



National Museums in Lithuania: A Story of State Building (1855-2010)

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Summary

The construction of national museums in Lithuania can be analysed in relation to traditional conceptualizations of European nationalism which emphasize state building through the identification of an ethnic and cultural nation situated in a particular territory (Hroch 2000). Although state building is not entirely explained by theories of nationalism, this report will broadly rely on this theoretical framework. The history of Lithuanian national museums can be divided into the following stages, based on forms of national statehood, key museums and key political oppositions:

I. The first public museums: Baublys local history museum (1812) and Vilnius Museum of Antiquities (1855-1863), were established by Lithuanian-Polish aristocrats who were interested in the political and archaeological history of Lithuania. Opposition to the Russian Empire.

II. The first state museums (1918-1940): Vytautas the Great Military Museum and Čiurlionis Art Gallery were organized by groups of Lithuanian intellectuals and established as part of a 'national pantheon' in Kaunas. Opposition to Poland, which occupied Vilnius.

III. The establishment of a centralized museums system (1940/1944-1990): state initiated museums were dedicated to Soviet propaganda in line with Marxism-Leninism, but groups of Lithuanian intellectuals built museums relying on the nineteenth-century template of an ethnic nation. Silent opposition to the communist regime, forgetting of the Holocaust.

IV. The consolidation of national state museums system (1990-2010): Soviet centralized administrative system was both subverted and modified to emphasize the ethnic Lithuanian dimension of nation-building through history, archaeology and culture. Opposition to Western popular culture and other perceived negative aspects of globalization, but beginning to deal with the Holocaust and communist crimes.

Stage I saw emphasis on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (PLC), but also on the pre-history of Lithuania. In stage II, the Polish element of Lithuania's history was represented as negative; hence there was little interest in aristocratic culture. History museums focused on the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL); a cult of grand dukes emerged alongside interest in Lithuanian folk culture. Jewish, Karaite and Belarusian learned societies organized ethnic museums too. During stage III, the political dimensions of ethnic nation-building were eliminated by the communist regime. However, the Lithuanian state was further constructed in museums through a history of the Middle Ages and folk culture. Aristocratic culture and the cultural heritage of the Lithuanian Jewish community did not get much space in Soviet museums, but were not completely eliminated either. The territorial focus was on the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR); references to the GDL were carefully censored. In stage IV the

political dimension of ethnicity was brought back into the museums. Jews and Karaites were represented in existing museums or acquired their own museums. The Polish dimension of Lithuania's history remained contested. However, there emerged new museums, dedicated to the difficult parts of twentieth century history, such as the Holocaust and communist crimes.

Note: A Full list of the abbreviations used can be found in an annexe of this report.

Summary table, Lithuania

Name	Inaugurated	Initiated	Actors	Ownership	Type	Values	Temporal reach	Style Location
National M.K. Čiurlionis Art Museum	1925	1921	Artists, intellectuals, nation-builders of the 1920s-30s. Thereafter the state (1940s -)	State	Lithuanian and international Fine and Applied Arts, Folk Art, Numismatics, History of Culture and Memorial museums.	Lithuanian territorial and universal (European and classical cultures) values.	1400s-1900s	Several buildings, the main gallery specially built in art deco style, located in a significant square in Kaunas (provisional capital).
Vytautas the Great Military Museum	1936	1919	Ministry of Defence	State	Archaeology, Fine Arts, weapons and documents.	Political history of Lithuania, emphasis on the struggle for sovereignty, ethnic nation and state-building.	1200s-1900s	One main building, specially constructed in the art deco style, located in an important square in Kaunas (provisional capital).
Lithuanian National Museum	1952/ 1992	1855	Polish-Lithuanian aristocrats, LSSR and LR governments	State (1952)	Archaeology, Fine and Applied Arts, Ethnography, Numismatics, History and memorial museums.	National values: Lithuanian folk culture, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Mainly cultural and political history of Lithuanian nation building and sovereignty.	10 th BC to the 1900s	Many buildings of various types. The main exhibitions located in baroque arsenal buildings in the centre of Vilnius Old Town.
The Open Air Museum of Lithuania	1974	1965	The Ministry of Culture	State	Buildings and objects from farms and towns. Landscapes, agriculture & animals.	Ethnographic regions of Lithuania within post-1944 borders.	1700s-1900s	The site is situated ca. 25 km from Kaunas, close to the Vilnius-Kaunas motorway. Traditional architecture and landscape.

Introduction

Since the nineteenth century, Lithuanian national identity has been conceptualized by nation-builders as rooted in language and folk culture (Balkelis 2009; Rindzeviciute 2003). During those long periods when Lithuania did not exercise sovereignty, some museums performed as outlays for expressions of national identity through cultural means. I will start with a brief overview of the key moments in the history of Lithuanian statehood. Then I will analyse relations between changes in statehood and the development of national museums.

Since the Middle Ages, the political history of Lithuanian statehood has been marked by both greatness and muddling through. First mentioned in written sources in 1009, Lithuania was organized as a medieval state, a duchy, during the 1200s-1300s. The last European country to be Christianized (1387), Lithuania was also home to one of the oldest East European universities (est.1579). For more than two centuries, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (hereafter GDL) was in union with the Kingdom of Poland (1569 to 1795) and formed the Commonwealth (hereafter PLC). The GDL incorporated lands which stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and which were populated by a variety of ethnic groups, such as Belarusians, Poles, Ukrainians, Jews and Tatars. The Lithuanian language was used only as the vernacular while the written language was the old Belarusian. At a later stage, Polish replaced the Lithuanian language as the spoken and written language of the elites.

The multilingual nobles of the GDL, who constituted the political nation and lived in the territory that today forms Lithuania, Belarus and Eastern Poland, defined themselves as 'gente Lituani'. The nobles were, as a rule, owners of land estates and settled in the countryside. Although in principle all nobles were of equal status, there were large differences between small landowners, landless nobles and powerful magnates who owned entire cities and often contested with the king. During the period of the 1600s-1700s, the cultural and social development of cities, especially Vilnius and Kaunas (or Vilna and Kovno), was jeopardized by multiple wars, fires and diseases. The governing elites were based in rural areas and therefore cultural development was associated with manor estates. Vilnius and Kaunas, in turn, were home to large, and often rather impoverished, Jewish communities. Not until the middle of the twentieth century did Lithuanians come to form the majority of the urban population. However, all national museums existing in 2011 are based in the major cities, with some branches elsewhere. The PLC ceased to exist in 1795 as it was partitioned between the Russian and Habsburg Empires and Prussia. During the nineteenth century, which was marked by both the development of ethnic nationalisms and the construction of national or public museums across Europe, Lithuanian society was subjected to various means of control. The Russian administration actively suppressed organizations that hinted at local patriotism (Vilnius University was closed down in the 1830s; Lithuanian script was prohibited in the 1860s) and tightly regulated public associations. However, aristocratic amateur scholars and writers, and intellectuals from the middle-classes (Balkelis 2009), managed to create various societies that fostered ideas about national museums. During the nineteenth century, Lithuania developed antagonistic relations with Russia, which were supplemented with antagonism to Poland in the first half of the twentieth century (Staliūnas 2004). The independent nation state of Lithuania was established in 1918, but in 1920 Poland occupied a large part of Lithuania, most importantly the capital city Vilnius. After a *coup d'état* in

1926 Lithuania was subjected to the semi-authoritarian regime of Antanas Smetona. This regime espoused values of folk culture and language-based ethnic-nationalism and promoted anti-Polish sentiments. It is important to note that during 1918-1940 the influence of the old landed noble elites decreased: many of the nobles had already fled the country during the nineteenth century, especially after the unsuccessful uprising against the Russian Empire in 1863. The new democracy also introduced a land reform that imposed caps on private land ownership and redistributed land to previously landless peasants. The old elites were also regarded as being excessively 'Polonized' and therefore not entirely loyal Lithuanians.

Museums and Polish-Lithuanian Political Identity

The formation of the first public museums in Lithuania could be understood as expressions of both local patriotism, featured in 'the nation of nobles', and of democratic aspirations to produce and disseminate scholarly knowledge and cultural education. Bearing in mind the rather harsh measures of the Russian Imperial administration it is difficult to estimate the political intentions of the museum builders. However, there may have been some intentional political agenda in the process: the establishment of the Vilnius Antiquities Museum was soon involved in political turbulence.

The first public museum in Lithuania, founded in 1812 by the Lithuanian lawyer Dionizas Poška, was playfully called *Baublys*. Situated in the gardens of Poška's estate, Baublys was a large oak tree trunk, which was hollowed out and used as a room to display various objects. These objects related to local history (archaeological findings) and general West European history (medieval manuscripts, antiquities). In 2011, Baublys remains open to the public and is part of the museum *Ausėja*, dedicated to local history and Lithuanian nation-building movements, in Šiauliai. Although frequented by the nineteenth century nation-builders, Baublys was more of a *Kunstkammer*. It was its body, the trunk of an ancient oak, which was perceived to be of value, and not the displayed collection.

The first public museum with a mission to accumulate, study and display a collection, with the aim of preservation and popular education, was organized almost half a century later. The establishment of Vilnius Museum of Antiquities (VMA) in 1855 was the result of strong individual actors, organized in a civic society. It has to be remembered that the Tsar, who was afraid of any devolution of power, actively discouraged creating museums outside of Saint Petersburg (Nikishin and Fladmark 2000). Conditions were not conducive to the opening of new museums in Russia proper, but the situation was much more complicated in the newly annexed lands of Poland-Lithuania. Since 1795, the former lands of the GDL, together with the Duchy of Poland, came into the possession of the Russian Empire. Unsuccessful attempts at revolts against Russian rule in 1831 and 1863 were followed by tightening control of cultural and civic life in Lithuanian lands, which were proclaimed as part of the North-Western Region.¹

Members of the Vilnius-based Polish-Lithuanian aristocrats initiated the creation of VMA. The most active was Eustach Tyszkiewicz (1814-1873) of the powerful Tyszkiewicz family, known for its rich collections of West European art and antiquities and keen interest in archaeology. In the context of Tsarist domination over the local elites, the construction of VMA could be understood as containing a hidden political agenda. First, the establishment of VMA was an enlightenment project, because the museum was intended to compensate for the closure

of Vilnius University in 1832. Second, surviving descriptions of VMA displays indicate that VMA dedicated some space to the history of the PLC: VMA's displays publicly exhibited objects connected with the political identity of the Polish-Lithuanian nation.

The published rationales described the purpose of VMA as the study and display of the universal history of mankind, natural history and local history. Adam Kirkor (1818-1886), one of the founders of VMA, was particularly interested in reviving the Lithuanian nation, despite the fact that he did not speak Lithuanian (Staliūnas 2001). This political orientation of the museum was confirmed by the reaction of the Imperial administration: after the Polish-Lithuanian uprising in 1863-1864, VMA's collections were purged and looted and VMA was transferred to the administration of the city governor. However, in reality the museum ceased to function: the museum was hardly ever open and its displays were censored. Objects that referred to the PLC could not be displayed.

The next important step in the history of Lithuanian national museums was taken in the 1880s. Since 1863, printing in Lithuanian letters had been banned. This prohibition stirred a widespread cultural movement outside Lithuanian lands, particularly in the area of East Prussia, where literature was published in the Lithuanian language and illegally smuggled into Lithuania and distributed throughout the country. A group of intellectuals, such as a medical doctor and keen archaeologist Jonas Basanavičius, saw their mission as 'awakening' the Lithuanian nation. They propagated interest in the history and language of Lithuania, particularly archaeological research (Balkelis 2009). It was in these circles of émigré intellectuals that the explicit idea of a 'national museum' (in Lithuanian, *tautos muziejus*) was first formulated. The cultural project of nation building was eventually translated into a political quest for independent statehood. It is significant that those Lithuanian nation builders, who spoke Lithuanian at home or learned Lithuanian at an adult age, did not seek to capitalize on VMA. In contrast, they actively downplayed VMA's significance, mainly because VMA's founders did not speak Lithuanian and therefore were seen as Polonized elites and traitors, because they collaborated with the Imperial authorities.

Museums and the Nationalising State: The Cult of Grand Dukes and the Search for Lithuanian Art

The words 'national museum' were first used in the debates following the Lithuanian ethnographic exhibition at the Paris World Fair (1900) (*Varpas* 1900). In 1899, Lithuanian activists abroad were actively engaged in organising an exhibition at the Paris World Fair. The display, containing samples of Lithuanian newspapers and books, was arranged independently from the Russian Empire and displayed in the ethnographic section of the Fair ("Parodos reikalai," 1899: 81-82). Following the Fair, an article about the education of the Lithuanian nation was published in February 1900. For the first time, the idea of a national museum was formulated and, significantly, its purpose was conceived as first and foremost educational: "The establishment of the National Library and the National Museum are of big importance in the education of the nation" (S.Z. 1900: 14).² In 1907, the idea of 'The House of the Nation', which would include, among other things, a library and a museum, was voiced by Basanavičius, the leader of a newly founded Lithuanian Science Society (LSS) (Tyla 1984: 38). The LSS was not a rich organization: it did not seem to be able to attract rich patrons. The idea of 'the House of the Nation'

systematically recurred in discussions in the press after the establishment of an independent nation-state of Lithuania in 1918. The project never materialized, although many of the LSS's members were signatories of the Independence Act and consequently significant actors in subsequent governments. However, it seems that the interwar governments of the Republic of Lithuania did not prioritize museums as an instrument in the ongoing nation-building. Museums are expensive and probably it was thought that the establishment of museums was a matter for private individuals or civil society.³

At present it is difficult to establish precisely the moment at which the idea of creating *a particular national museum* emerged in Lithuania. In 1918, in line with Woodrow Wilson's right of self-determination, Lithuania was established as an independent republic with its capital in Vilnius. At that time, Vilnius was home to many learned societies, several of which actively assembled collections and made them available to the public. However, in 1920 Vilnius region was annexed by Poland and the Lithuanian government moved the capital to Kaunas. It was, therefore, in Kaunas that the first museums that held the explicitly acknowledged status of 'national significance' were organized and established in a specially constructed building. These museums were Vytautas the Great Military Museum (1921/1930/1936) and Mikalojus K. Čiurlionis Art Gallery (1921/1936). (These museums are discussed in greater detail in Part 3).

During the brief period of independence (1918-1940) the Lithuanian government did not seek to create an integrated system of museums. This was not surprising because the state cultural policy system was not systematically developed at that time. The period featured short-lived and under-funded Commissions for Arts Affairs, most often under the Department for Education (Mačiulis 2005). This should not be regarded as a feature unique to Lithuania: in the interwar period only authoritarian states, such as the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, had developed administrations for the arts and culture. In Lithuania, the creation of new cultural organizations came from below, usually from formally organized learned societies. Although the 1938 Constitution endowed the President of Lithuania with almost absolute power, both the intellectual community and wider society provided increasingly less support to the authoritarian nationalist regime (Senn 2007). Lithuanian authoritarianism, however, was 'soft': to my knowledge, there were no attempts at direct regulation of museum exhibitions. It is important to note that cultural autonomy also applied to other ethnic groups, for example the Jewish museum was moved from Vilnius to Kaunas.

The Centralized State Museum System and Nationalism: Subverting Socialism

An integrated system of state museums, just like the idea of a state-run cultural sector, was formulated by the Russian communist government in the 1920s. The central administration for culture and education called Narkompros, the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment, headed by Anatolii Lunacharsky was established in 1917 (Fitzpatrick 1970). The Soviet system of cultural policy was revised in the 1930s, when Iosif Stalin further centralized the cultural sector by imposing the obligatory creative unions.

In June 1940, the Red Army entered the territory of the Lithuanian Republic and with the help of rigged elections elected a communist government, which declared that Lithuania joined the Soviet Union and became the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania (LSSR). Sovietization of the Lithuanian economy, public life and cultural sector was promptly started and this was a brutal

process. Between 1940-1952 Lithuania lost 780,922 inhabitants or about 30% of its population, as people were killed, deported, or fled the country. Sovietization was followed by the Second World War, during which about 95% of Lithuania's Jewish population were killed both by Nazis and Lithuanians. After the war, the economy drastically declined and growth first took place only in the late 1950s. These horrifying and traumatic beginnings of the LSSR paved way for further decades of governance through fear and survival through adjusting to the authoritarian regime. Post-1940 development of Lithuanian national museums took place in a drastically different political, cultural and material context. The communist ideology of creating a new Soviet man replaced, but did not entirely do away with ethnic nation-building. The Soviet system appeared to prefer the local ethnic majority, i.e. Lithuanian culture. The Soviet regime was strongly anti-Semitic and the Holocaust was largely omitted in official histories of the Second World War. Despite rapid urbanization, Lithuania remained a predominantly agricultural country, even after fifty years of communist rule. The majority of Lithuanian urban elites, who emerged during the interwar republic, fled to the West; many of the new Soviet cultural and political elites came from rural areas. In this way there were multiple social, political and economic factors at work, which sustained and further developed interest in folk culture. It has been widely argued that folk culture was regarded as mildly anti- or a-Soviet, and as a legitimate way to promote Lithuanian ethnic identity and reconnect with the interwar republic. Museums could and did describe folk culture in line with Marxism-Leninism as a component of working class life. Finally, participation in folk culture was part of the everyday experience of many cultural operators, who often came from the countryside.

The Communist Party (CP) was arguably the strongest actor in the Soviet system of museums: all museums, like all organizations in the Soviet Union, were subject to CP ideological and financial control. But which state organs were of the highest significance? The work of Soviet museums was regulated by decrees from Central Committees (hereafter CC) of both the LSSR CP and the CPSU. In 1965, for example, the LSSR CC demanded that the museums be better used for education purposes. This could not be achieved without 'proper care that exhibitions would strictly adhere to historical reality and that historical events would be presented from a Marxist-Leninist position'. The CC stipulated that 'more attention should be paid to the propaganda of the friendship of nations and that the role of masses should be emphasized'. The CC also warned that activities of individual persons 'should not be overestimated'. On the other hand, in the same decision, CC called for improvement of the protection, scientific research and propaganda of cultural monuments, because 'historical, archaeological, architectural, folk art monuments and, especially, the monuments of the revolutionary past and the Great Fatherland War, should be widely used in the communist education of working people'.⁴

Already in 1940, some museums were centralized under a newly established organization, the Central State Museum of Culture, which was under Narkompros (Samavičius 1991: 77). Other museums were transferred to the LSSR Academy of Sciences (LAS). The LAS narrated its origin as being rooted in the Lithuanian Science Society (1907-1940), which had its own museum. After 1953, most museums were transferred to the newly established Ministry of Culture, a branch of the all-union Ministry of Culture. The LSSR Minister of Culture was not particularly influential in policy making on the republic level: for example, the Minister of Culture was not typically a member of the Politburo, the highest decision-making body in the communist government.⁵ In

1967, the LCP Supreme Council passed the Law on the Protection of Cultural Monuments (besides Lithuania, this law was adopted only in the Russian Federal Republic and the all-union law was adopted only nine years later).⁶

The Soviet museum system entailed several networks: republic, local (city council or collective farm) and trade union museums. The republic and all-union Ministries of Culture were in charge of the most important museums. State cultural policy was organized according to annual and five-year plans.⁷ In 1963, a joint Agency for Museums and Cultural Monuments (AMCM) was established under the LSSR Ministry of Culture.⁸ At the moment, it is unclear just how much the work of the AMCM was coordinated with the Agency for Cultural Enlightenment Organizations, which was in charge of culture houses and clubs. It may well be the case that the museums sector, in practice, was little used in education, because education was the responsibility of a separate ministry. The Soviet system of governance, it has to be remembered, was very vertical and compartmentalized; there was little horizontal cooperation. In turn, partially in order to avoid ideological errors of interpretation, Soviet museums narrowed down their activities to collecting to such an extent that later on the museums were criticized as 'dead warehouses'. However, as I will detail in a case study, the cultural intelligentsia perceived the very presence of some museums as a strong symbolic statement.

The Soviet administration established clear hierarchies within the museum sector. Such hierarchies were reflected in funding: the staff from such museums as the Kaunas State Museum of Culture (formerly the State Čiurlionis Art Museum), the Military-Historical Museum (formerly VDMM) and the Vilnius Art Museum (VAM) received the highest salaries (category 1) (Samavičius 1991: 78). The determination of museum status and corresponding economic categorization was based on geographical location and the numbers of visitors and stored objects (Jokubaitis & Klimavičius 1991: 154). In other words, big museums located in central cities were financially rewarded by the Soviet economic system. In the case studies, I will show that the Soviet regime conferred the highest administrative status on the interwar 'national museums'. In this way, although perhaps unintentionally, the Soviet regime sustained the pre-war organizations in the system of national cultural values.

The centralization of the administration and financing of cultural life under the state agencies should not give the impression that the Soviet system completely abolished the role of individual persons. True, civic associations could not really be organized under Soviet regime. On the other hand, some non-governmental associations, such as student clubs or amateur clubs, could be formed. Although closely watched by state intelligence agencies (KGB), many of these associations contributed a lot to researching and collecting objects related to local history and folk culture.

A good example here is *The Society for the Monuments Protection and Local History*, established in the LSSR in 1965.⁹ This was part of the all-union movement: in the same year the All-Russian Society for Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments (VOOPIK) was founded under the RSFSR Ministry of Culture. Mainly in the provinces, local history enthusiasts gathered objects and oral history and donated them to local museums. An article indicated that in many places such ad hoc growing collections of 'cultural monuments' (this term was used to describe any object which had a heritage value) stimulated the establishment of new museums ('Maži eksponatai...' 1966: 65). The work of the Society was regulated: its members were strongly

encouraged to collect materials which related to the Soviet part of Lithuanian history, for example objects related to Soviet partisans. Museums organized from these collecting practices were criticized for insufficient scientific quality, poor infrastructure and lack of public displays. The high number of these museums, pointed out the deputy head of the MCMFA, was inflated by a wish to improve statistical reports ('Muziejai ir...' 1968: 3).

Another important non-state actor was *The Soviet Fund for Culture* (SFC), a self-regulating public body initiated by Raisa Gorbacheva and George Soros, with had branches in all Soviet republics. The founding conference for SFC took place in Moscow, November 1986. Among the principal tasks of the Lithuanian branch of the Fund was to raise and distribute material support to cultural organizations, including museums, in the countryside. The chairman of the Fund particularly highlighted the importance of supporting memorial museums of Lithuanian artists (Kudaba 1987: 8). The Fund's policy reversed previously negative official attitudes to private collecting: the Fund's statute stipulated collaboration and assistance for private collectors. Another important direction was engaging the society in building, restoring and preserving public monuments ('Tarybinio...' 1987).

The role of individual actors was actually quite important in the centralized formal system of Soviet administration. Only creative individuals could solve the many bureaucratic bottlenecks: hence the role of directors became extremely important in the Soviet regime. Resources, distributed centrally through the Ministry of Culture, were very scarce. The Soviet Union was a great military power, but also an impoverished state which channelled most of its funding to military purposes. Culture belonged to the low priority sector of services (Rindzeviciute 2008). It was vital for particular individuals, usually museum directors, to mobilize their own informal personal networks in order to obtain additional resources for their museums. Similarly, personal networks were crucial for the creation of new museums. The successful Soviet museum directors were those who actively and personally engaged with the top government officials, especially the economic planners from the State Planning Committee (Gosplan) and various ministries (Rindzevičiūtė 2010). State initiative in making new museums was largely confined to narrow propaganda: museums of atheism, which pursued a narrative of secularization by displaying objects from the history of science alongside religious objects; or museums of the communist party, often dedicated to various party activists.

How many museums were there in Soviet Lithuania? The LSSR Ministry of Culture was in charge of about 500 cultural organizations in 1980.¹⁰ Thirty of these organizations were museums, the same number as in 1953. The overall number of museums did not increase much, because many new museums were established as branches of already existing museums, for example, the popular Museum of Amber was established as a branch of the Lithuanian Art Museum. In 1989, there were 726 researchers working at LSSR museums, 561 of which had university education (Jokubaitis and Klimavičius 1991: 151). In 1984, the Ministry of Culture was in charge of twenty-nine museums (thirteen local history museums, five historical-ethnographic museums, three memorial museums, two literature museums, and the museum of Revolution, the Atheism museum, the Everyday Life museum and the Sea Aquarium museum).¹¹ Soviet museums were classified into many types. The most important ones were state republic museums, or those that were directly administered by the Ministry of Culture. The significance of these museums was 'republic-wide'. Less important museums were those that were administered under local

organs, mainly municipalities. Other types of museum included those under certain agencies, such as industrial enterprises, trade unions or associations. This latter type of the museum was sometimes called 'public'. As mentioned earlier, the biggest and most important museums from the interwar period were classified as being of 'republic-wide significance'. In this way, the Soviet status of 'a republic museum' is similar to the status of 'a national museum'. On the other hand, there were some museums that administratively were of lesser status, but in their symbolic meaning were regarded as very important to the history of the Lithuanian nation. Such was the case of Trakai castle, which was part of Trakai Local History Museum, subordinated to Trakai city council.

Quite a few new museums were built in the 1960s and later. It was the short-lived economic growth that the Soviet Union experienced in the late 1950s until the mid 1960s that stimulated the building of new museums. According to the official statistics, in 1970, Soviet Lithuanian museums attracted about 3 million visitors, which was commented on by the ministry officials as being 'a lot in relation to the past and too little in relation to the future'.¹² However, it is important to note that Soviet statistical data is unreliable: it was common practice to inflate visitor numbers. Many visits were obligatory group visits organized by schools and trade unions and therefore the numbers do not tell us much about the intentional engagement of the audiences.

Although museums were seen as important sites for propaganda and education, it can be suggested that Soviet cultural policy perceived other cultural organizations as more efficient in constructing the Soviet population. A study of documents from the archive of the LSSR Ministry of Culture created the impression that the museums sector was seen as ideologically less important than the cinema network (highly prioritized in the 1950s), or club enterprises (houses of culture, highly prioritized in the 1970-80s). This suggests that those cultural organizations that were traditionally dedicated to entertainment were held to be more important for propaganda purposes than the museums, the organizations dedicated to scholarly research and education. Cinema provided the CP ideologues with access to particularly large numbers of viewers (Roth-Ey 2011). Houses of culture organized club activities, which, in the eyes of Soviet cultural policy makers, stimulated participation in collectives. The collective was traditionally regarded as superior to the individual in Soviet Russian culture (Kharkhordin 1999). In terms of providing instantaneous access to large numbers of people, museums struggled to match cinema. Unlike culture houses, Soviet museums had little to offer for collective participation. However, just like in the West, museums in the Soviet Union performed an important role as significant institutions, which conferred value on objects, events and historical periods.

The foremost task of Soviet museums was somewhat ironic: to display the achievements of the communist regime. This was achieved by exhibiting the past in a negative light in relation to the present. However, in the 1940s-1950s, Lithuanian museums were slow to pick up on the glorification of the communist reality. In 1953, the main daily *Tiesa* published an article which outlined the purpose of cultural enterprises, formulated in a meeting of cultural workers, and criticized the museums for a lack of exhibitions about the 'achievements of the Soviet regime' ('Kelti...' 1953:2). Indeed, the Soviet state failed to adequately provide for the vast museum network that it had constructed. The Soviet Union never fulfilled its ideological declarations to develop a thriving cultural sector that would satisfy the needs of working men and women. As

basic living standards were very low, the material standards of LSSR museums were not high either. According to Antanaitis (1998: 45), salaries in the cultural sector were 20-30% below the average salary in the LSSR. This economic inferiority contributed to the low social status of ordinary cultural workers (who should not be confused with Soviet intellectual and artistic elites, who enjoyed exceptionally high social status). For example, in 1988 the LSSR Minister of Culture admitted that salaries for cultural workers were lowest and that:

(...) uncertainty about the future, bad provision with accommodation and often total indifference of the heads of [collective] farms forces young specialists to leave (...) Schools which train cultural experts do not take into consideration our [the Ministry of Culture] needs, it is probable that the schools treat cultural workers as lower-rank people, to say it colloquially, as a third brother John. Cultural workers have seen much in their lives and this attitude does not shock them (...).¹³

Museums did not have sufficient means either to provide adequate storage conditions for their collections or maintenance of their buildings, not to speak about development of new and sophisticated forms of display and dissemination. For instance, even the highly popular and nationally significant Museum of People's Everyday Life found it close to impossible to hire a specialist for wood conservation, although there was no lack of chemists in the LSSR ('Kultūros forumo...' 1969: 4). The Museum just could not offer a decent salary for a specialist. This dire situation was a 'public secret' that sat at odds with ideological declarations of the communist government's dedication to culture.

It is difficult to evaluate the impact that Soviet museums had on popular awareness of political and cultural notions of the state and the nation. Soviet museums probably found it safest to construct themselves as organizations that were first and foremost dedicated to the collection and storage of objects. It is not surprising that in 1987 the LSSR Historical and Ethnographical Museum, which derived itself from the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities, boasted the following achievements when celebrating its 130-years anniversary: 'at present the museum stores more than 340,000 exhibits, there are almost 24,000 cards filled in at a scientific cards database, 14 scientific catalogues were published' (Jankevičienė 1987: 19).¹⁴ It was thought that museums, as Jokubaitis and Klimavičius had put it, could form their collections rather independently from governmental control: 'collect whatever you like, but, for god's sake, people should not see it'. On the other hand, documentation of audience response was actually controlled, as the museums' books for comments used a special binding which made it easy to remove pages, because pages were not numbered (Jokubaitis and Klimavičius 1991:151).

The national 'cult of heroes' was described by Soviet ideologues as a bourgeois ideology that tried to make 'the masses more patriotic for the exploitative system'. Glorification of Lithuanian history was criticized for masking that elites retrieved their strength and wealth not from the past, but from the present: 'having forgotten speeches and hymns about the glorious national past, nationalist leaders and petty chiefs acquired their wealth and goods from the present, bought manors, built houses, and when doing that forgot to take care of the monuments of the past of our nation and land' (*Gimtasīs kraštas* 1940:3-4, cf Pšibilskis 1987: 37).

Although additional research is required to understand dissemination of narratives developed in the LSSR museums among the Lithuanian population, it can be suggested that the LSSR

museums contributed to the ethnicization of the history of Lithuania. This process was particularly important in the areas where ethnic Lithuanians traditionally constituted a minority, such as Vilnius city and region. Elsewhere I have argued that the State Historical and Ethnographic Museum (HEM) structured its display of the history of LSSR around the sole narrative of the nation of ethnic Lithuanians (Lithuanian speakers who lived, broadly, in the territory of the LSSR) (Rindzevičiūtė 2010a). The conservation and partial restoration of Gediminas and Trakai castles reaffirmed the interwar narrative of the history of Lithuania, which was rooted in the heroic past of the GDL.

The years of 1988-1990 saw intensification of the national revival movement. Calls to revive 'national culture' were voiced widely in all public media. The cultural press published articles about Soviet historical taboos, such as the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, deportations and killings by the communist regime and texts about the government of the interwar Lithuanian Republic. The Soviet period was described as the 'genocide of our cultural traditions' (Jackūnas 1989: 5). Even before the declaration of independence on 11 March 1990, many museums removed exhibitions that glorified the Soviet system.

National Museums and the Regaining of Sovereignty, 1990-2011

What was the role of the idea of a national museum in the debates about cultural policy in (once again sovereign) Lithuania? A study of the main cultural monthly, *Domains of Culture (Kultūros barai)*, revealed that museums were surprisingly absent from the heated discussions, which otherwise concerned most diverse forms of cultural practices. During the upheaval of the national revival in 1989, *Domains of Culture* published many articles and discussion round tables, which deliberated on how national culture was to be revived and how the Lithuanian cultural sector was to be revitalized. Nevertheless, museums were not mentioned either as individual organizations or a whole organizational network in these debates. Instead, there was a strongly voiced concern about 'cultural monuments', particularly their preservation and restoration.¹⁵ For example, Zikaras's monument *Freedom* was returned to the square of the Vytautas the Great Military Museum in Kaunas in 1988, followed by restoration of an alley of busts of nation-builders and a monument to an unknown soldier. Re-erection of monuments destroyed by the Soviet regime appeared to be the main cultural strategy, undertaken both by the civil society and strongly supported by the government.

Calls to revive 'traditional ethnic culture' constituted another important component of public discourses during the first decade of post-Soviet transformation. It is important to note that revival of the forgotten culture of other ethnic groups, such as Jews, was also part of this movement (Rindzevičiūtė, forthcoming). Some artefacts, for example decorative crosses made by amateur folk artists, were seen as important parts of traditional ethnic culture. However, Lithuanian ethnic culture was first and foremost identified with practices, such as the Lithuanian language, literature and songs, a way of life, especially festive rituals and, curiously, both Catholic and pre-Christian religion, and less so with objects, which were stored in the museums.¹⁶ Drawing on the Russian philosopher Lev Gumilev, Lithuanian intellectuals described the Lithuanian ethnic culture as a material and spiritual system, which included both the man-made and natural environment.¹⁷ Here complex environments, such as the built environment (Vilnius Old Town, rural villages) and landscapes, prevailed over discreet objects that could be stored in

museums. In turn, some museums, such as open-air museums, could accommodate performance of the practices of ethnic identity and became increasingly popular.

The museums somehow retreated back in this new public quest for the national identity. But did the museums become less important for the political agenda of the state? There is no easy answer to this question. Relative absence of the museums from public discourses about Lithuanian national identity may be understood not as a sign of their weakness, but as a sign of strength or fulfilled institutionalization of the museums. For example, by the mid-1990s the museums analyzed below were firmly anchored in the most central and prestigious sites of the two largest cities, the castle area and the Old Town in Vilnius and in the imposing purpose-built central buildings in Kaunas. Perhaps the state of the museums was simply not seen as being that urgent. It has to be remembered that the late 1980s saw increasing economic hardship and in the early 1990s the Lithuanian economy declined much more than, for example, the US economy did during the Great Depression. There were more urgent problems than reorganization of already well-established museums: architectural heritage was especially endangered due to decades-long neglect. In the early 1990s a Swedish visitor, for example, saw Vilnius Old Town as a surreal landscape of decrepit ruins (Kreuger 2010). A Finnish colleague of mine described Vilnius at that time as the ‘Havana of Eastern Europe’, where old-fashioned Soviet vehicles were parked in dilapidated baroque courtyards. The above described hegemony of architectural heritage and public sculptures was to a large extent motivated by an obvious need to preserve or re-establish things which either were on the genuine verge of extinction (such as ruined churches, badly damaged old buildings) or were demolished by the communist regime (such as public sculptures).

Although the museums did not occupy the central place in public debates about national culture, discussions about how to contribute to the ongoing political and cultural changes took place within the museum sector. On 18 April 1989 a founding meeting of the Lithuanian museum workers’ association took place. The idea to create such an association was formed spontaneously during a meeting in Kaunas, 15 November 1988. Its goal was to reform Soviet museums and, as one paper outlined quite poignantly, to fix the damage that the Soviet occupation inflicted on the Lithuanian nation: ‘The fatal year 1940 disturbed not only the material, but also the spiritual life of Lithuania. The “new spiritual values” which were brought with the occupying tanks were declared to be the only real and true ones. The notion of national culture disappeared. Instead an understanding of a class culture appeared, ‘nation’ was replaced with cosmopolitan ‘people’. Fatherland (*tėvynė*) was turned into motherland (*tėviškė*) and its place was occupied by an acronym that has no nationality – the USSR. Because the notions of national history and culture had vanished, Lithuanian museums lost ‘their guiding idea’ (Jokubaitis and Klimavičius 1991: 151).

The Soviet legacy was, in this way, paradoxical. It was thought that the Soviet government succeeded in turning museums into a tool of propaganda. On the other hand, it was complained that Soviet museums developed into huge warehouses, which were only interested in gathering and classifying their objects and did little to introduce their collections into broader social life. Critics were harsh: they declared that in 1989 even those LSSR museums that were to become national museums were not worth the status of a scientific organization. Such a status could be granted, it was suggested, only to the great Moscow and Leningrad museums. Another point of criticism concerned the return of exhibitions to ‘material things’, because Soviet museum

exhibitions 'were filled with endless "ideologically important" photocopies, documents and little papers, other materials which are not valuable from museological point of view'. All Soviet Lithuanian museums, it was argued, looked the same and were boring. Finally, the fact that most LSSR museums were heavily underfinanced and their collections were as a rule kept in bad condition, and the fact that the salary of a museum worker (on average 111-113 roubles per month in 1989) was hardly higher than a state pension, were indicated as the key problems. The meeting was rounded up with the suggestion to include a definition of the 'national treasure of Lithuanian culture' in the LR Constitution (this suggestion was not implemented) (Jokubaitis and Klimavičius 1991: 151).

However, reforms were soon to come to the Lithuanian museums sector. Besides freedom of speech, the reforms principally entailed administrative decentralization, which granted the museums with more autonomy in decision-making, at the same time guaranteeing state financing through the Ministry of Culture. In April 1990 the Republic Commission for Monuments and Decorative Sculpture was abolished and replaced with the Republic Commission for Monuments, which used independent experts.¹⁸ In 2003, a special Museum Council was organized as an advisory experts' body at the Ministry of Culture. The plan for the last year (1990) of the LSSR Ministry of Culture did not list museums as a priority sphere: it focused instead on legislation, the congress of culture and several song, theatre, and film festivals.¹⁹ The state principally provided the museums with salary and maintenance costs. Hardly any funds were allocated for creating new exhibitions. Although in 1993 the Lithuanian government spent a respectable 3.3% of the national budget on culture, in real terms it was pittance: the average salary of a museum worker was 103 litas per month (ca 25 USD).²⁰

The post-Soviet national museums continued to capitalize on being depositories of 'nationally significant' objects. Most displays were revised to reflect new historical narratives. However, there was a surprising lack of debate about how a new democratic national museum should be constructed in Lithuania. For instance, an overview of the quarterly magazine *Museums' Chronicles* demonstrates a quite surprising absence of explicit, published rationales for post-Soviet museums as sites for the education of the citizens in new democratic ethics.

It was in 1996 that a new law for national museums was passed. This law made the three national museums (the Lithuanian National Museum (LNM), the Lithuanian Art Museum and the M.K. Čiurlionis Art Gallery) more independent from the Ministry of Culture, because the budgets of these museums were now voted on by the parliament and administered by the Ministry of Finance. It is rather curious to see that only three of the top or 'republic' status Soviet museums managed to 'translate' themselves into the new formal status of a national museum. Two of these museums, the Historical-Ethnographic Museum (HEM) and the Lithuanian Art Museum (LAM), were based in Vilnius. It can be hypothesized that the directors' role was particularly important here. The current director of LAM, an art historian, Romualdas Budrys, had decades-long experience as an insider of top decision makers in LSSR. The director of HEM/LNM, Birutė Kulnytė, worked at the museum since 1973 and it was thanks to her initiative that HEM was turned into the most venerable LNM.²¹ The third director, Osvaldas Daugelis, had worked at the Čiurlionis State Art Museum since 1979. Being a deputy head in 1988-92, he was appointed as the director in 1992.

It was after the collapse of the Soviet Union that an official definition of ‘the national museum’ was eventually formed. In 1992, 1994 and 1996 the LR government revised *The Regulations of the State Museum*. The 1996 revision stipulated five types of museums: national, republic, county (*apskritis*), local and agency museums. These types were formulated on the basis of a museum’s collection and anchored in territorial-administrative structures. According to the regulations, the national museums have administrative duties as coordinating centres, which provide guidance and assistance to other public museums in Lithuania.

Types of collection played the most important role in the attribution of the official status of a given museum. According to the official definition (1996) the national museums were ‘those museums which store the most important collections of the state historical, art, technology, nature and other kinds of values’.²² *The Regulations* also stipulated that the national museum was principally a category only applicable to state-owned museums: only the Ministry of Culture could establish the national museums. However, not in all cases was there a clear-cut relation between the museum collection and its status.

In 1990, the word ‘national’ was included in the title of the former Lithuanian State Historical-Ethnographic Museum as it was renamed the National Lithuanian Museum of the State and Culture. In July 1996 the official status of a ‘national museum’ was legislated and granted to three museums: *the National Lithuanian Museum of the State and Culture History* (now: The Lithuanian National Museum, Vilnius), *the Lithuanian Art Museum* (Vilnius) and *the State M. K. Čiurlionis Museum* (Kaunas).²³ It is notable that all these three museums have a surprising amount of so called ‘exhibition branches’. These branches are actually pretty self-sufficient and different museums in their own right.

There were several exceptions. One of them was the controversial case of the rebuilding of the Royal Palace in Vilnius. The building was not yet finished in 2011 and the Royal Palace does not have a particularly old and significant national collection; however, the Royal Palace was granted national museum status. Because I have analysed this case in detail (Rindzeviciute 2010), I will not expand on it here. It suffices to note that the key rationale of the Royal Palace focuses on establishing continuity between the contemporary Lithuanian state and the GDL. In doing so, the Royal Palace somewhat revised the 19th-20th century narrative that portrayed Lithuania’s relations with Poland in negative terms. Additionally, it should be noted that an important patron of the Royal Palace was Romualdas Budrys, the director of the Lithuanian Art Museum, one of the three post-Soviet national museums. Backed by the powerful political figures of the President and then Prime Minister and Budrys, this new museum was therefore attributed with this especially high administrative status.

The creation of the famous Grūtas Park Museum of Soviet Life (established in 2001) could be described as another exceptional case when a museum stimulated significant public debate about the political past. During the 1990s, the Ministry of Culture searched for a solution to monuments of Soviet figures, because the Ministry was official owner of these monuments. Initially stored in several warehouses and even in the courtyard of a former KGB prison in Vilnius, the monuments were given to a private entrepreneur Viliūmas Malinauskas, who signed an agreement with the Ministry to use these statues to create a museum park. Since then, the Grūtas Park Museum of Soviet Life has proved to be a popular destination, an economically viable undertaking and a fascinating case, which attracted quite conflicting evaluations by many

international scholars.²⁴ The author's observations at several local conferences revealed that Grūtas Park Museum was not, however, treated as a 'proper museum' by the workers of the national museums.

Elsewhere, I have analyzed the creation of new museums that engaged with subjects that were silenced under Soviet regime: the crimes of communism and the Holocaust (Rindzeviciute, forthcoming). The professional community of museologists took up the post-Soviet reorganization of existing museums: it was perceived and implemented as an internal matter for cultural sector professionals. The organizing of new museums, particularly the Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum and the Museum of the Victims of Genocide (both in Vilnius) was undertaken by groups of enthusiasts or civil society. The Jewish Museum was established largely by the efforts of a newly established Society for Jewish Culture (1989). The Genocide Museum was established through the efforts of a public association and political party the Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees (1992). The heritage department of the Ministry of Culture and Education assisted the organization of both museums. It is interesting that the already existing museums regarded the development of these new museums with some scepticism, just like in the Grūtas case. Perhaps one of the reasons was the perceived competition for scarce economic resources in the public sector.

Case studies

The Lithuanian National Museum

The first case deals with the Lithuanian National Museum (LNM), which, as its name suggests, has the formal status of a national museum. Formally established in 1992, the LNM defines itself as an heir to Vilnius Museum of Antiquities (1855-1865). By the early nineteenth century, ideas about public museums as instruments to disseminate enlightenment ideals and republican ideas circulated in Lithuania. For example, in the 1820s, the organiser of a 'philarethic and philomatic association', a student of Vilnius University, wrote in exile that 'people's museums' were instruments for education of the people and helped the government to establish communication with the population and to mobilise it for progressive goals (Keršytė 2003: 22).²⁵

The idea to establish a public museum in Vilnius belonged to Count Eustach Tyszkiewicz, a wealthy landowner from Minsk county (*gubernija*). As Vilnius University was closed down in 1832, in 1835 Tyszkiewicz attempted (unsuccessfully) to establish a scientific historical society (Aleksandravičius 1989: 36). In 1848, the count submitted a proposal to establish a Provincial Museum, which, according to the Lithuanian historian Mulevičiūtė, very closely resembled the structure of the *Musaeum Polonicum* (1775). Tyszkiewicz proposed to organize four sections of natural history, antiquities (archaeological findings, works of art, weapons, coins), library and economy.²⁶ The envisioned museum was to stimulate both local patriotism and economic progress; the museum's collection would 'encourage the inhabitants to love the artefacts of their homeland, but also competition [...] by expanding and improving local industries just as exploring historically our past; it also will serve by persuading the young generation that the artefacts of our land are no worse than those from abroad'. Interestingly, just before engaging in his museum project, Tyszkiewicz had travelled extensively in Sweden, Denmark and Norway in 1843. In his detailed description of this journey, the count described his deep impressions about

libraries, art and historical collections, burial mounds, castles and churches. However, Mulevičiūtė pointed out that in his notes Tyszkiewicz never mentioned Scandinavian museums which makes it difficult to prove a direct Nordic influence (Mulevičiūtė, 2003: 47-48).

Tyszkiewicz's museum proposal (1848) was rejected. In 1851 the Count produced another proposal in which he promised to donate his collection of antiquities, numismatics and library on the condition that the government provided the premises and appointed him as the head of the museum. The museum would be financed by private donations. Somewhat later, he also suggested establishing a learned society that would specialise in archaeological studies (Aleksandravičius 1989: 36-7). This was accompanied with a somewhat less ambitious plan for the museum in which the industrial part was abandoned. The proposal was accepted. However, it took several years for the organisation of the museum and, according to Aleksandravičius (1989:37), the Imperial administration was concerned about the possible political implications of the collections and demanded that the displays would be accompanied by the 'correct' version of history.

On 29 April 1855, the Tsar passed a decree on the Museum of Antiquities and the Temporary Archaeological Commission in Vilnius.²⁷ This decree described the museum as a Russian institution, dedicated 'to preserve the monuments of antiquity, to create an opportunity to use them for the study of the region [*krai*] not only in relation to its history, but also in relation to its trade, industry, natural history, agriculture and statistics'.²⁸ The museum was envisioned as a library, a fine arts depository and a natural history laboratory, as it included 'ancient books, documents, manuscripts, coins, medals, weapons, inscriptions and photographs [of incomprehensible], pictures, sculptures and other objects, which are relevant to the Western region of Russia' ('Polozhenie o Muzeumi'...' 1855: 2). The news about the first large public museum in Lithuania, and the Archaeological Commission, were announced in the main bilingual newspaper, *Vilnius Courier* (in Polish *Kuryer Wileński*, in Russian *Vilenski vestnik*).

The head of the museum was responsible to the Governor-general of Vilnius, Grodno, Minsk and Kaunas military counties (*okrug*) and the Head of Vilnius Scientific County. The appointing of another head was the responsibility of the Governor-general, who was also responsible for Vilnius Scientific County, with the agreement of the minister for National Education. The appointed staff of the museum included a scientific secretary-librarian and two administrative staff. Financing came from the Museum and the Commission that was to be approved by the Governor-general. The Ministry of National Education or the Governor-general's office was suggested as possible premises for the museum. The chairmen, vice-chairmen and members of the Museum and Commission were also to be formally approved by the Governor-general. The decree listed that it was 'local landowners and people in general' who were eligible to become members. The members had to support the museum scientifically, financially and materially, at not less than 30 silver roubles per year. The Museum and the Commission were given the right to publish their proceedings, with approval of the Censor ('Polozhenie o Muzeumi'...' 1855: 2-3). In September 1858 the importance of the museum was officially signalled by the visit of Tsar Alexander II.²⁹ In relation to this visit the Museum published a small collection of historical documents and sources; another volume was planned for 1863.

It seems that the primary function of the museum, formally outlined in the decree, dealt with the production of politically and economically useful knowledge about the administratively

defined area. In the decree, the word 'Lithuania' did not feature at all. The only geographical reference is the one indicated on the Imperial map, the Western part of Russia.

The VMA collection was supplemented with cabinets of Mineralogy, Zoology and Numismatics, which originally belonged to Vilnius University, but after its closure were held in Vilnius High School (*Vilniaus gimnazija*). VMA had the following nine sections: archaeological collection, archaeographical, numismatic, portrait, prints and sculptures, stamp collection, a library, zoological, mineralogical cabinets and botanic collection. In 1862 VMA organised a new ethnographic section on the basis of donations of the Count Mikhail Tyszkiewicz and doctors of the Baltic navy. The ethnographic collection included about 406 objects from China, Japan, Egypt and Siberia (*Kuryer Wilenski* 1863: 1). The first ethnographic collection in the Vilnius Museum of Antiquity could be seen as part of an imperial colonisation project.

In 1862, the Commission had 206 members, of whom 20 members were from outside the Empire (it was added that most of them were from Slavic lands) (*Kuryer Wilenski* 22 January 1863: 1). The Commission collaborated with learned societies in the Russian Empire and abroad (the collaboration mainly involved exchange of publications) (*Vilenskii v'stnik* 1864: 4). Ironically, already in 1862 the Vilnius Governor-general has decided to establish an Archaeographical Commission in Vilnius, which according to Aleksandravičius (1989: 44), presumed dissolution of the Archaeological Commission.³⁰

Polish-Lithuanian uprisings against Russia in 1863-1864 triggered harsh cultural policy measures. On 27 February 1865 the Governor Murav'ev created a commission for the reorganisation of VMA. The commission criticised VMA for featuring many objects that referred to PLC national heroes, such as the poets Adam Mickewicz and Tadeusz Kosciuszka, and the GDL (armour, flags, stamps). According to Mulevičiūtė, those objects that could be related to rebellious Grand Duchy nobles were removed from VMA's collection (including a portrait of Thomas Jefferson) in March 1865. Interestingly, according to the records, the ethnographic section did not experience almost any damage. The official records listed 256 objects that were confiscated and sent to other museums in Russia. In reality, about 1,000 objects went missing and members of the Archaeological Commission perceived this as a collapse of VMA. The Museum was transferred to a newly established Public Library. In 1866 the new head of the museum found its collections in disarray and rather badly damaged. In 1868 the Museum was again opened to the public, but the number of visitors decreased. The collections were expanded to include objects with Slavic connotations and attributes of the Imperial administration. Starting in 1871, when the head of museum Aleksii Vladimirov was replaced, an increasingly important role was played by objects connected with the Orthodox church (Mulevičiūtė 2003: 52-6).

During the 1905 revolution, the ban on public associations was lifted. In Lithuania new societies were formed and organised new museums. VMA was partially revived as the Vilnius Science and Art Museum between 1907 and 1914 (again under the initiative of Tyshkiewicz family members). This time the museum explicitly oriented its collections to represent the territory of the Grand Duchy of 'Lithuania and Belarus'. However, there was competition with other museums established by two recently founded societies: the Lithuanian Science Society (1907-1940) and the Vilnius Society of Friends of Science (1907-1941) (Petrauskienė 1985: 42-49). When Poland occupied Vilnius in 1920, the history of VMA as a Lithuanian museum was paused, ironically, until Vilnius was returned to Lithuania by communist Russia.

In 1941, the newly established LSSR Academy of Sciences (LAS) organized a historical museum under its history department, which was to house jointly collections from VMA and Vilnius's societies of Lithuanian Science and the Friends of Science.³¹ At the same time the LAS ethnography department organized an ethnographic museum. In 1952 the Museum of Ethnography was merged with the Museum of History and renamed the LSSR Museum of History and Ethnography (henceforth HEM). A cultural historian, Vincas Žilėnas, was appointed as director and, typically of Soviet leadership, remained in this position for more than two decades, retiring only in 1973. Organized in archaeological, ethnographic, history, iconography and numismatic sections, in 1963 HEM was transferred from LAS to the LSSR Ministry of Culture.

Both HEM's physical location and self-identification in narratives of its origin aptly spoke about the national significance of this institution. Situated at a complex of buildings called the New and the Old Gunpowder Houses (these buildings dated back to the 1500s-1700s and were also known as the Arsenal), HEM found itself at the foot of Gediminas Hill, near the castle and the Cathedral at the heart of Vilnius Old Town. Although first established in the early 1940s, HEM celebrated its 125th anniversary in 1980 and in this way affirmed its genealogy from the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities (1855). Indeed, the word 'national' (in Lithuanian *tautinis, nacionalinis*) had already been carefully introduced into the notion of HEM in 1970:

The Lithuanian SSR Historical and Ethnographic Museum (HEM) is a '*national museum*' because it is first and foremost concerned with collecting, storing and displaying those cultural monuments which are directly and indirectly related to the past and present of our nation. (Bernotienė, Mažeikienė and Tautavičienė 1970: 7, original emphasis – E.R.)

HEM opened its first permanent exhibition on the threshold of the end of the Thaw, November 1968. This exhibition was cautiously limited to a period between the settlement of Lithuania's territory, 10 000 BC, and the October revolution in 1917. This display was located in seven halls; the eighth hall was reserved for temporary exhibitions. In 1972 HEM reorganized the display of Lithuania's history to reflect changes in the historical interpretation of socialism introduced by Leonid Brezhnev's doctrine of 'mature socialism'. A new display 'The History of the Soviet Society, 1940 to the present' was opened later in 1976 and included several themes: 'The Victory of the Revolution and the Beginning of the Creation of Socialism in the LSSR (1940-1941)', 'Lithuania during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945)', 'Creation of the Basis of Socialism and Completion of Socialism (1945-1961)' and 'LSSR National Economy and Culture under Mature Socialism (1961-1975)' (Žilėnas 1980). The reformed HEM systematically Lithuanianized the history of the LSSR as it exclusively focused on Soviet Lithuanians and minimized the visibility of non-Lithuanian ethnic groups, such as Poles and Jews (Weeks 2008).

In 1992, HEM was renamed the Lithuanian National Museum and further expanded during the 1990s. A new statute for the Lithuanian National Museum was passed in August 2004. According to this statute, the LNM was defined as a 'national budget enterprise which collects, stores, researches, conserves, restores and popularizes the values of Lithuanian archaeology, history and ethnic culture'. The charter also re-affirmed the genealogy of LNM from the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities (1855) and the collections of the Lithuanian Science Society (1907-1941). The key directions of LNM collections were listed: archaeology, the history of Lithuania,

Lithuania's ethnic culture, iconography, and numismatic. In 2011 the LNM contained the following branch museums:

1. Exhibitions about Lithuania's archaeology, history and ethnic culture (The Old and New Arsenals, Vilnius)
2. Exhibitions about fights with crusaders, weapons and iconography of the Vilnius Upper Castle (the Vilnius Upper Castle, Vilnius)
3. Exhibitions about the national revival (1904-1918), the re-creation of the Lithuanian state (1918) and the National Revival Movement (*Sąjūdis*) (1987-1990) (the Signatories House, Vilnius)³²
4. Exhibitions about the prohibition of the Lithuanian press, the era of *Varpas* and Vincas Kudirka (V. Kudirkos Naumiestis)
5. Exhibitions about the prohibition of the Lithuanian press, the era of *Ausra*, and Jonas Šliūpas (Palanga)
6. The memorial museum of Kazys Varnelis, which contains modernist works of art by Varnelis (est. 1993, part of LNM in 2004, Vilnius).

There is some consistency in the selection of the branches that constitute LNM: branches 1 and 2 are based on some of oldest museum collections in Lithuania and are situated in the historic centre of Vilnius (the castle hill and surrounding arsenal buildings). On the other hand, branches 3 to 6 were linked to the LNM at various points in time. The uniting rationale of 3-5 and 6 is not entirely obvious. These branches focus on the political history of the modern Lithuanian nation state: resistance to the Russian Tsarist regime in the 1800s and national revival movement (3, 4, and 5), the declaration of independence (1918) and the political history of interwar Lithuania (3). Branch 6, however, sits oddly with this general direction of national politics represented in LNM, because it displays an exhibition of modernist art created by Varnelis, as well as Varnelis's personal collection of fine and applied art (East and West Europe, East Asia) and of books, including old Lithuanian books.

National M.K. Čiurlionis Art Museum & Vytautas the Great Military Museum

The second case concerns the development of two important museums, both of which were founded in 1921 during the first period of Lithuania's statehood as a nation-state. At the moment of writing only the Čiurlionis Art Museum has the formal status of a national museum. However, these two museums were established at almost the same time and their buildings form one architectural complex. It can be argued that both the Čiurlionis Art Museum and Vytautas the Great Military Museum performed the function of a national museum during the interwar period. Indeed, in 1923 the term of 'national museum' (*tautos muziejus*) was used in the discussions about the location of planned museums among the Kaunas city council and intellectuals (Jankevičiūtė 2001: 31).

Vytautas the Great Military Museum (VGMM) was established through collaboration between the government, intellectual community and cultural operators. On its website the museum traces

its genealogy to the Lithuanian Military Museum which was created by the Lithuanian Ministry of Defence in 1921. After the decree was passed on the 15th of December 1921, the first exhibition was opened to the public on the premises of a garrison. A decade later, in 1930, construction of a special building was started in Kaunas. The Lithuanian Military Museum was renamed the Vytautas the Great Military Museum, which first opened to the public in 1936.

VGMM was specially designed to house an exhibition that narrated the heroic story of the Lithuanian nation, especially its fight to establish an independent state. The period of joint statehood with Poland, the PLC, was presented as a negative moment in the history of the Lithuanian nation. The culmination of the exhibition was a 'chapel' dedicated to Vytautas the Great (which was actually ridiculed as a hilarious example of national kitsch by some contemporaries) and a crypt that commemorated those who died for the freedom of Lithuania.³³

Mikalojus K. Čiurlionis Art Gallery was also established in Kaunas in 1921. A symbolist painter and a romantic composer, Čiurlionis (1875-1911) was canonized as a national genius in the interwar period. In 1985 a Soviet Lithuanian magazine *Museums and Monuments* wrote that this Čiurlionis Art Gallery (later a museum) 'became the most important keeper, depositor and representative of the national art and riches of art which exist in Lithuania' (Rimkus 1985: 5). Initially housed in the temporary building of an art school, Čiurlionis Art Gallery was moved to a purpose-built building situated right behind the Vytautas the Great Military Museum. The gallery was renamed as the Vytautas the Great Museum of Culture (VGMC) and expanded to include collections gathered by the City Museum and Lithuanian Art Society. Alongside works by Čiurlionis the VGMC displayed a collection of Lithuanian folk art and works of Lithuanian professional fine and applied arts.³⁴

It has to be noted that first exhibitions of Lithuanian art in the twentieth century were hardly structured by any historical narrative at all. The principal goal of these exhibitions, as the organizers recalled, was 'to display as many works of art' as possible (Galaunė 1985: 3). It therefore seems that the foremost function of these exhibitions was to show that there existed such a thing as 'art produced by Lithuanians', and that these arts were also abundant and richly diverse. These public displays of 'Lithuanian art' therefore should be regarded as an important cultural means of nation-building. On the other hand, the strong presence of Lithuanian folk art in the display of VGMC should not be overinterpreted as a fanatic dedication to the folkloristic notion of the nation. Paulius Galaunė (1890-1988), the director of VGMC recalled that he had only a miserable wooden shelter, originally built for keeping construction materials, to store the museum's folk art collection. It was to avoid the risk of damaging this collection that all the more valuable pieces of folk art were put on permanent display. As a result the VGMC's shelves were tightly crammed with folk art artefacts (Galaunė 1985: 3-4).

VGMM and VGMC formed an architectural site that came to be perceived as a pantheon of the Lithuanian nation. VGMM faced a square, decorated with a classicist monument to freedom (1938) by Juozas Zikaras and embellished with an alley of prominent Lithuanian nation builders, intellectuals and politicians, and a monument to an unknown soldier (1921). The formation of this national pantheon, and particularly the museums, was not a top-down steered project of the government. Lithuania's economy being rather weak, the government was not keen to part with money to fund museums. The formal system of education through schools and universities was

prioritized and indirect education through museums and arts was less important. The building of the Vytautas the Great Museum and Čiurlionis Gallery was rather the result of systematic pressure from intellectual communities and not of a consistent governmental programme. It was members of the intellectual and artists communities who systematically sought to persuade and co-opt the government to fund and support these organizations (Jankevičiūtė 2003; Keršytė 2003; Mačiulis 2005).³⁵ It can therefore be suggested that it was civil society, expressed in the networks of the cultural intelligentsia, which was the driving force behind the establishment of 'national' museums in interwar Lithuania.

This 'national pantheon' was revised by the communist regime in 1940. The name of Vytautas the Great, the symbol of the powerful medieval GDL, was removed from the titles of both VGMM and VGMC. In 1944 VGMC was renamed as the State Čiurlionis Art Museum. In 1940 VGMM was renamed as the State Military-Historical Museum and in 1956 it was further renamed as the State Historical Museum. During his directorship between 1946 and 1963 Jonas Apuokas Maksimavičius gave away or destroyed many objects which related to the pre-Soviet statehood of Lithuania (such as flags, photographs, or a model of the Apuolė castle mound). The new communist director made sure that the 'national pantheon' surrounding the former VGMM and VGMC was eventually disassembled (Gečas 1993: 50). In 1940 the crypt was bricked in and an exhibition about the Lithuanian army regiment was removed. Eventually the alley with nation builders was taken down (Samavičius 1991:77). In 1950, the Freedom monument was demolished and replaced with a sculpture of Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas, the first leader of the Lithuanian communist party. The monument to the unknown soldier was replaced with a sculpture of Feliks Dzerzhinski, the founder of the communist secret police, Cheka/NKVD/KGB.

The Čiurlionis Art Museum continued to display works by Čiurlionis, folk art and Lithuanian fine arts created between 1907 and 1940. A quirky side of the Čiurlionis museum is its branch Museum of Devils, which displays a collection of thousands of devils, collected by popular interwar painter Antanas Žmuidzinavičius. During the Soviet period it was noticed that the Museum of Devils was at odds with the highbrow Museum of Art. These devils proved to be able to attract a good flow of visitors, which was sufficient to justify the Museum of Devils being part of the top category republic-museum (Rimkus 1985: 5, 8).

It is curious, in turn, that the Vytautas the Great Military Museum, highly celebrated in the 1930s, appeared to be demoted after the reestablishment of independence. Although in the Soviet times it was classified as a 'republic museum,' the VGMM became an 'agency museum' when it was subsumed under the Ministry of Defence in 2006. It can be suggested that as a result the national significance of VGMM was administratively decreased.

The Open Air Museum of Lithuania³⁶

The third case outlines the history of a skansen-type open-air museum in Lithuania. Although this museum did not have the formal status of a 'national museum' at the moment of writing, it can be considered as one of the most significant museums in relation to the development of Lithuanian ethnic-nationalist discourses. Informally called 'the museum of the motherland' (*tėviškės muziejus*), the Open Air Museum of Lithuania stages the spatial and material

identification of Lithuanian national identity as rooted in the countryside, landscapes, farmsteads, villages and small market towns.

It was under the Soviet regime that The Lithuanian SSR Ethnographic Museum of Everyday Life (*LTSR Liaudies buities muziejus*, henceforth EMEL) or a 'Lithuanian skansen' was founded after the example of the Swedish Skansen museum in Stockholm. However, this was not the first attempt at the recreation of peasants' lifestyle in a museum. The first ever museum of a Lithuanian farmstead was created in Tilsit, East Prussia, 1905. The Lithuanian house was assembled on the basis of donations by private individuals and attracted 25,000 visitors. In the 1920s several farm buildings were brought to Kaunas fair grounds, however, the advancing Red Army burnt down the buildings in 1940. In 1938 the eminent museum builder Petras Bugailiškis attempted at founding an open-air museum near Šiauliai. There were also attempts at establishing a Lithuanian skansen in Vilnius, but with no success (Morkūnas 2008).

In 1958, the site of an old village, Rumšiškės, was flooded as a result of dam construction for Kaunas hydroelectric plant. The village itself was re-created as a new settlement several kilometres away from its original location. In the same year, the idea to establish a Lithuanian *skansen* was discussed at the LSSR Supreme Council. EMEL was discussed alongside projects for rebuilding medieval castles, such as Trakai and Biržai. These initiatives were underpinned by economic recovery in the LSSR and partially enabled by Nikita Khrushchev's decentralization reform (*sovmarkhoz* 1957-1964), which granted more decision-making power to republican authorities.

Building new museums was also part of the post-war recovery. Although it was suggested to build the Open Air Museum near Vilnius, the decision was taken to situate such a museum near Kaunas and close to the recently moved village of Rumšiškės. This location meant close proximity to a lake, created by the dam construction, and a newly built modern motorway that connected Vilnius with Kaunas and Klaipėda. The interest in ethnic national culture in this way was embedded in a system of industrial achievements of the communist leaders of Lithuanian industry. Researchers described such progress-oriented activities of republic communist parties as 'economic nationalism'. LSSR leaders were, of course, loyal communists, but they treated the Lithuanian republic as their own kingdom and were keen to demonstrate that it was them, local leaders, and not Moscow, who had decision-making power (Rindzevičiūtė 2010). Museum builders tapped into this political resource.

EMEL presents an eloquent tale of the complex development of Lithuanian society in the 1960s. Located not far from a large industrial project, the Nemunas dam, the museum was composed of about 150 buildings dating mainly from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The museum occupied about 180 hectares and the visitor route stretched six kilometres. The museum was established by the decision of the LSSR Council of Ministers on the 30th of April 1965. The first director was Vytautas Stanikūnas, who studied museology at Vilnius University in the 1940s.³⁷ Work started in 1966 and in about a decade the first buildings were finished. EMEL was officially opened in 1974, but further construction, such as an entire town of the second half of the 1800s, were planned and built later. As Jakelaitis noted, the reconstructed market town curiously lacked Jews, who at that time made up the majority of Lithuania's urban population.

However, the original plan included a synagogue as part of the reconstructed market town (Jakelaitis 1998: 97).

The administrative building was located in Rumšiškės, which also saw construction of homes specially built for many of the museum workers. This building scheme, which included new public utility buildings such as a supermarket and a restaurant, was possible through support of the constructions ministry, which during the period of economic decentralization had relative liberty in allocation of resources. In his memoir the former vice-minister of culture particularly mentioned the support given to the museum by the LSSR State Planning Committee official Algirdas Brazauskas and the LSSR minister of finance Romualdas Sikorskis (Jakelaitis 1998: 102). The guidelines of the museum pointed out that the museum was to 'reflect the everyday life and architecture of Lithuanian people', 'to distinguish four ethnographic regions', to have a 'farmstead as the main exhibition unit', to 'recreate the households which represent various periods and different social classes' including serfs, small holdings, medium-size and large farms, manor houses and city dwellings. The guidelines carefully framed a rationale to preserve religion buildings as it stressed that it was important to contain 'unique examples of folk wooden architecture' (Stanikūnas 1970:32). The introduction to the guide of EMEL sets the stage for the museum by describing people without history:

The names of ancient rulers are inscribed in manuscripts, dukes and gentry erected marble or granite monuments for themselves, but the graves of simple people, of humble ploughmen withered away in sand hills. Wooden crosses lingered over these graves, but eventually, weathered by storms and winds, they rotted away. Entire generations of common folk left life without a trace. (Vėlyvis et al. 1977: 3)

The official goal of the Soviet Lithuanian Skansen was to do justice to these people without history: 'In fact those grey people were the creators of history'. In this way, EMEL skilfully balanced the obvious focus on rural folk culture with a Marxist class narrative; a take that was quite successfully used in Lithuanian historiography by Jurginis. As it was put in the guide: 'visitors, including a large share of young people, witness the difference between the old and the new, they can compare the past with the present and are convinced about the obviously great advantages of Soviet order and socialism' (Vėlyvis et al. 1977: 42). To illustrate the 'disadvantaged' past, the museum could use an eighteenth-century old wooden church (the director Stanikūnas, however, recalled that one party ideologue criticized the cross on the church tower). Indeed, in 1968 the first secretary of the LCP, Antanas Sniečkus, gave explicit instructions to the museum builders to construct the museum in such a way that it would juxtapose the past poverty with the current well-being of collective farms (Stanikūnas 2009: 37). On the other hand, the attitudes of LCP party leaders were mixed. For example, other influential state officials, such as LSSR Gosplan official Algirdas Brazauskas, LCP ideological secretary Antanas Barkauskas and the LSSR Minister of Culture Lionginas Šepetys, even explicitly asked the museum workers not to depict historical Lithuania as a poor and deprived country, because this would give another reason for the visitors from Moscow to boast about the civilizing power of the Soviet Union (Stanikūnas 2009: 38; Jakelaitis 1998: 102). However, this encouragement was not translated into adequate economic support. For example, in 1966 the newly established museum was given only an old minibus and several bicycles: such were the means of transport to

be used to collect exhibits (Stanikūnas 2009: 38). This suggests that the building of ethnically oriented Soviet museums was a truly collaborative effort between the LCP party leaders (who gave personal assurance of support) and museum workers (who were motivated highly enough to work in spite of gravely insufficient resources).

EMEL's guide, published in 1977, sought to evoke an emotional response in the reader by romanticising the simplicity of rural life. The Soviet Lithuanian Skansen could be understood as an inward-centred technique of ethnic nationalization. It aimed at the collection, concentration and classification of the architecture and material heritage of rural Lithuanian communities. The audience of this museum was not only the population of the cities, but also the countryside population, which lived in industrialized collective farms. In this way the idyllic rural life was equally detached from both town and country people in the 1960s LSSR.

During the post-Soviet period, the museum was renamed into the Open Air Museum of Lithuania. In the construction of a quaint and romantic image of the past, the Museum appeared to disregard the groups that were considered alien to ethnic Lithuanianness, such as Jews or Polonized elites. The museum exhibition lacks households of upper-class Lithuanians, although in the 1990s there were plans made to install a manor house. Since the 1960s, the Museum presented the Lithuanian village as a unique phenomenon and did not articulate any regional ties, either Baltic or Nordic. However, in the 2000s, the museum has been developing a new section dedicated to Lithuania Minor, an area which roughly occupied the current coastline (Klaipėda/Memel) and parts of former East Prussia (now Kaliningrad).

Several new buildings were added that narrated the past that was banished by the Soviet regime. A new section called 'Deportations and Resistance' was organised in 1992. Several objects were installed to represent suffering, repressions and resistance to Soviet power: a yurt, similar to the ones that were used by deportees near the Laptev Sea, a train cattle car that was used to transport prisoners and deportees, and an anti-Soviet partisan bunker. The market town is still under construction; however, the museum's information does not give any indication about the possibility of including a Jewish quarter or a synagogue. It only mentions that shopkeepers were 'mainly Jews'. Therefore, it may seem that communist crimes were more readily incorporated in the Open Air Museum than the Holocaust. On the other hand, elsewhere I have argued that the museum site dedicated to deportations was established mainly by the effort of an active society of Laptev Sea deportees. This society was not always strongly supported by the museum leadership, which, reportedly, adhered to rather state socialist views even in the 1990s (Rindzevičiūtė forthcoming a).

This example brings us back to the key argument, which suggests that it was great many actors who engaged in the construction of the nation and state-building through the medium of museums in Lithuania. It would be difficult and unfair to try and reduce this variety and heterogeneity into '-isms'. I hope that this study has demonstrated that there have been so many potential openings for revising the past, the present and the future of the state and the people in the national museums.

Notes

- ¹ However, in the second half of the nineteenth century smaller museums were established under the city municipalities and regional governors' auspices. This wave of museums of industry, trade and design was an adoption of the process started by the creation of Victoria and Albert Museum in London.
- ² In addition, the term 'the Museum of Lithuania' was used by Teodoras Narbutas in correspondence with Simonas Daukantas in 1846. Narbutas referred to the planned Vilnius Museum of Antiquities (Aleksandravičius 1989: 59).
- ³ It is interesting that after 1990 the idea of 'the House of the Nation' has been revived again and periodically discussed in the Lithuanian press.
- ⁴ This decision expressed a general call to represent the role of revolutionary figures, intellectuals and cultural operators of Russian and other national origins in Vilnius. On the other hand, this decision also stipulated the establishment of eight memorial exhibitions dedicated to Lithuanian writers, artists and scientists, some of whom, such as Žemaitė, Juozas Zikaras, Būga and Lazdynų Pelėda, were active in the 1800s and before 1940. Moreover, the LSSR CC announced its support for the open-air Lithuanian Museum of People's Everyday Life. ('Nutarimas apie muziejus' 1965: 16).
- ⁵ There was the exception of Lionginas Šepetys, who, as an influential politician, was invited to participate at the LSSR Politburo. On the all-union level Minister of Culture was also regarded as a politically insignificant post, if compared with Politburo membership.
- ⁶ ('Paminkloaugos raida Lietuvoje'; http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=6817&p_k=1).
- ⁷ LLM, 342, a. 1, b. 3323, l. 18.
- ⁸ The head of this Agency was Jonas Glemža (1963-1979) and E. Misiulis (1979-1990). On 15 July 1988 the Ministry was reorganized and the Museums and Cultural Monuments Agency was merged with the Agencies for Cultural Enlightenment Organizations and the Library Affairs to form a new department, the Agency for Cultural Enterprises. Museums were represented by a Museum Group ('Nauja Lietuvos TSR kultūros...').
- ⁹ The Society was established on the basis of the earlier LSSR Society for Local History (1961) and in 1989 was reorganized into the Lithuanian Local History Society.
- ¹⁰ LLM, 342, a. 1, b. 3323, l. 18.
- ¹¹ LLM, f. 342, a. 1, b. 3574, l. 32-33.
- ¹² LLM, 342, a. 1, b. 3323, l. 68.
- ¹³ A speech 'Saviveiklinė meno kūryba – svarbus dvasinės kultūros baras' by the Minister of Culture Jonas Bielinis (April 1988), LLM, f. 342, a. 1, b. 3826, l. 28, 29.
- ¹⁴ On the other hand, every larger museum had a department for 'work with masses' (in Lithuanian, *masinio darbo skyrius*). Although the task of such departments was to engage audiences in the museums, one gets the impression that the functions of these departments were quite diverse. On the one hand they would collect and process statistical data about visitors and provide exhibition guide services; it was these departments which also provided exhibition tours to foreigners in larger museums, such as the State Historical and Ethnographical Museum (HEM), in English and German languages. These departments also collaborated by 'providing methodological assistance' to guides from the Bureau of Excursions, Sputnik and Inturist companies. On the other hand, the department for work with masses also arranged travelling exhibitions, lectures, and meetings dedicated to such occasions as the 110th anniversary of Lenin's birthday, victories of the Soviet people in World War II, or congresses of the CPs of the USSR and LSSR. A more interesting event was the open days organized to celebrate the International Museums Day. During these days such professional historians as R. Rimantienė, M. Jučas, V. Merkys, E. Gudavičius, and A. Tautavičius, were invited to the Museum halls to consult visitors about the exhibitions ((Jankevičienė 1987: 25).
- ¹⁵ See, for example, statements by Napalys Kitkauskas ('Visuomenės atgimimas...' 1989: 8-12).
- ¹⁶ See, for instance a debate about national culture and cultural workers ('Tautinė kultūra ir...' 1989: 8) and volume 6 by *Kultūros barai* (1989).
- ¹⁷ For example, 'The unity of man and nature, which was based on love, ensured the special state of ethnos, a feeling of Freedom. All this is encoded in the Lithuanian ethnos energetic field and exists in the unconscious of each of us. This is the giant energy of the National Revival [*Atgimimas*] and Creation, which should be released. It is necessary for the power of the national spirit to express itself (...)' (Tauginas 1989: 6).
- ¹⁸ The Lithuanian Ministry of Culture and Education, Decree no. 144 (19 April 1990), LLM, f. 342, a. 1, b. 3914, l. 242-243.
- ¹⁹ Collegium of LSSR Ministry of Culture, decision no. 3 (4 January 1990), LLM, f. 342, a. 1, b. 3915, l. 12-19.
- ²⁰ Verbatim no. 39 of the debates at the Lithuanian Parliament, 30 November, 1993.
- ²¹ Educated as a historian at Vilnius University, Kulnytė was the head of the Folk Art section in 1973-1989, the head of the Ethnographic section in 1989-1992 and since 1992 has been the director of the museum.
- ²² Republic museums were 'specialized museums, which stored collections, which matched their specialization'. County museums stored collections which 'reflected the cultural history of the county'. Local museums stored

- collections which ‘reflected the cultural history of certain territories’. Agency museums stored collections which ‘related to the area and history of the founding organization’. *Valstybinio muziejaus nuostatai*, LR Government decision no. 975 (15 August 1996).
- ²³ LR Government Decision no. 867 (19 July 1996).
- ²⁴ For divergent views about Grūtas Park see Aronsson (2003), Lankauskas (2006) and Mark (2010).
- ²⁵ In 1822 Alexander I banned all civic associations, including masons. However, according to the 1803 university statute, the university was entitled to organize groups and circles for studies. Within this framework a philomatic association was established in 1821 by Adam Mickiewicz and J. Lelevel. The philomatic association aimed at recreating the PLC and abolishing serfdom. In 1820 a philaretic association was established by Tomas Zanas. In 1823 the imperial authorities started active prosecution of members of philomathic-philaretic organizations: many of them were imprisoned and sentenced to deportation.
- ²⁶ The Musaeum Polonicum, proposed by Michal Mniszech, a member of the Educational Commission, included sections on natural history, a gallery of sculptures of famous people, cabinets of numismatics and prints and an exhibition of agricultural machines (Mulevičiūtė, 2003: 46-47).
- ²⁷ *Upravlenie Vilenskago Voennago grodnenskago minskago I kovenskago General” Gubernatora po Vilenskomu Uchebnomu Okrugu*, Vilnius, 1855. VU RS, f. 46-3, no.1135, l. 76.
- ²⁸ (‘Polozhenie o Muzeumi’...’ 1855: 2). The Imperial Archaeological Commission oversaw all archaeological investigations in the Russian Empire.
- ²⁹ During this visit crown prince Nicholas was appointed as patron of the museum and the Archaeological Commission. In relation to this Tyszkiewicz attempted to reformulate the Commission into Vilnius Science Society, but without success (Aleksandravičius 1989: 42).
- ³⁰ The Archaeographical Commission was established on 17 April 1864.
- ³¹ The following part draws on my earlier publication (Rindzeviciute 2010a).
- ³² In November 2002 the House of the Signatories of Lithuanian Independence (est. 1999) was included in the Lithuanian National Museum. LR Ministry of Culture, Decree no. 401 (4 November 2002).
- ³³ The sections included: Vytautas the Great chapel; Lithuania after 1795; Napoleonic times; 1831 and 1863 uprisings against the Russian Empire; the period of prohibition of Lithuanian print; Lithuanian military regiments in Russia in 1917; a section on independence; a section on the Lithuanian army; a section on Šaulių sąjunga and partisans; Darius’ and Girėnas’ flight with *Lituanica*; a collection of armour and weapons; a section about Lithuanian castle mounds and the Iron age; a crypt for those who died for Lithuanian freedom. For more about the cult of Vytautas the Great in interwar Lithuania see Jankevičiūtė (2010).
- ³⁴ The statute of Čiurlionis Art Gallery stipulated it should display folk art. The Gallery both gathered its own collection of folk art artefacts and included collections from the State Museum (which used to belong to the State Archaeological Commission) (Galaunė 1985:3).
- ³⁵ Among those lobbyists for museums was Paulius Galaunė (1890-1988). Educated in Saint Petersburg (1910-1913) and Paris (at the Louvre, 1923-1924). Galaune was one of first professional museum workers in Lithuania and the director of the Čiurlionis Gallery (1924-1936) and Vytautas the Great Museum of Culture (1936-1944).
- ³⁶ This is the official translation of the museum’s title. However, a literal translation of the Lithuanian title into English is ‘The Museum of Everyday Life of Lithuania’s People’.
- ³⁷ In 1958 a smaller open air ethnographic museum was organized as part of Rokiškis local history museum (Daunys 1966).

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Annexe, Lithuania

Abbreviations

AMCM	Agency for Museums and Cultural Monuments
CC	Central Committee
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
GDL	Grand Duchy of Lithuania
HEM	LSSR State Historical-Ethnographic Museum
LAM	Lithuanian Art Museum
LCP	Lithuanian Communist Party
LSSR	Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic
LNМ	Lithuanian National Museum
PLC	Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic
SFC	Soviet Fund for Culture
VAM	Vilnius Art Museum
VGMM	Vytautas the Great Military Museum
VGMC	Vytautas the Great Museum of Culture
VMA	Vilnius Museum of Antiquities

Archives

Archives of Lithuanian Literature and Art (LLM)

Online archives of the Parliament documents (www.seimas.lt)