mobilizing the society as the different communication of the experiences of WWII by different communities was not convenient for the occupant government which was seeking to justify its legitimacy in the country. The memory construed in the Soviet times was inevitably affected by the ideological normative. The past was perceived as a means serving to provide argumentation for the processes of modernization, industrialization and urbanization while also establishing the myth of the Red Army as the winning army of the 'Great Patriotic War'. For the political regime, it was essential to gain some stability by manipulating the memory of the community (Rüsen, 2007), therefore, for instance, by allowing to establish the Jewish Museum in Vilnius, the Soviet government was expected to benefit from it with the objectives of the indoctrination of the Soviet ideology.

The importance of the need for the museum for the Jewish community is indicated by the fact that it was operating even under the conditions of the ghetto. When merely a couple of weeks passed after the entry of the Red Army in Vilnius, the survivors of Holocaust undertook intensive activity related with its establishment: they were collecting the historiographical materials hidden throughout the entire territory of the ghetto, books, sculptures and documents, i.e. everything that made the background of the collection of the Jewish Museum in Vilnius (1944–1949) (Latvytė, 2017, 2018; Samavičius, 2000). Apart from the active preparation of the exhibition by the Museum curators intended to present the mass murder of the Jews, they were also taking care of tidying up the site of the mass murder of Paneriai and the erection of a monument to the Jewish victims, for which, funds were being raised. It was the Museum that care was taken about perpetuating the existence of the mass graveyards of the Jews killed in Kaunas, Panevėžys, Zarasai, Utena, etc., where monuments to the victims were being erected in commemoration of the Jewish victims even without obtaining a permit of the government (Atamukas, 1998), thus avoiding the Soviet censorship. A poster-style exhibition

featuring artifacts was being prepared. Its initial title was "On the Cruelties of German Occupants against Jews" which was later modified to "German Cruelties against the Jews of Lithuanian SSR" and ultimately rephrased into "Fascism Is Death." Still, this exhibition was never actually opened as it did not conform to the criteria of the Soviet discourse of 'peaceful Soviet citizens as victims'. In 1948–1949, the directives of the Soviet Government to follow the 'line of restriction' regarding the Jewish community were getting ever more radical forms (Laukaitytė, 2012). With the harsher attitude to the activity of the Museum, a dual practice developed: while the staff of the Museum were still collecting and safeguarding the exhibits, simultaneously, they were taking care of their transportation to a safer site. When intellectuals were leaving Lithuania, they were also attempting to smuggle out the exhibits of the Museum (Fishman, 2017).

The concept of overlapping memory is the optimal way of defining the efforts of the Jewish Museum in Vilnius to perpetuate in the society whatever was attempted to be erased. This unique memory institution was showing desperate effort to survive under the conditions of the dictate of a totalitarian regime. The topic of Holocaust as the main axis of the Museum defined as the core identity of the survivors could not be neutralized when the narrative of the exhibitions was forcefully adapted to follow the Soviet canon of the fight between the social classes or the cliché of the Red Army as the winner of the 'Great Patriotic War'. Such integration also failed when the Five-year Plans were included in the exhibitions. The speaking of the Museum on behalf of the community, the publicizing of Holocaust and the preservation of the Jewish tradition of *Zakhor* (en. Remember) was in sharp contrast against the newly created Grand Soviet narrative. To some extent, it even seemed dangerous, or, at least, causing anxiety. Even in the midst of the anti-Semitic campaign in June 1949, when the Jewish Museum in Vilnius was closed, attempts were being made to neutralize the collections of the Judaica and Holocaust accumulated at

the Museum by dispersing them across a variety of Lithuanian museums, archives and libraries. The Soviet Government feared that the sites uniting the shared memory, including the Jewish Museum, would turn into sites mobilizing the Jewish population. Thus an effort was being taken to make the tony Jewish community and its memory non-existent (Laukaitytė, 2012). In the public culture of memory, it was hardly ever introduced during the four subsequent decades of the 20th century. However, within the community, by sharing memories, listening to them, and accepting them, the so-called counter-idea of the 'kitchen communities' (Boym, 2001) was being maintained as a counterweight to the hegemonic narrative. Yet, in the course of time, it became fragmented, neutralized by the Soviet ideology, and it was hushing up a number of things while attempting to overcome its traumatic experience. It was only through the symbols that it was striving to preserve the aspects of historical value. It was only on 6 September 1989 that the Lithuanian State Jewish Museum was recreated (it is currently named *Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History*). It has been continuing with the postwar traditions of the Jewish Museum: in 1991, it opened the first (and, for a long time, the only) Holocaust exhibition *Katastrofa* (en. Catastrophe) which was prepared on the background of an exhibition of the postwar Jewish Museum in Vilnius. Also, the Museum organized the tidying activity of the sites of the mass murder of Jews and developed a project of naming the Jewish victims. The concept of the postwar Museum in Vilnius was preserved in 2010 when the Holocaust exhibition was updated.

Communication Aspects of Holocaust Memorial Sites: Holocaust Site as Location of a Crime

The sites of the mass murder of Jews is a consequence of diligently planned and documented mass extermination of Jews and Roma initiated by Nazis and implemented with the involvement of the local collaborators. More than 80 percent of the Jewish victims in Lithuania

were simply executed by a firing squad in the nearest forest. That is, the murdering took place in locations which were topographically, culturally and socially a small and closed space. In other words, it was plainly evident to everyone. It should be noted that not only the extent of the mass murder of Jews, its course and consequences, but also the very definition of the mass murder sites at the international level still raises multiple discussions at the international level, which demonstrates the trends of the presence of overlapping narratives.

The mass murder of Jews in Lithuania from 1941 to 1944 was being supervised by the chief officer of the police of occupied Lithuania (*SS und Polizeiführer Litauen*), and they were mostly being implemented by the Operative battalions No. 2 and No. 3 of the German Security Police together with SD who were being assisted with the headquarters of the Police of Lithuania in Kaunas, local police offices, members of German and Lithuanian police battalions and local volunteers. In total, there are 227 sites of the mass murder of Jews in Lithuania where Nazis and local collaborators executed from 200,000 to 206,000 Jews from July 1941 to July 1944, of whom, there were ca. 190,000 Lithuanian Jews, from 8,000 to 10,000 Jews who had escaped from Poland, nearly 5,000 Jews from Austria and Germany, and 878 Jews from France (Bubnys, 2021; Dieckmann, Sužiedėlis, 2006). The victims murdered in the sites of the mass murder of Jews also included some Roma. Prior to WWII, the Lithuanian population of the Roma could be estimated at 1,500, of whom, at least one third were murdered during the years of Nazi occupation (Toleikis, 2005). Four main stages of the extermination of Jews can be singled out in Lithuania:

1. Prosecution and murder of Jews. It started with spontaneous attacks and, in some locations, even pogroms, during the very first days of the entry of Nazis in Lithuania, i.e. 22–23 June 1941 and continued until mid-July. During this period, Jews were murdered in at least 95 sites.

2. Establishment of ghettos and mass extermination of Jews. This was the most intensive period of killing which covered in later part of 1941

and finished in late November of the same year. During this period, Jews were murdered in at least 193 sites.

3. Period of 'stabilization' in the ghettos. It started in December 1941 and went on until March 1943. During that period, four ghettos in Lithuania were still functioning – those of Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and Švenčionys. In the 'provincial' Lithuania, the Jewish communities had already been exterminated. Although the mass murdering of Jews was still going on, it did not reach the previous intensity. The Jews incarcerated in the ghettos were being exploited in forced labor activity. During this period, Jews were murdered in 3 sites.

4. Liquidation of the ghettos. This is the period from April 1943 to early July 1944. During this period, Jews were murdered in 3 sites.

The most intensive killings were taking place during the first and second periods when 95 percent of the Jews of Lithuania were exterminated, mostly in the provincial areas (Dickmann, Sužiedėlis, 2006). Therefore, the absolute majority of the mass murder sites were established particularly during those two periods.

The definition of the mass murder of Jews in Eastern Europe and the definition of a mass grave are still being fiercely discussed internationally (Klinker, Kather, 2023). Most Jews in Eastern Europe were mass-murdered within the territories in which they were residing, usually, in the nearest forest, by the river or lake, or in some other remote place. In somewhat less common cases, Jews were being exterminated in ancient Jewish graveyards. Execution was usually implemented by shooting; therefore, this method has been named as *Holocaust by Bullets* (Desbois, 2008).

Archeologists are striving to define a site of mass murder by the type of the site, the specificity the layout of the bodies and the use of some special means intended to conceal the murderous event (Pohl, 2015; Skinner, 1989; Mant, 1987; Schmitt, 2002; Jaeger, 2013). The *Bank of*

Terms of the Republic of Lithuania does not provide a definition of a site of mass execution, but it suggests the term of the *mass brotherly graveyard* which indicates that it is "A site of collective burial of soldiers perishing in a battle, or dying from wounds, killed in devastating misfortunes. Each brotherly grave has its own number, date of burial, and is marked in a topographic map" (LRTB – The Bank of Terms of the Republic of Lithuania). It is likely that this definition was adapted from a term which became widespread in the Soviet Union during the early stage of WWII in an effort to employ the facts of the mass murder of Jews for political and propaganda purposes while discrediting Holocaust and the Jewish victims. This example indicates how overlapping narratives can function in the contemporary society.

Holocaust Site as (a) Public Space

A Holocaust site is framed in the context of the Communication as Practice theory (Craig, 2006) through which an assumption can be made that the public memory of Holocaust is not some political decision achieved by the society under the conditions of consensus, but rather a lengthy process of the shaping of the culture of Holocaust remembrance. It is notable that the sites of material (tangible) memory conform to the political objectives of the State, whereas, looking from the perspective of the communication of Holocaust memorial sites, in contemporary Lithuania these sites are still being presented as a part of the process of memory formation (Rimaitė, 2019). Even though the memory of Holocaust has been elevated to the level of public memory – and this should provide an opportunity to discuss its content – however, the grievances of the past along with the complex process of overcoming the trauma are maintaining the tension. Therefore, Holocaust sites still remain only a fragmented part of the public memory.

In the context of the communication action theory, a Holocaust memorial site is perceived as (a) symbolic and social space where,

through communication, the public opinion is formed while construing and communicating various narratives (Habermas, 1992). A sense-making and consistent set of actions, or, otherwise, practices which mobilize and involve people united by shared culture, history, memory, hobbies, or attitudes provides the nature of communication for an action of memory (Craig, 2006). The bonds developed by the communities sharing experiences and their ability to understand each other through rituals, symbols, language and visualization generate meanings and help to publicize sites by filling the communicative field with content (Nora, 1995; Čepaitienė, 2014). A typology of the actors of the public memory of space can be singled out (Bernhard, Kubik, 2014):

1. Mnemonic warriors who support a single historical truth as the foundation of social and political life. They emphasize the distinction between, in their opinion, the correct and incorrect historical events (e.g. the generators and supporters of the central idea of a semiosphere).

2. Mnemonic pluralists who acknowledge the dialogue-based convivium of different memories in the society along with the right of different communities to the interpretations of their own past (e.g. they are more distant from the central idea, and therefore they are able to see and perceive the communication of another semiosphere).

3. Mnemonic abnegators renouncers who purposefully select the strategies of forgetting due to various different direct and indirect traumatic experiences while avoiding active participation in the politics of memory (e.g. these are individuals who have directly experienced or taken over traumatic events).

4. Mnemonic prospectives who use populist reference to the mistakes that have already been made. They assemble everyone for historical resistance and the restitution of justice without actually having any guidelines for that or any criteria for the implementation of novel

decisions (e.g. these are promoters of the social networks memory, but they are not activists of a practice).

Their mutual interaction while employing different strategies and seeking to establish a memory narrative which is convenient to them forms memory practices which are related with some historical event, i.e. memory programs (mnemonic regimes) (Bernhard, Kubik, 2014):

- A program of fractured memory is created when in debates regarding some memory-related issue some memory fighter (or a few of them) starts his/her/their activity, and an opposition ensues between different narratives of memory (e.g. memory practices of the groups of semi-dialogue narratives, such as events commemorating the Genocide Day of the Roma community).
- A program of pillarized memory is predominant when memory actors have different interpretations of an event from the past, however, they accept them with tolerance, and no debates or confrontations are taking place regarding some specific question or issue of memory (e.g. practices-events of the dialogue narrative memory groups, such as *Molėtų maršas* (en. The March of Molėtai) or *Vardai* (en. Names)).
- A program of unified memory is formed in such a case when there is a predominant interpretation of some past event(s) in the country which is universally acknowledged (e.g. these are the memory practices of the memory of non-dialogue narratives, such as the ritualized ceremonies of the State).

It is notable that a Holocaust site as a public space is framed by the narratives construed by the social, political and cultural reality and the different strategies of communication of the participants of the public space. People assess the events of the past on the grounds of their relationships with the realities of their present times, whereas the personal experiences, along with the experiences inherited from the earlier generations along with the narratives they communicate

highlight different features of the memory agents and the field of realities which they presume to exist. A Holocaust site is re-accomplished by communicating different memory strategies. It evolves while creating a conflicting unity of narratives in which, in the long term, spaces of creolization can be discovered and named.

A Holocaust Site as Expression of Memory

In the historical memory of Lithuania, Holocaust has been established as a narrative of some competing traumatic experience which, both in the public and private space of communication, is reflected as a factor deconstructing the collective identity. Therefore, it is not surprising that such an attitude incites to adhere (regarding the presently discussed topic) a somewhat reserved, and sometimes even defensive, position. The (re)constructed collective identity of a State is based on the background of the martyrological memory of the repressions of the Soviet regime while highlighting the image of Lithuanians as the main victims of a totalitarian regime (Tismaneuanu, 1998). Therefore, Holocaust, despite being lumped together alongside this consolidating martyrological narrative, is still in dissonance with the latter.

When a site is perceived from the perspective of perpetuation, several overlapping periods of Holocaust as a memory site can be singled out:

1. The period of marking (1941–1944). Even though, during the years of Nazi occupation, the periodical mass media of the country was promoting the anti-Semitic rhetoric with the encouragement to get rid of the Jews and to free oneself from them, however, the Nazi propaganda mass media of Lithuania was silent about the sites of the mass murdering of the Jews despite these growing rapidly in number. Several brief notes appeared in the summer and autumn of 1941 on the establishment of Jewish ghettos in Lithuania. The mass media of the Red Army was writing about the mass murdering of the local population (of whom, the vast majority of the victims were Jewish) based on the testimonies of the neighbors of the victims. Information

on the state of Lithuanian Jews in the Nazi-occupied Lithuania, their imprisonment in ghettos and mass extermination since the very beginning of the war was publicized by the international news agency *Jewish Telegraph Agency*. Even though the Lithuanian historiography has no hints about the messages of the Lithuanian anti-Nazi underground mass media on the killing of Jews, however, despite the very small extent, such information was being announced. It was the newspaper *Laisvės kovotojas* (en. The Fighter for Freedom) of the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters Union than briefly mentioned Nazi crimes, execution of Jews and the crimes hidden in the Ninth Fort of Kaunas in its issue of 5 December 1943.

The first attempt to register the data of the sites of murdering Jews within the administrative territory of the Lithuanian General District was the correspondence of the self-government institutions which took place from 1941 to the autumn of 1942. It discussed the issues of tidying, upkeep and the general attitude to the sites of extermination which were named as wartime graves, war victim and Jewish victim graves, or mass graves. The Supreme Service of Hygiene and the supreme doctors of the districts were responsible for ensuring the sanitary state of the mass murdering sites. The correspondence between the local institutions showed that the municipalities were obliged not only to mark the borderlines of the mass killing areas, but also to label the sites. There were cases when attempts were made to neutralize the sites of mass killing, that is, to plant something, to plow the area, or to grow trees there.

2. The period of the (non-)existent community (1944–1962). When the Soviet Union was involved in the work of rebuilding the country, the local Soviet government was forming itself in Lithuania. It adopted a neutral stance regarding the issue of the Jews. With the efforts of the survivors, the Jewish Museum was founded in Vilnius. The sites of the mass killing of Jews were being registered and marked with memory signs. The State of Israel was founded in 1948. Within a short

timeframe, the increasing solidarity among the Jews started causing anxiety to the Stalinist regime as this was in opposition to the Soviet doctrine. The objective of the Stalinist anti-Semitic campaign was to make the Jewish community non-existent by restricting the religious and cultural life of the community, ignoring and destroying its heritage artifacts. The stereotypes which started flourishing during the anti-Semitic campaign did not disappear even after the death of Stalin. The inscriptions on monuments about the Jewish victims were being replaced even in the brotherly graves with the new versions communicating the losses of the peaceful Soviet citizens, and the inscriptions in Yiddish were replaced with Russian texts. The phenomenon of Holocaust was hidden under the umbrella numbers of the victims of WWII, and the sites of Holocaust became institutionalized. They were communicating the narrative of the heroic and liberating Red Army formed by the Soviet propaganda which justified the casualties among the local population and the legitimacy of the doctrines promoted by the Soviet ideology. Even during the years of the relatively calmer 'thawing' period of Khrushchev, the Soviet Government was still demonstrating the intolerance to the memory of Holocaust by destroying objects of the Jewish heritage, but the memorial objects, i.e. the sites of mass murder which were communicating the cultural memory became a convenient means for the promotion of the ideology of Communism. In the light of the policy of restriction, it was morally necessary for the Jews to gather at least once per year at the sites of the murdering. The Soviet security forces were not denying the right to visit, but they were closely following that the rituals of honoring the victims of Holocaust would not transgress the allowed limits. Memory became an important stimulus for the new generation of Jewish writers using the Lithuanian and Russian languages. The politics of 'thawing' was testified by the publication of the memories of the ghetto partisans, although they did not highlight the extent and exceptionality of Holocaust. Even though the killing of Jews did not start to be covered by the curriculum of the Lithuanian education system, however, doubtlessly, the memory of

Holocaust remained for decades in the circles of the survivors, their family members and the nearest circle of relatives and friends, as well as in the public discourse promoted in Yiddish and Hebrew.

3. The period of transformation (1962–1988). The trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 drew attention to the assumptions pertaining to Holocaust and the process as such which was named as a crime against the Jewish nation. The Soviet propaganda benefited from it by shaping the narrative of the 'crimes of Hitlerism'. It employed this event for the strengthening of the process of memorialization. The victory in the Six-Day War incited the patriotic feelings and nationalist aspirations of the Jews. The Soviet Government feared that it would not incite repatriation and/or acquire manifestations of a dissident movement, and therefore undertook all possible means to control the situation while also attempting to raise conflicts between the Lithuanian and Jewish Diasporas abroad. In the mass media of the 1960s, articles appeared about the murdering of the peaceful Lithuanian population by the Nazis and the collaborating local bourgeois nationalists, and tenders/competitions were initiated for the ordering/tidying up the memorial sites. On top of that, exhumations in several mass murder sites were performed which were presented to the society only to the extent it was beneficial to supporting the official narrative and expressing gratitude to the Red Army.

4. The period of rethinking (1988–presently). The impact of the ideas of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* encouraged the articulation of the articulation of the Holocaust memory. Prior to the late 1980s, the trend of the revival of the Holocaust memory via fiction had already been observed. The Western European countries observed a shift in the period of 1980 to 1990 regarding the direction of the collective memory as it was redirected from the future to the past. This led to the increased interest of the society to get to know the historical traumas, and the past became an important part of framing the identity (Assmann, 2006). In the Lithuanian society, the historical memory on

the Interwar Lithuania started to be actualized, along with the memories of the Lithuanian guerilla anti-Soviet movement, Soviet exile, and Nazi and Soviet crimes. This period is related with the initiation of the novel factual research run by *Sąjūdis* and the Lithuanian Council for Culture under the jurisdiction of *Sąjūdis*, the activity of the Society of Culture of the Lithuanian Jews which was encouraging the process of de-ideologization of the difficult heritage. It was not easy to introduce the facts of Holocaust to the society and to discuss the personal traumatic experiences as the Soviet meta-code of the 'victims of Fascism' which was framing the sites of Holocaust was quite strongly rooted in the society. Today, the concept of Holocaust as a site-related memory phenomenon has evolved into a noticeable phenomenon of the culture of remembrance. The historiography of Holocaust has evolved into an integral part of the formation of the Holocaust memory culture. The principle that the Holocaust memory culture has to be grounded on the correct, i.e. fact-grounded but 'not cleansed', history has been declared multiple times.

2. Theoretical Background and Methodology of the Research of the Communication of Holocaust Sites in Lithuania: Application of the Theory of Semiosphere by Lotman and the Theory of Overlapping Narratives for the Research of the Communication of Holocaust Sites

The concept of semiosphere as developed by Yuri Lotman (2004) is a synchronous global structure of the systemic nature undergoing evolution in time and space whose main functions are related with certain memory mechanisms preserving and communicating elements of the past and the present and (re)creating information. It could be stated that this structure is the state-official narrative and the community/alternative narrative which are filled with various different groups of the semiotic nature (structures, signs) which are interacting in a variety of ways in the semiosic behavior and which may have points of creolization (interaction). The harmony of

interaction is possible only in a certain semiotic continuum filled with semiotic formations of various types and various organizational levels. The semiosphere as an all-embracing semiotic system integrates all possible signs, texts, interpretations, symbols, information, knowledge and their representations as well as the mutual relationships of all the presently listed entities and the forming semiotic phenomena of the systemic nature. The sense of semiosphere can only be perceived upon assessing the interrelation of the network nature of all of its elements, as well as the relationship between the elements and the entirety at the systemic level. Within the internal space of semiosis, there is the competition between the pushing and pulling forces, and intensive nuclei of semiosis are singled out in opposition to the periphery. Thus, resonant and dissonant zones are manifested. Such movements and reactions turn into the informational energy of an idea where the difference and similarity do not reject each other, but rather create a conflicting unity which promotes the transfer of the information which one has in possession, along with the creation of new texts and the memory capable of safeguarding and recreating information.

The theory of the overlapping narratives is based on the theoretical paradigm of communication and information sciences. It also emphasizes the importance of narratives as some peculiar structures of framing. The concept of semiospheres by Lotman helps to reveal the overlapping of narratives under the conditions of the Nazi occupation and the Soviet totalitarianism as well as during the period of independence as long as we bear in mind that overlapping is the layering of memory and narratives while preserving the dominants of the memory without stifling the previous values while also creating added values with the objective to raise and sustain the empathy of the society for the traumatic experiences and the historically hard storylines of the past (Hoheisel, Knitz, 2017, Boym, 2001).

The communicative theoretical attitude in this thesis is also supplemented with the Theory of Communication as Practice by

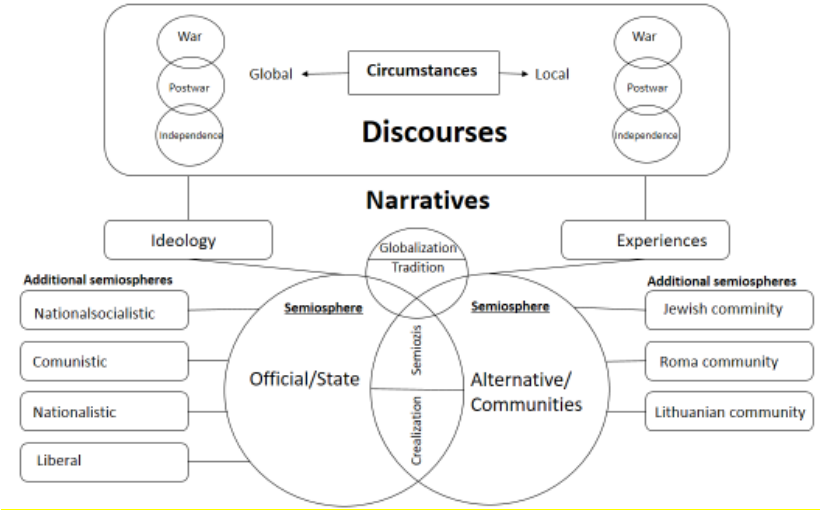
Robert T. Craig which emphasizes consistent, mobilizing inclusive and sense-making ideas with the subsequent actions of humans connected by the shared culture, memory, history or hobby as an opportunity for a dialogue. For that, historical conceptual contexts are brought to serve (Nora, 1998; Rüsen, 2007). They allow defining and analyzing certain narratives functioning within a community within the space of its memory.

By applying the theory of semiosphere for the sense-making of the traumatic experience in the context of the communication of Holocaust sites, we could benefit from the assumption regarding the continuity of cultural processes allowing to perceive the past as experience and the present as two integral parts which are connected and represent the same continuum which is not fragmented in space and time. Yet, this is not an opposition between the past and the present as if, supposedly, two mutually negating factors, but it is rather an interaction of the systemic and mutual impact nature of (the) two structures of a semiosphere or their overlapping. Not only the traumatic experience and its sense-making, but also the semiospheres communicating these experiences may be perceived as homogenous and systemic structures which depend on a certain culture or context, are open, permanently changing and progressing. They interact (manage to establish and share a dialogue) with other semiotic structures, such as other sciences or other traditions of sense-making along with the fragments of the semiotic structures (cultures) of the past still functioning in that particular semiosphere.

Explanation of the Model of Theoretical Research

On the grounds of the above discussed theoretical assumptions, a theoretical model of the dissertation research was developed which serves to generalize and visualize the theoretical attitude employed in the thesis.

Figure 1. Theoretical model of the research



Source: developed by the author

The model of the theoretical research consists of narratives and discourses.

Narratives in this thesis are perceived as an evolving semantic structure which has been shaped out of experience, knowledge, associations, ideological implications, the creation of the participating narratives, and the support and correction taking place in the processes. They are related with semiospheres which may have shared points with ideologies and experiences. Two semiospheres are singled out: the official/state, and the unofficial/community. The semiosphere of the state is defined as an entirety of signs shaped and framed by the political ideology. Meanwhile, the alternative (community) semiosphere is perceived as a space created by the meanings of experiences. In the context of the research, three main semiospheres contributing to the main semiosphere of the communities were singled out – those of the Jews, Roma and Lithuanians. Also, four semiospheres supplemented the state semiosphere – these are the

National Socialist, Communist, nationalist and liberal semiospheres. The greater semiospheres are interacting through creolization and semiosis. The semiosic behavior is defined as the coexistence of semiospheres which are perceived through the action of different narratives on a single field of action of conflicting unity serving to analyze the narratives through the possibility of opening up a dialogue in the context of the ideas of globalism and localism. Creolization is perceived as an opportunity of taking (over) and (re)creating the meanings of the dialogue-based convivium created by different narratives. An important precondition for the creation of the space of creolization is the understanding why the other semiosphere is communicating in particularly that way, why it has different practices, uses different symbols and, possibly, in some aspects, repeats certain mechanisms of operation of that other semiosphere. All semiospheres are inevitably affected by the ideas and traditions of globalization.

Discourses are perceived in this thesis as a way of expression of a certain context framed by the meanings of the ideas, on the grounds of which, the discourse subjects are operating thus forming and manifesting identity which may be related not only with the personal but also with the social environment as well as with the capacity of the power to impact the social, political and cultural contexts. For instance, the discourse of the Holocaust memorial sites acts not only in the sense of heritage with the interaction between the site and the society, but also by framing the culture of memory and the relationship of different communities by passing over and representing the cultural identity of the society. Discourses differ from narratives regarding the structuralist aspect. A discourse is a process of structuration where a narrative is rendered. Discourses are impacted by both global (e.g. WWII, Holocaust) and local circumstances (Holocaust by Bullets, the collaboration of the local population during the years of the Nazi occupation), whereas the connection with narratives is establishes through ideologies and experiences.

In the course of this research, three main discourses were singled out which were affecting the formation of the narratives of Holocaust memorial sites:

1. The discourse of the wartime years: 'The Final Solution of the Jewish Question'. The mass extermination of the Jews, differently from the other genocides was being documented. This is shown by the surviving documents of not only the Nazis but also of the local administration covering the planning and the implementation of the process, brief messages on the committed crimes in the wartime mass media not only in Europe, but also in the United States of America. The Jewish tradition is interwoven with the written tradition; therefore, the victims were striving to leave as many records as possible documenting the events of the time and their personal experiences. Nazis were implementing the total anonymization of the extermination of the doomed people. They were seeking to destroy the identity of the personalities of the victims by physical means (the identification of the prisoners by number, burning the bodies of the victims, hiding the traces of the crimes, etc.) and by the discourse attitude (the victims were named by numbers, the exhumed bodies of the murdered people were called shapes, the mass murder of Jews was referred to as the resolution of the Jewish issue, etc.). The sites of mass murdering were called in the wartime discourse as bases (e.g. Paneriai), forts (the Fourth, Seventh and the Ninth Forts of Kaunas), or simply a hole, a forest, a ditch, a trench, etc. This way, the Jewish community was killed together with the memory of it.

2. The postwar discourse: 'The extermination of the peaceful Soviet citizens'. The second Soviet occupation and the evaluation of the mass murder sites of the Jews by the occupation government through the prism of 'Soviet citizens' as victims of the 'Great Patriotic War' legitimized the rightfulness of the occupation and shifted all the blame exceptionally to the Germans. This was suitable for all the countries occupied by Germans as it did not escalate the issue of the historical,

legal or moral responsibility for the participation in Holocaust (Stasiulis, 2017, 102). Archive materials were not directly accessible, and they reached the society only through the publication of anthologies of documents which were censored by the Soviet government where the sites of the mass murdering of Jews and the experiences of the survivors were only given minor and fragmentary attention just because the experience of a survivor was deemed not to be objective knowledge; therefore, it remained only in the private space and overlapped with the official discourse when appealing to the right of the exterminated community to attend the sites of the crime as cemeteries where the slaughtered relatives are mourned. The perception of Holocaust in the early postwar period was heavily affected by the trials of Nazis after WWII which incited the societies of Europe to direct their glances to the victims and gradually enabled the testimony of serving as one of the key sources of the memory of Holocaust experiences. On top of that, this process transferred the naming of the criminals from the centralized to the personalized level, thereby shifting attention also to the collaborators during the years of WWII, witnesses, and the motifs of behavior.

It should be mentioned that, after the war had ended, Holocaust was universalized in the Western Europe, and the crimes of the Nazis against humanity were being emphasized. They had to serve as a lesson to the mankind as an event which should never repeat in the history of the mankind anymore. The establishment of the State of the Jews was as if some kind of grounding of a certain postwar consciousness in the United Nations, and thus it entered the international discourse. The process of the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the TV mini-series *Holocaust: the Story of the Family Weiss* (USA, 1978), and the 9-hour-long documentary *Shoah* by Claude Lanzmann of 1985 heavily impacted the policy of the memory of Holocaust and its rhetoric in the West. These changes should have also been considered by the Soviet Union by softening its discourse regarding the sites of remembrance of the Holocaust memorial sites and by

replacing the policy of restriction with reserved tolerance in the framework of the practices of the surviving members of the community.

3. The discourse of the years of independence: 'Never again'. The collapse of the Soviet Union marks the shift of the discourse from the tragedy of 'Soviet citizens' to a catastrophe of Jews. When the archives were opened, attention from the Nazi criminals was turned towards the local accomplices and the participants of the mass murdering of Jews in the Eastern Europe, including Lithuania. Therefore, during the early period of independence, the research was mostly of the peripherized nature. They allowed identifying the course of the event, localizing new sites, naming the victims and criminals, and bringing to the limelight the issue of the property of the murdered Jews. The sites of the mass murdering of the Jews were granted more attention as they were cared about by the joint effort of the state institutions, Jewish communities, and foreign partners. Gradually, the large majority of the sites were given the status of an object guarded by the State. Under the initiative of the Jewish community, inscriptions on the monuments were replaced, new monuments were built to name the victims and to refer to the participation of the local collaborators in the murdering. When Lithuania became a member of the European Union, it was invited to the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance* (IHRA) which unites governments and specialists in order to strengthen, support and promote education on Holocaust and its memory worldwide, to conduct research, and to implement the commitment of the Stockholm Declaration of 2000 and the Ministerial Declaration of 2020 (IHRA, 2021). The activity on the pan-European context of the preservation of the Holocaust memory, education and research promotion served as a certain breakthrough in the shift of the discourse. Although the Lithuanian public discourse regarding the participation of some Lithuanians in Holocaust, who should be responsible for that, and what the responsibility should be still remains one of the hot topics dividing the society into fractions.

However, the manifestations of latent anti-Semitism at the state level in Lithuania are evidently not tolerated.

Presentation of the Research Methodology and the Process of Data Collection

No previous research has been conducted in Lithuania regarding the communication of Holocaust memorial sites. However, research has been performed on the sites of traumatic heritage as a way of promoting the dark tourism, along with the research on political repressions and the investigation of the consequences of the psychological trauma of the Holocaust survivors along with the research on the actualization on the transfer of the family memory, or the impact of traumatic experiences on the alteration of personality. The authors of the presently listed researches in their attempts to deliver the most detailed research results possible, employed scholarly literature, and conducted qualitative and quantitative surveys of the informants. There is lack of research as to how the different narratives frame Holocaust memorial sites and what is the impact of Holocaust memorial sites on the society? The present research considered the previous research on the experience and memory, its transfer and actualization in the outline of the aim of the research, its objectives, the questions and the sample of the research.

When the research methodology was being devised, the research conducted by l. Vervečkienė (2022) was employed which presented the empirical data gathered in 2018–2020 on the research of the case of Lithuania regarding the relationship between the mnemonic socialization with the proximate – but not experienced – past, along with the aspects of the transfer of memory of the complex former regimes, the function of the intermediaries of memory and the moments of shaping the relationship with the collective memory. The research also employed the data presented in 2014 in the monograph by D. Leinartė, L. Žilinskienė, S. Kraniauskienė, I. Šutinienė and I. Gečienė on the data of analysis of the memory presentation in the life

stories about the Soviet period collected in 2010–2011 which transferred the personal experience in the space of collective memory. The research methodology was also expanded by the monograph of R. Reches (2020) exploring the impact of the socium on the reflection of the experiences of Holocaust survivors.

In the context of the analysis of the content of documents and historiography analysis, a Holocaust memorial site as an object of communication is named as a process which shares a common denominator of traumatic experiences (the past) whose interaction in the space of Holocaust memory (the present) overlaps depending on the different intentions of the memory communication of the communities and its need(s) and evolves by framing a Holocaust site. The scheme of frames is perceived as a tool which connects the individual interpretation with the knowledge of the community. The research of the scheme of frames allows perceiving the translation of academic texts, the creation of non-professional knowledge and texts and their repeated use in the non-professional practice of the community. Meanwhile, the overlapping narratives communicated by various different semiospheres operating in the reality and framing Holocaust memorial sites are best revealed with interviews.

The empirical research applied the design of qualitative research. The research was conducted in two stages: the first stage included the collection of empirical data, whereas the second stage involved the analysis of empirical data.

Empirical data and its collection

The research employed two bodies of empirical data:

1. Documents;

2. Interviews.

The data necessary for the research was mined in several main massifs of documents which can be divided into the following groups: official

documents stored in archives, published official documents, publications of periodicals, memories, diaries.

The documents were being gathered in 2016–2020 in the memory institutions in Lithuania, Israel, the United States of America and Germany. The research mostly used the documents stored in:

Lithuanian State Central Archives (further referred to as LCVA);

Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art (further referred to as LLMA);

Lithuanian Special Archives (further referred to as LYA);

Archive of the International Institute for the Holocaust Research of Yad Vashem (further referred to as YV);

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive (further referred to as USHMM);

Archive of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (further referred to as YIVO);

The non-catalogued collection of the Department of Judaica Research of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (further referred to as LNMB JTS);

The Manuscript Department of the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (further referred to as LMAVB RS);

Vilnius Regional State Archive;

Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History collections;

Ukmergė Local History Museum collections;

Archive of the Institute of Contemporary History (Munich) (further referred to as IfZ).

The sources which were deemed to be important for the research were those that are related with the origin of the sites of the mass murder of the Jews, the upkeep of the sites, and the attitude to these sites, the

postwar anti-Semitic policy of the State and the efforts of the Jewish community to make sense of the traumatic experiences and to introduce them to the society during various periods in history in a variety of ways.

This thesis also employs a number of publicized diaries and memories as an important tool of the reconstruction of the war and postwar periods (Kruk, 2004; Sakowicz, 2012; Šuras, 1997; Ginaitė-Rubinsonienė, 1999, Margolis, 2006, Korczak, 1977). Also, the publications in the mass media during the Nazi and the Soviet occupations were also considered. The opportunity to get acquainted with the mass media of the Red Army was provided by the YV Archive Ilya Ehrenburg collection fund P.21. The diaries of the Nazi occupation government *Wilnaer Zeitung* and *Kauener Zeitung* allowed naming the trends of the wartime discourse more precisely. The copies and excerpts of the Jewish Telegraph agency were sourced from the IfZ Institute in Munich archive (Wiener Library Press Cuttings, IfZ Archiv, MZA 1/158, 3 E3: Baltic Countries) and gave an opportunity to determine the narratives of the sites of the mass extermination of the Jews the way they were being communicated in the United States of America.

We can generalize by stating that even though the official Soviet Government was writing about the sites of mass murder in the territory of the Soviet Union as early as during the initial months of the war taking place within its territory, archive documentation testifies that this work was still being continued throughout the entire period of the Nazi occupation, and even after its termination. However, it should be noted that an absurd situation developed regarding the mass murdering of the Jews because the Jewish victims, as a group of the society experiencing total extermination, was only named fragmentarily. In the ‘best-case scenario’, it was only stated that the Jews, as well as all other ‘peaceful Soviet citizens’, experienced the extent of the mass killings organized by the Nazis. Official documents prominently

reflect notably this trend. When analyzing archive documentation, it can be noted that the local government was making attempts (as dictated by the local circumstances) to appease the global ideological discourse and to remain moderate regarding the parallel (although framed by the ideology) alternative discourse construed through experiences. It is only possible to reveal these overlappings with the contribution of the extensive archival materials sourced not only in Lithuania but also abroad.

In the second stage of the research, interviews were conducted with the objective to establish how the overlapping narratives are functioning not only at the document level, but also at the practical level of the live memory and how these two levels get in touch with each other to check whether they are dissonant or they resonate with the official narrative or with each other in different communities.

The method of the research interview is "a conversation between two individuals initiated by the researcher (in this case, the conversation is perceived as the interview technique, and therefore it should not be considered a separate method of research) whose objective is to gather the required information for the objectives of the research" (Kardelis, 2016, 255). This is a method which, despite raising "a number of psychological subtleties related with various forms of communication and the ability of the researcher to listen to the research subject," allows revealing the attitudes of the respondents and interpret the data without assessing the correctness and representativeness of the data.

For the implementation of the research, an interview of the directional type was selected with the intention to note the answers of the respondent on the situation which is known to both interlocutors even before the interview. The answers provided by the respondent allow the researcher to decide whether the raised hypothesis has been confirmed or not (Kardelis, 2016). The qualitative attitude of the interview leads to perceiving the interview as an interpersonal experience but not as a contract. It thus allows perceiving and

interpreting the internal world of the interviewees and provides an opportunity to focus on specific issues without getting distanced from the ultimate objective. The reliability of the method is ensured by the qualification of the interviewer, his/her communication skills, the willingness to communicate with the interviewees and the sincerity of the interviewees when answering the questions. Objectivity may also be preserved by the adherence to the regulated requirements; therefore, such a research requires preparation. The researcher must be acquainted with the field of activity of the respondents, and it is even better if the researcher knows the interviewees in person. Before conducting the interviews, three criteria of importance to the researcher were considered: *trust* (friendship, seeking a shared objective, overcoming the personal ego), *inquisitiveness* (pursuit of knowledge and willingness to hear the opinions of others, wish to advance), and *integrity* (making no impact, absence of hindrances for the interviewees to express their opinion). Therefore, such individuals were selected as the respondents whom the author of the thesis has known in person since 1999 and with whom she is related in professional and public/social terms. This is what helped to ensure the reliability of the interviews by decreasing all possible margins of error which may stem from the personality of the interviewee and due to some fault of the interviewer as it is fundamental to avoid the domination of the opinion of the researcher and/or the researcher's attitude to the investigated phenomena and to escape the trap of obtaining the desired answers conforming to the hypothesis or the willingness of the respondent to appeal to the researcher, religious beliefs, ethnic differences, etc. The margin of error was also mitigated by the clearly and explicitly outlined questions by adhering to the regulation so that the respondent understands clearly the topic of the discussion.

When construing the questionnaire of the interview, the theoretical part of the research served as the background. The research of other authors discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis was also

considered. In the course of the interview, the type of the questions with the answers unlimited either in form or in content was selected, and the respondent had a variety of options when answering a specific question. The "advantages of such questions are as follows: they provide the opportunity to conduct the interview in a more flexible way, i.e. to consider the response, to formulate a subsequent question accordingly, to elucidate some subtleties, to determine the depth of the knowledge of the respondent, etc. However, with this type of interviewing, unexpected responses may spring out, which may subsequently modify the raised hypothesis. To the questions of this type, the funnel-type questions can be attributed when, initially, a broader question on the topic is presented, which is followed by narrowing ones soliciting more detail" (Kardelis, 2016, 260). For instance: What was the first time when you found out about the sites of the mass killing of the Jews? → When did your first visit there happen? → What was that site? The questions to the respondents were presented in two ways: either direct (e.g. What was the first time when you visited a site of mass killings?) or circumstantial (e.g. What would encourage a greater interest of the society in the sites of the mass killing of the Jews?) when the question of interest (How does the miscommunication between the narratives really look like?) is elucidated in an indirect way. Undefined questions of the general nature were explicitly avoided (e.g. What do you think of that?) with the intention of avoiding any suspicions that the interviewee might develop. When the differences in terms of the engagedness of the respondents were manifested in the course of the research, some questions had to be specified or supplemented, thereby obtaining the most interesting empirical material possible. Even though further questions of interest sprang up in the course of the research, the three fundamental topics of the research (1. Personal relationship; 2. Collective behavior; 3. Features of communication of different narratives) contributing to the perception of the mechanisms of communication of Holocaust memorial sites remained unchanged.

Composition of the Sample of the Informants. Criteria for Selection

The data for the qualitative research was collected in 2016–2023. Three communities were selected for the research interview. Of these, the Jews and the Roma were selected as they had a specific relationship with the Holocaust sites since both communities experienced Holocaust, and members of the community of the Roma were being killed in the sites of the mass murder of the Jews. The community of Lithuanians was selected in this research as the largest community in Lithuania.

In total, 17 semi-structured exploratory interviews of the directional type with Holocaust survivors were conducted. They were discussing the Holocaust memorial sites in the context of the society: members of the Jewish and the Roma communities, staff of memorial museums, members of memory communities whose activity is denoted by direct relationship with the mass murder sites.

Fourteen interviews were conducted in Lithuanian, whereas 3 interviews were conducted in Russian. When the agreement of the informants was obtained for the use of the interview material in the prepared dissertation, 16 interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. This was followed by a brief summary of the interview. Then, the interviews were transcribed as written text, analyzed, categorized, grouped and contextualized. The answers of one of the interviews were provided via email. The average duration of an interview was 90 minutes. Nine interviews were held at a location selected by the informant, which was either at home, or in the workplace, two interviews were conducted via *Skype*, and six interviews were taken by phone.

The author of the thesis and the respondents conformed to the requirements imposed by the selected method of empirical research as both participants were related by long-term professional as well as

personal relationships which encouraged mutual confidence and allowed a conversation at a shared field of knowledge. This also led to the honesty and goodwill of the participants and ensured that the researcher would possess the skill of hearing the opinion of the other contributor without biased evaluations, without interruption or interference. Also, opportunities were developed, due to considering the engagement of the respondents, to specify the questions/answers naturally, or to complement a question without creating awkward situations. Thus, the shared objective could have been achieved.

Research of Empirical Data

The main material of the analysis was textual documents and interview data of the textual nature. The arrangement and processing of the data allowed to develop more abstract insights and to draw more generalized conclusions on the explored social reality.

When conducting data analysis, the method of the qualitative analysis of the content was employed. It is fundamentally based on the data distribution and coding throughout the entire period of data collection according to the defined categories. The clear-cut definition of the categories allowed more purposeful search for the interconnections with other categories. For the coding of data, the *MaxQDA2020* tool of qualitative data coding, analysis and archiving was selected. The qualitative analysis of the data was performed with an open scheme of coding; therefore, while analyzing, coding and conducting quantitative analysis of the content of the documents, it was further supplemented, expanded and cross-checked in order to validate its performance.

On the grounds of the theoretical model, a basic scheme of coding – the model of the classification of narratives – was developed.

Table 2. Model of the classification of narratives

Category	**Subcategory**	**Subcategory**	**Subcategory**
Political ideology	Second World War	National Socialist	Global: Elevation of the nation
	Postwar	Communist	Global: idea of the social class
	Independence	Liberal Nationalistic	Global: ideas of freedom and modernity
Communities in Lithuania	Jewish Roma Lithuanian	Civil Ethnical	Liberal Patriotic

Source: compiled by the author

3. Exploration of Holocaust Memorial Sites as an Object of Communication. Communication Strategies of Holocaust Sites in the Conflicting Unity of Overlapping Discourses

Having conducted the research, multi-layered narratives bearing multiple meanings were identified. They were denoted by specific manifestations and target audiences, and they marked the collision of different elements of the memory and their points of tension. On the grounds of the attitude suggested by A. Bumblauskas (2009), three global narratives were identified: *nationalist*, related with the idea of the elevation of a nation, *Marxist/Communist*, related with the idea of social classes, and *liberal*, related with the spreading of the ideas of freedom and modernity.

The application of the scheme of the dialogic nature of narratives developed by R. Laužikas (2017) and the theory of the semiosphere by Yuri Lotman which allows to identify creolized and semiotized spaces, global narratives affecting the communication of the Holocaust memorial sites in Lithuania provides the possibility of classifying the narratives into *non-dialogic*, i.e. of the propaganda nature (National Socialist), *semi-dialogic* (Soviet, ethnical, civil), and *dialogic* (liberal, civil) which operate in the local context but are still affected by global ideas (see Table 3).

Table 3. Model of the classification of narratives according to their dialogic nature

Category	**Subcategory**	**Subcategory**	**Subcategory**
Political ideology	Second World War	National Socialist	Non-dialogical
	Postwar	Communist	Semi-dialogical
	Independence	Liberal Nationalistic	Dialogical Non/Semi dialogical
Communities in Lithuania	Jewish Roma Lithuanian	Civil National	Dialogical Non/Semi dialogical

Source: compiled by the author, based on the scheme of the dialogic nature of narratives developed by R. Laužikas (2017).

It was noted that local identities and elements of heritage, along with the impact of information technologies and globalization, were encouraging transformations of the identity and the perception of the past which allows discussing about a prominently broader field of narratives. Therefore, it is essential to highlight the alternative narratives which represent different experiences. When taking a look from the perspective of the past, it is evident that the past, in comparison with the perception of the industrialized society, is no more an obstacle for the progress and perspective which would invite to construe a novel and more open attitude. However, the society is not always eager to get rid of the stereotypical and straightforward assessment or to transcend the borders of the national 'storyline' and the ethnic interpretations, especially if traumatic experiences are being considered. In the perspective of traumatic experiences, the narratives of the non-dialogic nature are usually based in discussions on the ethnolinguistic perception of a nation and the historic traumatic experience, the assessment of 'us' versus 'them'. Meanwhile, dialogic narratives ground identity on the civic perception of the nation, and discussions are being held while considering the contemporary realities and humanist assessment.

R. Laužikas (2017) suggested a scheme of the contemporary narratives in the communication of the Lithuanian heritage which is based on the principle of the dialogic attitude of the narratives. He suggests that, under the impact of the processes of globalization on the contemporary networking society, processes of fragmentation are taking place which are defining novel borders but which are not being sufficiently discussed in the society. "In the course of a process, at the local level, groups based on specific (historic, geographic, thematic, religious, cultural, etc.) identities are developing and getting stronger. From the systemic point of view, they are maximally homogenous within themselves, and they are clearly separate from other groups" (Laužikas, 2017, 33). It has been noticed that, within a group, there exists a belief in the grounding idea without providing a broader

opportunity for discussions, a different opinion, or interpretations. It happens that a group gets composed of inertially functioning individuals sharing the same idea who get distanced from the society, and, therefore, frequently, without seeing the broader context, they gradually generate ever more radical attitudes. Having considered the above mentioned elements, it can be stated that they determine the level of the narrative dialogue of the group as the more insular and enclosed the group is and the greater is the distance to the society, the less dialogue is conducted, and the more radical are the ideas, and the more increasing is the separation of narratives that is manifested.

In the context of the challenges of interpreting the totalitarian heritage, the official narrative is raising a number of controversial evaluations and discussions. It is clearly recognized by the society. Meanwhile, the narrative of the communities represents the resistance against totalitarian regimes as well as propaganda-based and nationalist ideas (Čepaitienė, 2015).

It should be stated that the relationship of Holocaust with all the three global narratives was complicated due to the hushed overlapping (covered) shameful instances/cases which, while presenting the partial view of the communities, open up novel interpretations of the past and, despite being unable to alter the great narrative, they still persist as a resounding element of the narrative presupposing multiple perspectives-based, decentralized and asymmetric understanding of the equal rights and equal validity of the differences between ‘me’ and ‘the other’.

On the grounds of the theoretical model of the conducted research and the classifier of the narratives, global narratives were explored and described, and the main communication strategies of the Holocaust sites were identified. A statement was elaborated that different narratives *do* exist, and that they evolve in the conflicting unity of overlapping narratives.

1. The National Socialist narrative of WWII. It should be related with the representatives of the radical ethnic nationalism and the evaluation not through the civic, but rather through the purely ethnical perspective, when, consequently, the national values are elevated above the universal human values. Representatives of other nations (Jews and Poles most of all) are discriminated. They are perceived as enemies of ethnic Lithuanians from whom the nation should be protected. Radical methods should be employed to eliminate them, while purifying the Lithuanian race in the process. The partisans of this narrative in Lithuania were maintaining direct relationship with the Nazis, and, with the beginning of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union, they decided to benefit from the occasion and to revive the State of Lithuania which had to be radically ethnic and built on the example on Nazi Germany, independent, but aligned with the ideas of Hitler, and which was intended to create the 'New Europe'. The Jews were put in the same bracket with the Communists (the mass media named them *Jews and Chekists* [members of the USSR secret police], *Judeobolsheviks*, *Judeocommunists*). They had to lose all of their rights, and ethnic cleansing was envisaged ("the Jewish issue," "dealing with the Jews"), whereas the assembled collaborator government was issuing discriminatory and anti-Semitic laws (directions for Jews). They did not condemn the killings of Jews, nor did they ban the anti-Semitic propaganda. Salaries were being paid to the soldiers of the special battalions who were involved in the mass killing of Jews. The partisans of this narrative were denting Holocaust by stating that the extermination only affected Jewish males who had collaborated with the Communists and who had contributed to the cruelties of the Bolsheviks in Rainiai and Pravieniškės. The Nazi occupation Government in its official documents issued in Lithuania referred to the sites of the mass killing of the Jews as the sites of the elimination of the Jews. The same term was being used by the local administration; however, in their correspondence with the Supreme Service of Hygiene, they were also using some other terms, such as "mass graves," "wartime graves," "war victim graves," "Jewish

graves." By referring to some wartime diaries (Kruk, 2004; Tory, 2000, Rudaševskis, 2018), and by conducting interviews, it becomes clear that the Holocaust survivors mention that that they were well aware about the sites of the mass murder of their compatriots while still staying in the ghetto as, at the times of the selection (campaigns) for the mass murdering, it was necessary to hide in order to survive. Knowledge of the killings was also widespread among the local non-Jewish population who were sharing the information with the survivors after the war.

2. The Soviet Communist narrative. It is related with the Marxist political ideology. It highlights the fight of the classes in the process of history (i.e. the 'good' classes of the exploited ones against the 'bad' class of the violators; that is the 'proletariat' against the 'bourgeoisie') along with the revolutionary ideas. Historical events are assessed through the prism of Marxism-Leninism by applying the corresponding criteria of morality, justice and ethnicity. The indisputable authority of the Communist Party is emphasized along with the fight for the ideals. Specific terminology is employed: the Great Patriotic War, Victory Day, Baltic countries, the terror of Fascism, Fascist executioners and commemoration of the victims of Fascism, Soviet citizens of the Jewish nationality, bourgeois nationalists, peaceful Soviet citizens, brotherly graves. The utopian ideology accompanied by instilling the ideological doctrine was manifested by the totalitarian violence and covered a broad range of spheres of life. Family relationships, sane reasoning and activities were being disrupted, and the understanding of the society was being changed regarding the private property and patriotic values. Aggressive antireligious propaganda was being imposed. Efforts were being made to discredit the independent State of Lithuania and its patriotic citizens by distorting and denigrating historical events. When the collective memory was (re)created in the Soviet times, the collective memory of WWII (called the 'Great Patriotic War' by the Soviet ideologists) was being actively employed by highlighting the

defensive, military-patriotic and all-people nature of the war when a cunning enemy unexpectedly attacked the country of peaceful hard-working people. The country was being led by the Leader. Despite suffering losses of a previously unheard-of extent and experiencing incredible sufferings, the country managed to heroically defend its freedom. This scheme instilled by the Stalinist narrative propaganda was successful as it was escalating the concept of the heroic defense of the homeland thus strengthening the Soviet regime and the belief in this myth, while also legitimating the occupation and introducing symbolic transformation. It was claimed that a new Soviet society was forming which was putting into the top rank the theories of the fight of the social classes, revolutionary ideas, the heroism of the Soviet people and the creation of the new order when building Socialism (Mikailienė, 2015). Such self-positioning of the Soviet Government suggested the idea that in the "postwar Soviet Union, memorial obelisks could not feature the Star of David, but only the soviet five-pointed stars" (Snyder, 2011, 374). However, both archival sources and interviews reveal that the memory practices maintained by the Jewish communities usually refused to conform to the official canons presented by the government: there were monuments with the Star of David, and they featured inscriptions telling about the Jewish victims. These were individual initiatives of the survivors of Holocaust not only to commemorate the near and dear ones, but it also involved commemorations at the sites of mass killings. In the interviews, most respondents replied that even though there was no mentioning about the mass murders of Jews in the school classes, they knew about the Jewish victims nevertheless from the fragmented information overheard in their families, or else they had personal contacts with survivors of Holocaust or their family members and could listen to their stories. The respondents also told that the narrative of the "murdered peaceful Soviet citizens" communicated by the Soviet Government was decoded and evaluated according to personal experiences. Even though the post-traumatic stress disorder frequently limited the ability to overcome the traumatic experience by the

survivors, and which is the reason why in many families there were no conversations about Holocaust (and such families would not visit the sites of mass killings, either). However, there were also other families communicating the opposite narrative whose foundation was the preservation of traditions, where experiences and memories were being shared (although extremely painfully). These families would visit the sites of mass murders even despite the attitude of the Soviet Government or the symbols construed at the sites of traumatic memory. In the course of interviews, it was observed that the members of the non-Jewish community were attending the sites of mass killings according to the Soviet protocol, however, they were perfectly aware of the victims of the mass murder despite the absence of the public information. Meanwhile, the losses of the Roma, those who were murdered in the sites of the mass killings of the Jews, were never mentioned publicly – neither in the Soviet times, nor, essentially, in the contemporary society. The information is extremely scarce. It was impossible to identify outside of the Roma community at all. Whereas, within the Roma community, the memory of the traumatic events is still extremely scattered. In the course of the research, we observed overlapping memory and spaces of semiosic behavior between the official canons, the religious and secular representatives of the Jewish community, and the local community. The author of this thesis undertakes to challenge the opinion which is still fairly widespread in Lithuania that speaking about Holocaust and visiting Holocaust sites in the Soviet times was forbidden by claiming that not only now, but also back then there were memory fighters of Holocaust as a public space in the semiosphere, there were pluralists, and there were those who would refuse their memory. There were also those who, by interacting among themselves, would support the practices of the scattered, background or unified memory by (re)creating and adapting the narratives of Holocaust sites at different levels in a conflict-laden unity. The efforts recorded by the author to perpetuate the memory of the murdered families by the members of the community survivors of Holocaust, and to transfer these traditions to their children and

grandchildren suggests that, even in the Soviet times, ways were found to ensure the continuity of the Jewish tradition by coexisting in the conflicting unity of the Soviet reality. Jewish authors (Altshuler, 2002, 2012; Zelser, 2018) note that the survivors, among whom there were both religious and secular Jews, encountered the dilemma of the identity, traditions, culture and morality regarding the proper commemoration of the victims of war crimes who were murdered instead of encountering their natural death, whose bodies were mutilated and chaotically dumped into pits and ditches, destroyed by chemicals or burned, and the ash was mixed with sand and blown by the wind or trampled by accidental passers-by. Even though the moral duty required proper honoring, however, traumatic experiences demanded more time for the recovery. Therefore, in the Jewish community proper, different attitudes survived – whether to adhere to the tradition of Judaism, or to behave according to the real situation. The issue of the reburial of the Jewish victims raised extensive discussions within the Jewish community which is unacceptable according to the religious law of Judaism (hebr. *Halakhah*), however, the reburial of the remains of the Jewish victims *did* actually take place in Lithuania. The Soviet Union was actively promoting its anti-Semitic policy which was either harsher or more moderate depending on the general political situation in the country. However, essential differences regarding the attitude to the Holocaust sites were never observed. From the archival sources, it is possible to observe that with the geographical distancing from the political center, the nature of the implementation of the official instructions would become more lenient. Even though the only line was followed with the standard of honoring the 'victims of Fascism', 'peaceful citizens', 'innocent victims', and while the activity of the Jewish religious communities was not only controlled, but also limited, yet in Lithuania (and, in the words of Jewish authors, also in Latvia and Estonia), the local Soviet administration showed a less unfavorable attitude to the upkeep of the mass killing sites of the Jews (Altshuler, 2002). This fact is corroborated not only by the multitude of the monuments in such

places in Lithuania where the Jewish victims were explicitly mentioned, but also the inscriptions on the monuments were in Lithuanian, Russian and Yiddish (YV). This is also testified by the active correspondence between the Jewish religious community with the governmental institutions regarding the commemoration of the Holocaust victims, as well as by the stories collected in the course of interviewing about the personal practices while regularly attending the sites of mass killings.

3. The period of independence: nationalist and liberal. When the Soviet Union along with its soviet regime was already collapsing, the Soviet heritage was universally rejected and condemned; however, with certain exceptions. The sites of mass killings as the sites of the massacre of the peaceful Soviet citizens could not avoid transformations. However, a dilemma arose regarding the heritage values and the challenge in terms of whichever social group or 'memory community' should take over these sites and what should be done further. When this heritage group would attempt to adopt different communication senses representing different groups of interests, difficulties with the act of symbolization of the traumatic heritage arose as the narratives created and maintained by some groups were not considered. The transformations are illustrated and testified by the documentation and the iconographic materials (366 items) of the collection of Josif Levinson which reflects the active effort of the actualization of Holocaust sites of a member of the State Jewish Museum and the Jewish community of the time who, in cooperation with the local municipalities, not only activated the involvement in the upkeep of the above mentioned sites, but also had the Soviet inscriptions on the monuments replaced by naming not only the Jewish victims, but also indicating the number of the victims and emphasizing the contribution of the local collaborators to the killings. He was pursuing not only historic justice and respect to the Jewish victims and empathy, but also accountability. The materials of the correspondence of Levinson with the local municipalities indicates that even though

the latter contributed to the transformation of the mass murder sites, but perceived this as some toll to the Jewish community but not as a real need stemming from the local community.

R. Čepaitienė (2015, 8) suggests that the act of the symbolization of the heritage "is only possible when the observer interpreting its meanings is capable of recognizing and properly reading the code which had created this heritage; otherwise, these signs would remain meaningless to the observer, or other meanings may be mistakenly attributed to them." Differently perceived codes were mentioned by Irena Veisaitė who claimed that even though the Jewish community was essentially in favor of the Lithuanian national movement, however, the nationalist euphoria levitating in the Constitutional Assembly of *Sąjūdis* was testifying separation rather than a dialogue: "They were still talking about the sacrifices and sufferings of Lithuanians, and I suddenly thought – damn, what am I doing here? My mother was a victim, my entire family, my three-year-old cousin; and, for them, there is no place here, no one even mentioned them. But then I thought: this is the first time when Lithuanians could talk about their sufferings, about truth. We must understand their happiness and share it… However, up until today, there have been only a few declarations of the intellectuals, and several official statements about the role of Lithuanians in Holocaust." (Sirutavičius, 2012, 514). The assessment of the participation of Lithuanians in Holocaust was, and still is, one of the key challenges in the path of creating a dialogue between Lithuanians and Jews. That is why the sites of mass murder turned into an object of the consumer society when selecting more convenient and emotionally attractive interpretations, thereby maintaining the activeness of the shattered memory program. In the course of the interview, the respondents also frequently mentioned the unwillingness to listen to the Holocaust experiences and the importance of deciphering the memory codes as this changes the understanding of the society as well. The correct reading of the different narratives promotes a dialogue, through which, creolized spaces are created which are denoted by a great potential of creating

convivium. It should not be forgotten that the support pf the narratives in the society is related with the collective memory while preserving the continuity of the tradition. Therefore, it is not accidental that the respondents mentioned the importance of communicating narratives within the family as the wrongful interpretation of narratives may lead to mistaken attribution of meanings not only for the Jewish, but also for the non-Jewish community. It should be noted that the opening of various archives with the advent of the Independence of Lithuania expanded not only the frontiers of the Holocaust memory (Assmann, 2013), but also, during the three most recent decades, it acquired features of the qualitative breakthrough of the collective memory by accepting the facts of the Holocaust events which had been hushed for a long time before that, yet, without excessive inquisitiveness into the personal traumatic experiences of Holocaust. However, the tension, which originated already during the period of independence regarding the fact that the Baltic countries experienced three occupations (Soviet, Nazi, and then Soviet again), has survived to the present day that the Baltic countries, again, find themselves cornered by the interpretations of the totalitarian regimes and the complex shapes of the meat grinder of the memory where the national narratives cannot find the place they are due again (Masiokaitė-Lubinienė, 2021). Previously, the freedom fighters were being questioned regarding the fact of their participation in the mass killing of Jews. Now, issues of collaboration and the appropriation of the Jewish property are springing up along with the accusations of anti-Semitism, which is mercilessly abused by hostile countries promoting disagreement.

Semiosic Behavior

Having discussed the activity of different semiospheres which are perceived through the action of different narratives based on the communication of historic knowledge while analyzing them through the opportunities for a dialogue in the context of the ideas of globalism and locality, the author of the this states that the narrative as the central idea of the semiosphere determines all the semiotic matters taking

place in that semiosphere: practices, the way of communication, the symbols in use and the messages construed on the grounds of these symbols. The dialogue nature of the narrative is perceived through the level of inclination to construe a dialogue which is fragmented and framed by the communities communicating different narratives. The communities representing different narratives are homogenous inside as they are supported by a single, shared, background never-criticized idea. This homogeneity may be named as self-enclosedness into an ideologically shaped information bubble which is prominently fragmented from outside, and which ignores and is incapable of living with whatever happens when two distinctiveness(es) clash into each other. This is the search for new meanings, the effort how to learn to have some control over the collision instead of attempting to 'fix' the other according to 'my' values, attitudes, beliefs, an attempt to find a way how, by assessing a broader perspective, it is possible to look for coexistence strategies. The author of the thesis believes that convivium may be perceived as a certain strategy of life (or survival) by embracing and acknowledging the 'otherness' of some other narrative which should be regarded through the value of supplementation and enrichment with the perspectives that gradually start developing out of it.

Having employed the criterion of the dialogue nature, three forms of semiosic behavior are singled out in this research:

1. Not to communicate. Messages construed on the grounds of this narrative – although they do not question the nature of science – are usually related with traumatic experiences, are deliberately ignored when construing messages not just because for the sake of the community which tends to avoid any contact with the trauma, but rather because of the lack of preparation of the society for debates on the topic of traumatic experiences.

2. To be in conflict. Messages construed on the grounds of this narrative preserve their academic level as, in principle, they do not

reject the history knowledge, nor do they challenge the objects of heritage, however, they interpret everything by using the filter of historic justice which limits the opportunities of interpretation for the audience and which barricades the road towards any further discussion.one can essentially talk not just about the clash of the narratives created on the grounds of nationalism and liberalism, but also about narratives of the same nature supported by different communities: for instance, the Lithuanian ethnic narrative versus the Jewish ethnic narrative in their attitude to the memory of Holocaust. The Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights serves as a memory institution emphasizing the sufferings of Lithuanians, whereas a Holocaust exhibition narrates about the killing of Jews in Lithuania. This example demonstrates not only the community-level but also the institutional-level enclosedness in bubbles and the surviving fragmentation when there are two different museums to actualize the crimes of the Soviets and the Nazis. The conflict between the narratives stems not only from the rejection of the Soviet or Nazi crimes, but rather from their interpretation as the crimes of the Nazis mostly affected the Jews and the Roma, but not Lithuanians. The conflict-involving semiosic behavior is manifested even at the institutional level of the State due to the (never) formed policy of the State in the profound sense. The author of the thesis suggests that the semiosic behavior of this type was prompted by the miscommunication between the communities on the grounds of the community narratives, which locked the communities into the ideologically formed information bubble.

It is of importance to highlight that when we are talking about the interaction of narratives, we are discussing a real conflict between the narrative and the reality it has construed versus another narrative and the reality that the second narrative has construed. There are not many individuals openly expressing themselves about the narrative of the Jew-Communist, but this implication is still being manifested quite frequently. One should note that if we take this narrative and, say, the

State narrative which acknowledges the participation of Lithuanians in Holocaust, we already have a point of conflict in the sense that one of the narratives is stating that Lithuanians were not taking part in Holocaust, or that only the dregs of the society were involved, criminals, just several people, that is, they were few and far between. Meanwhile, the other narrative states that Lithuanians *did* participate, and quite a few of them were involved. Thus, the question 'participated – not participated' is already essentially the point where a conflict is lurking. When analyzing conflicts between narratives, it should be highlighted that these are such points or such ideas of the conflict where these narratives disagree and cannot find a mutually acceptable point. Actually, whatever is that point of conflict? This is some entity regarding which the narratives cannot enter a compromise (e.g. if Lithuanian nationalists acknowledged that many Lithuanians took part in Holocaust, they would not be Lithuanian nationalists anymore) as this would pose a threat to the identity of the information bubble.

The author of the thesis highlighted four fundamental cores of the non-dialogic conflict between narratives. These are the image of the Jew-Communist, latent anti-Semitism, issues of collaboration and the stigmatization of the Roma whose existence in the communication messages is registered through specific messages that have been communicated.

A. The image of a Jew-Communist.

In the course of the interviews, the communication of this image was manifested through the still-maintained controversy of the memorial sites when dealing with the problems related with collaboration that are still painful to the society as justification for the contribution to the mass killing is being sought.

B. Latent anti-Semitism.

Even though the manifestations of anti-Semitism in Lithuania are usually related with the experiences of the Interwar Lithuania or the period of Nazi occupation, however, the manifestation of the non-confidence in Jews which were taken from the anti-Semitic mood incited by the Soviet regime are still alive up to the present day in Lithuania at the level of subconsciousness.

C. Issues of collaboration

Even though the facts of the collaboration of Lithuanians with Nazis during the years of WWII and their participation in the extermination of Lithuanian Jews have already been extensively explored and published by both Lithuanian and foreign historians, and despite the fact that archive materials as well as the testimonies of not only witnesses but also the collaborators are also at hand, the issue of collaboration still remains one of the most painful topics in the Lithuanian society.

D. Stereotypization of the Roma

Stigmatization, xenophobia and stereotypization are related with the unknown, with the imagination that some or another nation is denoted by certain features which we attribute to the entire group of people by thinking in simplified and generalizing categories prompted by the low level of general education. We do this without thinking that each and every one of us is actually different, denoted by not only strengths, but also drawbacks. “The community of the Roma, in comparison to the other groups under observation, is depicted in an extremely negative light. Although the depiction of the group finds itself in the positive context (their cultural heritage, activities, expectations are described), it is still impossible to escape stereotypization or stigmatization” (Media4change, 2014).

Insights have been made that the non-dialogic narratives are clearly recognized in the society due to their fragmentation when pushing to the marginal spaces all the inconvenient topics (despite the fact that they *do* really exist) while raising the convenient topics and thus preventing the opportunity for discussion and remaining hopelessly stuck inside the conflict escalated by the Lithuanian and Jewish nationalist narratives where Holocaust is only communicated through the ethnic conflict between Lithuanians and Jews, and the traumatic experiences of the Roma community are lumped together with other issues, thus leaving them under the responsibility of no one else but only the Roma community.

Spaces of Creolization

The creation of the spaces of creolization is a fundamentally important process in an attempt to realize the functioning of the society. Therefore, this dissertation devotes to the exploration of the creolized space a separate chapter. According to Lotman (2004), a creolized space is created by different narratives which are, commonly, located somewhat in the periphery as the ones located closer to the center are impacted by the canon narrative in a stronger way, and thus they are unlikely to create a creolized space. However, the ones located in the periphery may start communicating in between themselves, as well as with other semiospheres, because they are not *that* faithful to the central (core) idea anymore. An important condition for the creation of a creolization space is the perception (understanding) why (the) other semiosphere is communicating in that particular way, why it possesses different practices, uses other symbols and, in some areas, maybe repeats certain mechanisms of the activity of another semiosphere.

The *March of Molėtai* devoted to the bright memory of the victims of Holocaust may serve as an example in this context. It was organized in 2016, when the 75-year-commemoration of the Jewish genocide was taking place, by Tzvi Kritzer who is an offspring of a family

originating in Molėtai and which was slaughtered there. This idea started gaining pace when a compatriot, the Lithuanian theater director Marius Ivaškevičius, also hailing from Molėtai, published an encouragement in the mass media which was supported with the personal thoughts about Holocaust and invited anyone who cares to join in the event of 29 August 2016 when a march took placed from the center of Molėtai Town to the site of the mass killing of Jews. More than a thousand people were involved. This is a typical action of constructing a creolized space as a march to a murder site is not a common practice within the Lithuanian narrative. Lithuanians never wandered to the sites of the killings, but this is a fairly common practice in the Jewish narrative. However, there is some surviving iconographical material with the march of the local residents of Utena Town to the site of the mass killing of Jews in 1965, which was actually referred to as a site of the murder of the Soviet citizens at that time. The march was supported by the Soviet government which, somewhat likely, took over this practice from the Jewish narrative.

The author of the thesis undertakes to suggest that a march as a form of honoring the victims of Holocaust during the years of Independence is a far more common practice within the Jewish community than among Lithuanians. Therefore, the *March of Molėtai* is a typical creolized space where a dialogue was constructed when the Lithuanian liberal-dialogue and the Jewish non-radical nationalist narratives demonstrated willingness to look for ways of establishing a dialogue. The above outlined example indicates how the members of the Lithuanian community take over a practice which is common in the Jewish community and employ it for the honoring of the victims of Holocaust.

It is perfectly natural that the present-day commemorations exhibit features of the Soviet routinization which are affecting our daily lives, and therefore the Holocaust memorial practices are not an exclusion. As one of the examples of routinization, the events of the national

project *The Road of Memory 1941–2021* could be mentioned which were held from June to December 2021. The events of the project were organized by the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania in cooperation with the Tolerance centers established under the initiative of this Commission, and by collaborating with a number of partners. When analyzing these events, the transformation of the natural practice into protocol-based behavior can be observed. Even though the events of this project exhibited some routinized motivation to create a creolized space, however, after routinized actions, one may detect the transformation of protocol practices into various other phenomena which not merely exist, but are also denoted by the capacity to reconstruct themselves. Whereas, the *March of Molėtai* was highly and proactively intentional, of the participatory nature: it was an involving attempt to construe a creolized space. As the interviews make it evident, the *March of Molėtai* was not uniform in the sense of opinions it evoked, but the respondents denoted this event as one which attracted attention and which resonated within the society. However, in the course of the interviews, despite some dissatisfaction which was expressed with the routinized protocol practices adapted to the contemporary needs from the Soviet 'repertoire', the proactive contribution to creating a dialogue was observed recently as a society which is multilayered and which communicates overlapping narratives (and therefore recognized the presently discussed practices) and which is taking over the experiences of the Jewish community, which interprets these experiences and adapts them to its own needs – this society is creating new creolized spaces through various events which are denoted by continuity in the conflicting unity in a variety of embodiments.

Without adopting the evaluative attitude, the author of this thesis suggests that the *March of Molėtai* was an intentional act in an attempt to construe a creolized space. However, in parallel, there was an event of *The Road of Memory 1941–2021* which, as a one-off action,

nevertheless, gained a prominent number of other continuous practices of a smaller extent. Hence, it is an entirely different question to determine whether some idea works – or it does not work – whether it was enforced by circumstances, sincere, or anywhere in between. Yet, the key point is that it *gradually* works, and the action itself, that formation of practices, it construes a creolized space. This suggest that the impetus was provided, and that initial impulse did not disappear without a trace if it worked (e.g. the murder sites were tidied up). It is in this way that a Holocaust memorial site is already returning to the reasoning of the society in the sense that not only the ancient Catholic graveyards, but also the Jewish ones should be looked after. This suggests that a creolized space is being construed. In the course of the interviews, we also analyzed intentionalist and protocol-based routinized initiatives of a smaller extent, and the pursuit of a dialogue along with the impact of the initiatives on the actualization of the mass murder sites.

The conducted interviews indicated that the observation of symbols and the exploration of their sense did not lock the Jewish community into the merely routinized space of protocol events, but it rather boosted the consciousness regarding the symbols and sometimes promoted the support of personal initiatives (although these might be only chamber initiatives by nature). However, these initiatives are passed over from generation to generation, and sometimes they even manage to find the motifs for contact in the creation of new meanings. It appeared that the attitude of the official Government regarding the Holocaust sites had an impact on the community initiatives by ideologizing them, creating certain symbolic rituals in order to reinforce the narrative promoted by the official government so that it would be accepted by the Jewish and non-Jewish communities alike. Even though the hegemonic narrative contained the intention of recreating the reality, however, in the real-life practice, it existed not only in the memory of the Jewish community encoded with double symbols; propaganda codes were being interpreted through the prism

of the identity of the community and its moral evaluation, whereas reception takes place only through protocol rituals which, due to the fact that are easier to recognize by the society, as if managed to ensure the most valid possibility of safeguarding the memory.

Conclusions

1. The communication of Holocaust memorial sites may be explained by adopting the model of semiosphere as developed by Yuri Lotman as a system of the synchronous nature which is all-embracing and evolving and whose main functions are related with certain mechanisms of the memory which safeguard and communicate the elements of the past and the present and which (re)create information. This model enables the identification of different semiospheres – the official one and the community one – as the overlapping narratives of the dialogue and non-dialogue nature are functioning at Holocaust memorial sites. This model also allows deconstructing their laws of action, that is, their semiosic behavior and the spaces of creolization.

In terms of the theoretical background, this thesis applies the theory of semiosphere by Lotman supplemented with the Theory of Communication as Action by Robert T. Craig which help us understand how narratives frame the communication of Holocaust memorial sites through the prism of semiosic behavior. Non-communicating, conflicting and dialogue-based (i.e. taking place in a creolized space) narratives have been singled out. The research has revealed that, with the theory of semiosphere by Lotman serving as the background and on condition that a motif of meaningful activity is present, it is possible to identify creolization spaces where different narratives can communicate without running into conflict.

The research has revealed that the global narratives functioning at the theoretical level, although they are existent in practice, but the mechanisms of their operation when functioning in practice tend to gain specific features. In the course of the research, an assumption was

made that, at different periods, some narrative(s) could have acted in different ways, however, the empirical research indicated that all of them maintained the same elements while adapting to the changing conditions, transforming the practices, but still preserving the key idea. Therefore, it can be stated that neither the shift in the cultural attitude nor the political changes had any decisive impact on the alteration of the attitude to Holocaust memorial sites.

2. In the course of the research, it was established that the communication of Holocaust memorial sites does not contain/involve any pure narratives. All the narratives are overlapping. The classificatory of the narratives presented in this thesis indicates that the pure narratives sublimated with the objectives of the academic research and sheer understanding are fulfilled in the real life in a different way. They do not contain these pure forms anymore – the way it is described in theory. In the practical life, they overlap, and this happens because the narratives as pure theoretical constructs in practice are passed through the experience of the communities as some kind of a filter which transforms those narratives. With the change in the socio cultural environment, such narratives do not alter specifically due to their overlapping. Essentially, the definition of such narratives, as confirmed by the present research, allows understanding the communication of Holocaust memorial sites at a more advanced level, which is exactly the novelty of the present thesis.

3. In the course of the research, it was established that the most important principles of the activity of the overlapping narratives and the elements of their recognition are detected by their relationship with other semiospheres. Overlapping narratives may be dialogic (liberal, civic), semi-dialogic (Soviet, ethnic and civic), and non-dialogical (National Socialist), and, in terms of their relationship with the Government, they can be official or community narratives.

The official narrative is clearly recognizable and definable although it raises some incompatibility issues regarding its assessment depending

on the narrative of establishing identification. The community narrative is definable as the resistance against totalitarian regimes, and the commemoration of this community narrative frequently lacks the proper attention due to the fights in between the memory groups. Still, it is possible to assume that these narratives are of the same level, i.e. that they are partial, introducing the idea which is being generated inside the community. This idea frequently resonates with the core narrative; however, the research has indicated that, inside the community, several storylines evolving around the core idea are usually being upheld. For instance, within the Lithuanian community, at least two different narratives are being promoted: the ethnic (nationalist) which highlights the distinction between Lithuanians and Jews who are positioned as 'others', and thus Lithuanians are eliminating themselves from the crime (the mass murder of Jews) by claiming that Holocaust was implemented by the Nazis. The civic paradigm emphasizes that the Jews were citizens of Lithuania and that, at the times of Holocaust, some citizens of Lithuania murdered some other citizens of Lithuania. Within the Jewish community, there are also at least two narratives: the ethnic (radical) narrative postulates that Lithuanians are a nation of Jew killers, and anyone who was involved in the resistance fights against the Soviets was directly or indirectly involved in the killing(s) of Jews. Whereas, the civic (moderate) narrative suggests that, at the times of Holocaust, there were Lithuanians who were collaborating with the Nazis and were participating in the killing(s) of Jews, yet there were Lithuanians who contributed to rescuing Jews during the years of WWII. The Roma community sticks to the civic narrative declaring that Holocaust and the killings of the Roma are a crime against humanity.

The relationship of Holocaust memorial sites with the three global narratives was complicated due to the hushed-up and overlapped (covered) shameful instances (moments) which, by rendering some partial experience of the communities, open up new interpretations of the past despite their own inability to change the Great Narrative

which remains the resounding element presupposing the multi-perspective, decentralized and asymmetrical perception of the equal righteousness and validity of the differences between ‘me’ and ‘other’.

4. The different narratives in the society interact by three essential ways: non-dialogic, semi-dialogic, and dialogic. Having discussed the functioning of the different semiospheres which are perceived through the manifestation of different narratives based on the communication of historic knowledge and having analyzed them through the opportunities for dialogue-based exchange in the context of the ideas of globalism and locality, it has been noticed that the narrative as the central idea of a semiosphere determines all the semiotic happenings which take place in that particular semiosphere: practices, the way of speaking, the symbols in use and the messages constructed on their grounds.

It has been established that the dialogic nature of a narrative is perceived through the level of its inclination to communicate which is fragmented and framed by the communities communicating different narratives which are homogenous inside as they are being supported by a shared and fundamental idea which is not to be criticized. This homogeneity can be defined as self-enclosure in an ideologically formed information bubble which is prominently fragmented outside, denoted by ignorance, and incapable of living with whatever happens when two differences collide. An important condition for the dialogic nature to appear is the search for new meanings, an attempt to learn how to regulate the collision without trying to ‘fix the other’ according to one’s own values, attitudes or beliefs, an attempt to find a way how to consider a broader perspective, and also the search for strategies of cohabitation. It should also be noted that cohabitation can also be perceived as a certain strategy of living/survival which takes and allows into itself the ‘otherness’ of the narrative of the ‘other’ when it is perceived/treated through the value of supplementation and

enrichment with all the perspectives arising for the long run in the future.

In the course of the research, the criterion of the dialogic nature allowed to single out three forms of semiosic behavior: non-communication (avoidance of communication), conflict, and the creation of a Creolized space. The author of the thesis establishes four fundamental cores of the conflict of a non-dialogic narrative: the image of a Jew-Communist, latent anti-Semitism, issues of collaboration, and stereotypization (or stigmatization of the Roma). Their presence in communication messages has been attested through specific real-life communication messages.

The research has revealed that non-dialogic narratives are clearly recognized by the society due to their fragmentation when pushing to the marginal areas all the inconvenient topics (although they are really existent ones), and raising the convenient topics thereby preventing the path to a discussion and getting stuck in the conflict escalated by the Lithuanian and Jewish nationalist narratives. Holocaust is communicated only through the national conflict of Lithuanians and Jews, whereas the traumatic experiences of the Roma are merged with other issues thereby leaving them under the responsibility of solely the community of the Roma. A conclusion has been drawn that, due to various reasons, different individual, collective and cultural memories made an impact in various ways and by various means, and this impact has been continuing up until the present day.

5. In the course of the research, it was established that, although overlapping narratives are framed by the discourse of interest, they still retained different narratives (de)coded with double memory standards, they incited and encouraged, however, they failed to ensure the dialogic relationship with the traumatic heritage. Within the communities, by sharing memories, listening to them, and appropriating them, the so-called counter-memory of the ‘kitchen communities’ was maintained as a counterweight to the hegemonic

narrative. This particular doubling was as if a counterweight to the trauma as such, and did not allow the community to identify itself with the system and to maintain at least selective elements of the totalitarian collective memory – although, as it has already been mentioned, the losses of Holocaust along with the related traumatic experience were simply hushed up and pushed outward even in the private environments. This research led to an observation that the traumatic experiences restricting the communication discourse are used for the escalation of anti-Semitism.

6. On the grounds of the concept of semiosphere as developed by Lotman, this thesis presents the definition of a Holocaust memorial site as a communication object which is referred to as a process in which traumatic experiences (the past) having a shared denominator within their interaction in the space of the Holocaust memory (the present) overlap depending on the different needs for communication of the different memory communities, and ultimately they evolve. This definition of the Holocaust memorial site has been confirmed by the research, and this is one of the novelties of the present thesis.

The research has shown that, when the approach from the perspective of communication as action is undertaken, Holocaust memorial sites emphasize the bonds and ability to achieve mutual understanding between the memory site and the memory communities which is created through communication – rituals, symbols, language and visualization by bringing into the public discourse the memory sites, evolution or transformation, all of which is achieved through the motif of meaningful (sense-bearing) activity, first of all originating from the internal wish. It may have been caused by different internal motivation, but it still pursues conflict-free communication of the different narratives.

7. In the course of the research, the following communication narratives of the Holocaust memorial sites in Lithuania were identified: National Socialist during the years of WWII, postwar

Communist, and liberal and nationalist in the period of the regained Independence. They are framed by the political ideology, and these are the civic and national/ethnic narratives affected by the experiences of the Jews, Roma, and Lithuanians.

In the course of the research, it was established that the most important factors contributing to the origin of these narratives are the communication strategies of the discourse construed by the ideologies of the different periods which cannot be separated from either the global, or the local circumstances. Also, it cannot be detached from the behavior stemming from the capacity of the Jewish and Roma communities as the experiencers (victims) of Holocaust to overcome their traumatic experiences, including their self-silencing due to the insecurity, guilt, vulnerability, intolerance of the society and the lack of the engagement of the State regarding the issues of the memory policy. The involvement of the Lithuanian community into collaboration with the Nazis and the direct or indirect participation in Holocaust left some evident trauma in the consciousness of the society which can be overcome by the emphasized ethnocentric and overly Catholicized narrative which is supported by the latent anti-Semitism and the manifestations of the double genocide, or at least the conscious self-suppression regarding the controversial issues.

In the course of the research, it was also established that the most important factors supporting these narratives in the contemporary Holocaust communication are the self-enclosure of the communities representing different narratives in an ideologically formed information bubble which is prominently fragmented outside, ignorant and incapable of co-existing with whatever happens when two distinctivenesses collide. On top of that, this is the lack of the search for new meanings, an attempt of the efforts to learn how to regulate such a collision instead of trying to ‘fix the other’ according to one’s own values, attitudes, beliefs and efforts to find a way how, by

considering a broader perspective, to seek for the strategies of cohabitation.

The research has indicated that various agents due to various reasons are employing different ways and means to make an impact, i.e. they were spreading various ideas which have been functional until the present day. When we look at a Holocaust site as an environment of the public physical, social and symbolic space, several categories of agents of the public sphere can be singled out. These are mnemonic warriors, pluralists, abnegators and prospectives who are generating at the representative level the meanings and who fill the communication field with the content, that is, they outline the lists of issues and questions which *do* (or do *not*) enter the public space for discussions. Their mutual interaction while employing different strategies in an attempt to legalize a memory narrative which they would find to be convenient to themselves ultimately forms the memory practices which are related with a certain historical event – these are the memory programs.

It has also been stated that a sizable chunk of the norms of the society behavior have been inherited from the Soviet times, and the factors supporting them are also related with the ideas dating back to the same period. Thus, the Soviet-generated Fascist/Hitlerist communication of the Holocaust sites still remains the principal model of the communication of the Holocaust sites even today. The present research verified its hypotheses, and it was determined that the Soviet communication of Holocaust sites as the sites of the victims of Hitlerism/Fascism still bears an impact on the contemporary society regarding the collective memory, and the cultural memory alike, by adapting semantic meanings, that is, protocol-based routinized practices, such as the programs of the official commemorations at the mass murder sites being 'enhanced' with the intentional practices which are somehow related to the Jewish community. Symbolic objects supporting the ceremony are also employed, for instance,

memorial wreaths and/or flowers are carried together with symbolic pebbles; these frequently feature Jewish names. Besides, periodic patterns established in the public memory are employed for the present-day needs, such as the list of the memorial dates approved by the State which frames the visiting of Holocaust memorial sites. Considering this, a conclusion can be drawn that the contemporary historical consciousness is overlapping, and, by getting chronologically more distant from the traumatic event, Holocaust memorial sites find more space for the overlapping of the different semiospheres especially due to the processes of the evolution of semantic meanings pertaining to these sites. Because of that, more opportunities for overcoming the trauma are manifested: there is more information, more means for obtaining and sharing information, more opportunities for the participation and involvement in various participatory activities.

Biography

Neringa Latvytė has a background in Modern History (BA and MA). Prior to joining the Faculty of Communication, she was working at the Vilna Gaon Jewish History Museum for 20 years. She is currently a lecturer at the Faculty of Communication Vilnius University. Her research interests include the effect of interactions on difficult and traumatic heritage and history on contemporary identities and attitudes.

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Internships:

1. 2016 07 01–12. Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USA).
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NOTES

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