University of Tartu

Department of Semiotics

Egle Krušaite

RESEMIOTIZING THE OBJECTS OF INCONVENIENT PAST:

THE CASE OF GRŪTAS PARK IN LITHUANIA

Master Thesis

Supervisor: PhD Tiit Remm

Tartu

2016

I have written the Master Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

Author: Egle Krušaite ....

20.05.2016

Introduction

The consequence of resemiotization is, paradoxically, to re-inscribe the palimpsest, creating a visual overlay that calls into question the correlation between locality and authenticity. [...] Genuine moments, and sometimes counterfeit or reconstructed ones, are consumed as so many tokens of the past, but, just as no reader of the "Nuremberg Chronicle" became any wiser about what Damascus, Ferrara, Milan, or Mantua really looked like, so today's cultural tourist, having plunged into history, gets back on the road without the promised experience of authenticity. (Resina, Ingenshay 2003: 22)

Visiting and exploring places associated with tragedy and death is an old, historical phenomenon. Already a long time ago, people were fascinated by sites, attractions or events, in one or another way linked to death, suffering, violence or disaster. Roman gladiator games, pilgrimages, attendance of medieval public executions may have been one of the oldest dark tourism attractions in the world. During the 20th century, dark tourism, with the central features of tragedy and death, developed into an increasingly pervasive attribute of contemporary culture.

According to J. John Lennon and Malcolm Foley (2000), **dark tourism** should be defined as a visitation of tourism sites related to recent and historical incidences of death and disaster. Anthony V. Seaton (1996: 236) states that thanatourism – he prefers using this term – is an act that is motivated by the desire for actual and symbolic encounters with death. In most instances, research on dark tourism concerns the analysis of dissonant, or inconvenient, heritage. Lynne M. Dearborn and John C. Stallmeyer (2010: 36) point out that inconvenient heritage is contested due to various narratives concentrating around it and also many diverse interpretations during the historical timeline. The majority of dark tourism objects belong to the inconvenient heritage because they lack an agreement and consistency in representations of the past.

Memories, or moments of the past that are presented at dark tourism sites, are often traumatic, being related to the war or occurrences of political, cultural and ethnic

violence. Rebecca Casbeard and Charles Booth (2012: 2) claim that dark tourism gives society an opportunity to resemiotize tragic political, cultural and ethnic events into forms that stimulate something other than primordial terror and dread and thus are more consistent with the views of modern society. Therefore, dark tourism can be considered as a resemiotizing practice of inconvenient past. Rick Iedema (2003: 41; 2001: 25) describes *resemiotization* as a meaning shift from context to context; it is a process through which relevant meanings are conventionally 'resemiotized' into alternative and more durable semiosis.

In this paper, resemiotization of the past is analysed in the context of Lithuanian dark tourism. There are many dark tourism sites in Lithuania, such as Grūtas Park, Museum of Genocide Victims, Jewish Holocaust Museum, War Museum in Kaunas, etc. Due to specific historical circumstances, dissonant, or inconvenient, heritage in Lithuania is associated with two historical periods: the Holocaust and the Soviet era, including the Cold War. Lithuanian dark cultural heritage has already been analysed by some Lithuanian and foreign authors (see, for example, Wight, Lennon 2007; Wight, 2014; Trilupaityte 2014).

A. Craig Wight and J. John Lennon (2007) conducted the research based on two case studies – the Vilna Gaon Lithuanian State Jewish Museum and The Museum of Genocide Victims. According to Wight and Lennon, both museums have the same problem: they do not intend to provide any open and transparent interpretations in the Lithuanian nation's commemoration of the past. In his doctoral dissertation, A. Craig Wight (2014) applied Foucauldian discourse analysis to the Lithuanian museums and sites of memory. Skaidra Trilupaityte (2014) raised a question whether the Soviet monuments should be preserved in public space or not. She also emphasized the problem of public squares turning into recreational areas without any meanings inscribed in them. After constantly removing monuments, public space is gradually turning into empty space, does not signifying anything else besides its "emptiness".

This master thesis is devoted to the analysis of resemiotizing practices in dark tourism sites and is based on a case study of Grūtas Park (unofficially known as Stalin's World; in Lithuanian: Grūto parkas). Grūtas Park is a sculpture garden exposing Soviet-era statues and other Soviet ideological relics erected and created in the times of Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (Lithuanian SSR). Founded in 2001 by

entrepreneur Viliumas Malinauskas, the park is located near Druskininkai, about 130 kilometres southwest of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. Currently there are one hundred eleven statues of various Soviet figures exposed (e.g., Lenin, Stalin, Melnikaitė, Mickevičius-Kapsukas) and over 1.5 million other artefacts, such as stamps, coins, paintings, elective posters, etc. It is important to point out that even though Grūtas Park has three indoor exhibitions, the main focus of my case study is the exposition of Soviet monuments and the outdoor environment of the park in general.

The scientific research has already been conducted on Grūtas Park (see, for instance, Lankauskas 2006; Williams 2008; Naef 2015; Isaac, Budryte-Ausiejiene 2015). Gediminas Lankauskas (2006) suggested the idea that seeing the Socialist past in Grūtas Park activates memories of trauma and loss, while "tasting" it – for instance, trying various Russian meals in the Grūtas' café – activates the feeling of nostalgia. Paul Williams (2008) claimed that Hungary's Szoborpark and Lithuania's Grūtas Park only semi-effectively demonstrate the current irrelevance of communism: they are an amalgamation of spatial conclusiveness and they allow visitors to practice irreverence in public, yet they contain little that can express individual experiences of the period. Patrick Naef (2015) discovered that the traumatic heritage exposed in Grūtas Park is confronted and challenged by the local population through the irony and derision. Rami K. Isaac and Laurencija Budryte-Ausiejiene (2015) carried out a study of emotions of visitors after seeing the exposition of Grūtas Park. Results revealed that visitors experience both negative and positive emotions after visiting the site, such as unpleasantness, discomfort, surprise, admiration and delight.

The aim of this research is to explore how the objects exposed in Grūtas Park resemiotize a conception of the inconvenient past. Further *research questions* are: a) how does Grūtas Park function as a spatial semiotic system; b) how does Grūtas Park function as a resemiotizing practice of the dissonant Soviet heritage? *The research method* is a case study of Grūtas Park. For gathering data, the observatory visitation of Grūtas Park was organized in the beginning of April, 2016. During the observatory visit, the data was collected by the examination of the spatial structure and elements of the park and by taking pictures of Grūtas Park environment. As an additional material, the audio-guide of museum exhibition (in Lithuanian language), the tourist map (see *Annex 1*), the information distributed on the official website of Grūtas Park

(www.grutoparkas.lt) and several pictures from other websites were used. The authority of every picture is indicated below it.

This thesis consists of three chapters – two theoretical and one empirical. In the first chapter, theoretical aspects of dark tourism are discussed. The chapter is divided into four smaller sections, focusing correspondingly on the definition of dark tourism, the forms of dark tourism, the classification of dark tourism sites and the resemiotization phenomenon in the context of dark tourism. This chapter should help the reader to find out, what is dark tourism and how it is related to resemiotization of the inconvenient past.

The second chapter first of all focuses on the description of environment as a tool for resemiotization. According to Kati Lindström (2008: 230), environment could be characterized as a material for inscribing messages of cultural and historical continuity. Therefore, powerful and willing to become powerful political regimes create an illusion of their eternity by erecting a number of monuments, marking the presence of that ideology in both urban and rural environments. However, after these regimes collapse, people often decide to erase obsolete and unwanted traces of the previous ideology by reorganizing and reinterpreting, and thus resemiotizing their surroundings.

In the second chapter, I also propose the idea that the meaning of environment is dependent on environment's structure. Thus, it may be possible to evaluate resemiotization of the past through the spatial description of a dark tourism site – Grūtas Park. For this reason, the conceptual tools from Amos Rapoport's, Kevin Lynch's, and Alexandros Lagopoulos' & Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou's theories are presented. Rapoport's three levels of meaning (1990: 221) are taken into account, by emphasizing the lower-level meanings that steam from physical, including spatial, qualities of environment. From Lynch's theory (1960: 47-48), five elements of environmental images – paths, edges, nodes, districts and landmarks – are described. Finally, with regards to Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou's (1992: 300-301) theoretical framework, dynamic spatial logic is described. These three theoretical approaches to space, with the concepts shortly described above, are used in the case study of Grūtas Park.

The third chapter is the case study of Grūtas Park. First of all, the analytical description of the park is given. The second subchapter could be considered as the

analysis Grūtas Park in connection with the spectrum of dark tourism (check *Chapter 1.3* for more information). The third subchapter is an attempt to apply of Rapoport's, Lynch's, Lagopoulos' and Boklund-Lagopoulou's spatial semiotic approaches to Grūtas Park. The final section describes how Grūtas Park resemiotizes the inconvenient past through the objects exposed in it.

1. Theoretical Aspects of Dark Tourism

1.1. The Definition of Dark Tourism

Death, disaster and atrocity as tourist attractions are becoming an increasingly pervasive feature within the contemporary tourism landscape. Various places of memory are turning into collective and cultural "trend", as testified by the increasing practices of dark heritage tourism (Mazzucchelli et al. 2014: 4). However, even before people started traveling a lot, dark tourism had a number of precursors. Death has been an element of tourism longer than any other form of tourism supply, often through religious or pilgrimage purposes (Stone 2006: 147).

Contemporary dark tourism does not represent death itself but rather symbolizes certain kinds of death. In Western secular societies, which are often labelled as death-denying (Kübler-Ross et al. 1972: 174), there are less and less possibilities to meet death face to face due to rapid development of life-prolonging medical techniques and different disposal of the dead management. However, contemporary societies are now entering a death-deriding age, where death and tragedy are mocked, commercialised and sold for the sake of entertainment and financial benefit (Stone 2012: 1566; Williams 2008: 186).

As a result, the phenomenon of dark tourism has entered an academic discourse and has consequently generated a significant amount of research interest. The term *dark tourism* was formulated by Lennon and Foley (2000) to describe the attraction of tourism sites related to recent and historic incidences of death and disaster. These authors also suggest classifying all dark tourism sites into primary and secondary (Wight, Lennon 2007: 519). The classification of dark tourism sites is more thoroughly presented in Chapter 1.3.

Kulcsar and Simon (2015: 125) state that dark tourism can be categorized according to the novelty of events into the old, or historical, dark tourism and the new, or present-day, dark tourism. The historical dark tourism involves both piety trips, such as pilgrimages, and the events where the main observer's motivation is curiosity (e.g., public executions, gladiator fights). The present-day dark tourism can be considered as visiting the sites of recent tragic events. It may be divided into two narrower categories, such as *warm* and *live* dark tourism. In the case of *warm* dark tourism, the tourist visits the destination at the very close time to the disaster; in the case of *live* dark tourism, the person travels to the site at the time of tragic events happening. For instance, visiting Euromaidan during the demonstrations in Kiev, Ukraine was a very common thing among people a couple of years ago.

Seaton (1996: 236) characterizes dark tourism, or thanatourism, as an act that is "wholly or partially motivated by the desire for actual and symbolic encounters with death". According to Strange and Kempa (2003: 387), the notion of thanatourism was coined by Seaton during the 90s "to make sense of the packaging and consumption of death or distress as a tourist experience of both the distant and recent pasts". Sather-Wagstaff (2011: 73) points out that thanatourism has a much deeper temporal history which is unacknowledged by other scholars, doing research on tourism sites of death, disaster, and violence.

In the academic literature on dark tourism, the term ***dissonant heritage*** is also often used. As it is claimed by Low et al. (2009: 13), the notion of dissonant heritage developed from the idea that heritage is a contemporary product shaped by history with diverse narratives existing in it. The concept of dissonance in heritage suggests that there is lack of agreement and consistency in the way past is represented. Isaac and Budryte-Ausiejiene (2015: 402) state that "dissonant heritage is concerned with the way in which the past, when interpreted or represented as a tourist attraction, may for particular groups be distorted, displaced or inherited". Thus, dissonant heritage is related to the distortion and displacement of the past, and these are relevant aspects of resemiotizing, or changing, that past into more convenient semiosis.

Dearborn and Stallmeyer (2010) introduce the concept of ***inconvenient heritage***, which is very similar to the notion of dissonant heritage:

[…] inconvenient heritage incorporates to a greater degree the problems of ownership, control, and representation that are generally inherent in all heritage tourism development. The contested nature of a great deal of heritage results from different interpretations that linked at points along the length of a historical timeline. (Dearborn, Stallmeyer 2010: 36)

The inconvenient heritage, as dissonant heritage, is contested due to different narratives existing in it and also varying interpretations during the historical timeline. In general, dark tourism objects can be considered as belonging to the dissonant, or inconvenient, heritage because they induce many-sided discussions and disputes in modern society due to various, mostly political, meanings attributed to them, resulting from the inconvenient past.

Lennon and Foley (2000: 11) suggest that dark tourism is an intimation of post-modernity and present three arguments, supporting this hypothesis. First, global communication technologies play a major role in developing the initial interest in dark tourism. Secondly, the objects of dark tourism themselves appear to introduce anxiety and doubt about the project of modernity (e.g., the case of "Titanic"). Thirdly, besides the educative purposes, dark tourism sites present features of commercialization and commodification which implicitly and explicitly show that purposive or incidental tourism consumption is necessary to dark tourism development. Stone and Sharpley (2008: 588) confirm that "dark tourism can potentially transform the seemingly meaningless into the meaningful through the commodification, explanations and representations" of dark tourism objects. Thus, the both commercialization and commodification, defined as transformation of objects and events into commodities or objects of trade, are the important attributes of contemporary dark tourism.

In this paper, dark tourism will be considered as a visitation of tourism sites related to recent and historical incidences of death and disaster (Wight, Lennon 2007: 519), with focusing primarily on recent incidences of trauma and tragedy in Lithuania – Soviet occupation. Therefore, the analysis will be devoted to the inconvenient Soviet heritage exposed in Grūtas Park, often contested due to various political and historical narratives evolving around it.

1.2. The Forms of Dark Tourism

There are different forms of dark tourism that could be distinguished on the basis of scientific research (Sharpley, Stone 2009; Kulcar, Simon 2015). Therefore, while visiting some tourist attractions or simply places, the tourist might unwittingly be involved in dark tourism activities. Sharpley and Stone (2009: 15-16) propose the idea that there are five forms of dark tourism, or thanatourism, activities:

1. Witnessing public enactments of death. Since public executions are not very common at these times, sensation tourism at disaster sites, typically called disaster tourism, may fall under this category. The most prominent example would be visiting the Greater New Orleans Area after Hurricane Katrina.

2. Visiting the sites of individual or mass deaths after they have occurred, such as battlefields, death camps, sites of genocide, locations of celebrity deaths, sites of publicised murders or homes of famous murderers. Sharpley and Stone define these trips as thanatourism.

3. Traveling to memorials or internment sites, including graveyards, cenotaphs, crypts and war memorials. Visiting graveyards, cenotaphs and crypts is usually called grief tourism, and visiting war memorials is definitely one of the war tourism activities.

4. Seeing material evidences or symbolic representations of death at locations other than death occurrences, such as museums containing weapons of death or attractions that reconstruct specific activities or events. These museums may focus on selected themes and thus they may be less concerned with historical accuracy.

5. Watching or participating in re-enactments of death (e.g., re-enactments of famous battles).

According to Stone and Sharpley, the involvement in activities which look "innocent" – at least at the first sight, such as the re-enactment of famous battle, might mean that person is actually engaged in dark tourism activities. It is questionable, whether we need to label such a wide range of activities as a dark tourism. Can the person, not even knowing about it, be a "hooked" dark tourist? If one takes into account this categorization of dark tourism, then most people may not even be aware of craving for dark and mysterious experiences. Despite this classification, in this paper dark

tourism is considered as an intentional visitation of the site associated with atrocity, death or disaster.

Kulcar and Simon (2015: 125) distinguish forms of dark tourism in a different way:

1. *Thanatourism.* Even though some authors (Seaton 1996; Stone 2012) use this term interchangeably with dark tourism concept, thanatourism (gr. *thanatos* – passing / dead) is mostly oriented to visitation of objects related to death.

2. *Grief tourism.* Generally it can be described as visitation of graveyards, cenotaphs, crypts. This term overlaps with thanatourism, because grief is normally connected to someone's death.

3. *Disaster tourism.* As it was mentioned above, this category of dark tourism might be described as traveling to disaster sites immediately after the catastrophe, mostly environmental.

4. *Slum tourism,* or *ghetto tourism.* It may be defined as traveling to impoverished areas of the world.

5. *War tourism.* Recreational travel to active or former war zones for purposes of sightseeing and historical study.

6. *Doomsday tourism.* Visiting endangered destinations before their disappearance (e.g., Antarctica).

Therefore, not all forms of dark tourism are restricted to visiting sites related to death. The variety of dark tourism practices indicate that dark tourism can also be associated with places and objects, where physical and, even more important, economical affliction is represented (e.g., slum tourism), and macabre sites which refer to inescapable but not necessarily human death (e.g., to symbolic "death" of the political regime). The meaning of symbolic death for society is discussed by Stone (2012).

However, distinguishing among diverse kinds of dark tourism has a problematic aspect: many forms are at least to some extent overlapping. For instance, if every dark tourism practice encompasses a visitor's motivation of direct or symbolic encounters with death, then nearly all forms of dark tourism (e.g., grief, war, disaster, doomsday tourism) could be considered as thanatourism because they involve an element of death. The classification, based on a description of characteristics of dark tourism sites, may

give the reader a more comprehensive and structured understanding on the concept of dark tourism.

1.3. The Classification of Dark Tourism Sites

There are a couple of attempts (Strange, Kempa 2003; Stone 2006) to classify a diverse range of dark tourism sites, attractions and exhibitions that are related to death, atrocity and macabre. According to Stone (2006: 146), certain dark tourism sites may, at least conceptually, share particular features, perceptions and characteristics, which can then be loosely translated into various 'shades of darkness' (see *Figure 1*).
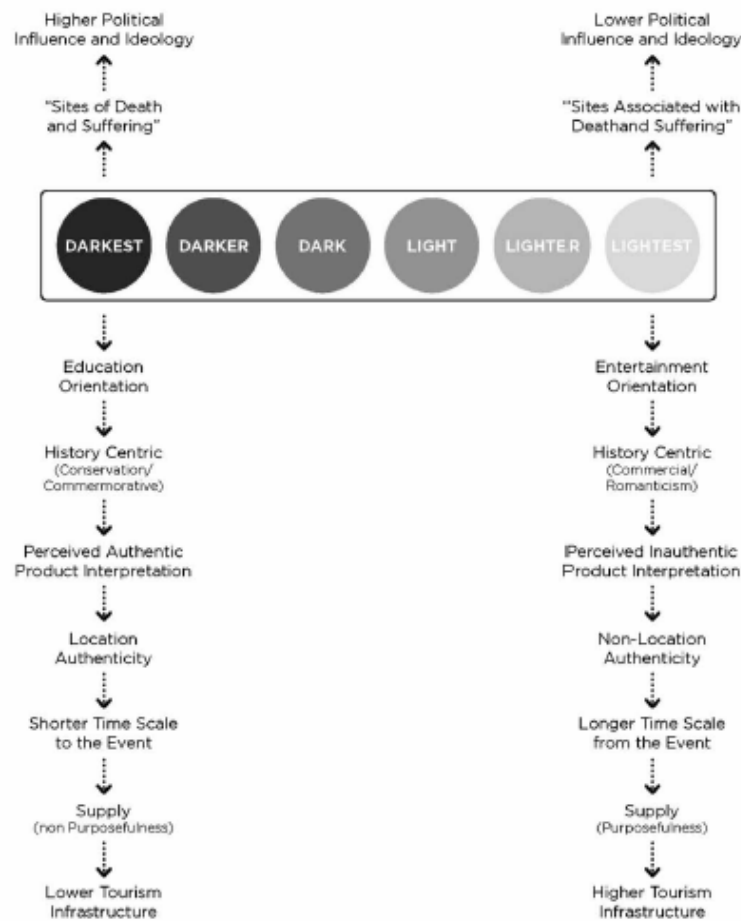

Figure 1. A dark tourism spectrum: perceived product features of dark tourism within a 'darkest-lightest' framework of supply (Stone 2006: 151)

Following *Figure 1*, all dark tourism sites can be divided into two main groups, indicated at the extremes of continuum: sites of death and suffering, considered as the "darker" sites, and sites associated with death and suffering, considered as the "lighter" ones (Stone 2006: 151). Respectively, the sites of dark heritage are often classified into primary sites, where the tragic and traumatic events actually took place, and secondary sites, only indirectly referring to tragedy and death (Wight, Lennon 2007: 519). In relation with this theoretical framework, it may be presumed that the Holocaust camp, where tragedies have actually happened, is a primary site, and the Holocaust museum, where objects related to the Holocaust period are exhibited out of their original surroundings, is a secondary site.

According to Stone (2006: 151), places of death and suffering have different qualities than places only related to death and suffering. Dark tourism sites where tragic events have actually happened are usually more politically influential and ideological, oriented to education, created due to both conservative and commemorative purposes, interpreting product authentically as much as possible, located in an authentic place, founded shortly after traumatic events took place, non-purposeful and belonging to a lower tourism infrastructure. Correspondingly, dark heritage sites associated with traumatic occurrences are less politically influential and ideological, often oriented to entertainment, commercial and romanticized, presenting non-authentic product interpretation, situated in non-authentic location, purposeful and belonging to a higher tourism infrastructure. In general, places of death and suffering are considered to be darker than sites only associated with tragic incidents.

However, this classification is not absolute because, for instance, there are definitely museums – secondary sites – displaying objects of dark heritage not only for entertainment but also for educational purposes. Respectively, there are holocaust camps – primary sites – surrounded by tourist infrastructure (e.g., hotels, restaurants, cafes) in order to accommodate tourists properly, so the authenticity of such holocaust camps may be covered by the layer of infrastructure.

Culler (1990: 6) states that "what is reproduced, represented, written about, is inauthentic, while the rest is authentic: tourists pay to see tourist traps while the real thing is free as air". Hence, even though museums of dark heritage are trying to present

objects and / or events as authentic ones, the authenticity is destroyed by attempt to persuade spectator about the genuineness of exhibition. Authentic things normally exist the way they are, naturally, and there are no tourist sites that can offer such attraction. On the other hand, a question should be raised, whether tourists themselves are willing to travel to the very authentic dark tourism sites. Perhaps only people who are into extreme experiences might be willing to visit holocaust camp without having a proper infrastructure (hotels, cafes, restaurants, souvenir shops, etc.) based around it. For instance, some people organize illegal trips to Chernobyl because they want to see everything with their own eyes and to feel the atmosphere of the strange. Therefore, the aspect of illegality may be considered as an indicator of trip's authenticity.

In the same research paper, Stone (2006: 152-157) also describes seven most common types of dark tourism sites with reference to the dark tourism spectrum (see *Figure 1*):

- **Dark Fun Factories** allude to those visitor places, attractions and tours which predominantly have entertainment orientation and commercial ethic, and which present real or fictional death and macabre events. Dark tourism sites of this type typically offer products that are perhaps conceived as less authentic and therefore less serious (e.g., "Dracula Park" in Romania).

- **Dark Exhibitions** refer to those exhibitions and sites which essentially blend the product design in order to reflect education and potential learning possibilities. If Dark Fun Factories are selling a commercialized and more entertainment based dark tourism product, then Dark Exhibitions offer these attractions which concentrate around death, suffering or macabre with a commemorative, educational and reflective message. A Lithuanian example could be the January 13th exhibition in Vilnius TV tower. Regardless of commemorative focus, it encompasses tourism infrastructure as well: after seeing the exhibition dedicated to the January events, or Lithuanian independence fights, visitors can go up to the restaurant "Milky Way" to enjoy a meal with a glass of fine wine.

- **Dark Dungeons** include those attractions and places which portray bygone penal and justice codes to the present day consumer and focus on courthouses and prisons. These dissonant heritage sites combine entertainment with education, possess a relatively high degree of commercialism and tourism infrastructure, and occupy

sites which were originally created for different purposes than dark tourism. On the basis of this classification of dark tourism sites, Raseiniai prison may be considered as the most prominent Dark Dungeon in Lithuania.

- ***Dark Resting Places*** are oriented to the cemetery or grave markers as potential products for dark tourism. In contemporary society, the cemetery is a romanticised, if not rather macabre, urban space. The key attributes of Dark Resting places would be history-centrism, conservation and commemoration. A Lithuanian example could be Antakalnis cemetery, where national heroes killed during the January events in 1990 are buried.

- ***Dark Shrines*** are those places which essentially merchandise the act of remembrance and respect for the recently deceased. These places are constructed very closely to the site of death and shortly after the tragic incidence happened. In accordance with Kulcar and Simon's (2005: 125) thoughts, Dark Shrines could be also described as *warm* dark tourism sites, referring to the very recent tragedies and deaths. Most Dark Shrines are non-purposeful and therefore possess very little tourism infrastructure due to their temporal nature. One of the most outstanding examples of this kind dark heritage places are the gates of Kensington Palace at the time Diana, Princess of Wales, was killed in 1997.

- ***Dark Conflict Sites*** are focused on the representation of warfare objects and battlefields and their commodification as dark tourism products. The Dark Conflict Sites are oriented towards entertainment and commemoration, are history-centric and originally non-purposeful. Nowadays Dark Conflict Sites are to a greater extent more commercialized and as a result have a developing tourism infrastructure. The well-known Lithuanian example of a site exposing such dissonant heritage would be War Museum located Kaunas.

- ***Dark Camps of Genocide*** represent those sites which are focused on genocide, atrocity or catastrophe as the main thanatological, or death-related, theme, and hence can be located in the darkest area of dark tourism spectrum. Such dissonant heritage sites are of commemorative and educational nature and, unlike Dark Exhibitions, are based at the actual location where the tragic events happened. The well-known example in the world would be Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, former

concentration camp. In Lithuania, the Genocide Victims' Museum could be defined as Dark Camp of Genocide.

The classification of dark tourism sites based on a dark tourism spectrum might be useful for generally describing the research object. It may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding on how objects are represented in a site, e.g. whether they are exposed in their original surroundings or not, the extent to which they romanticized and commercialized or if they focus more on the commemorative function. The main limitation of the model is the impossibility of evaluating the exact level of "darkness" that site offers for an observer. On the other hand, in the model presented criteria can be used as a basis for the case analysis – the description of dark tourism site.

1.4. Resemiotizing the Objects of Inconvenient Past in Dark Tourism

Memories, or moments of the past, which are presented at dark tourism sites, are often traumatic, being related to the war or occurrences of political, cultural, and ethnic violence. Researchers use different terms for describing the past introduced in places of dissonant heritage: *painful* past (Kempa, Strange 2003), *undesirable* past (Lankauskas 2006); *eclectic 'dark'* past (Lennon, Wight 2007); *inconvenient* past (Dearborn, Stallmeyer 2010); *inconvenient* past (Wight 2014); *unwanted* past (Isaac, Budryte-Ausiejiene 2015); *traumatic memories* (Mazzucchelli et al. 2014).

Dearborn and Stallmeyer (2010: 40) suggest that the dark tourism industry tends to cleanse the past of its inconvenience, or of things physically incongruent with the preferred interpretation, unpalatable for tourists who seek something dark and extraordinary. In cleansing the past, material objects are valorized, restored and represented, isolating them from the rest of the physical world. In this context, it is possible to talk about resemiotization of dissonant heritage.

According to Iedema (2003: 41), *resemiotization* is about "meaning making shift from context to context". Iedema (2001: 25) adds that it is a process through which relevant meanings "are conventionally 'resemiotized' into alternative and less negotiable semioses". Hence, due to changing historical circumstances, particular objects and events have to be re-evaluated and re-adjusted to the new context in order to

meet the needs of contemporary society. As a result of resemiotization, inconvenient objects and events get a chance to exist in society in more "convenient" way.

Šakaja and Stanic (2011: 508) state that negotiating meanings of historical events are manifested in resemiotization of monuments, which may be achieved by relocation of memorials, by addition of new elements and by removal or replacement of some old elements of monuments. Similarly, Lowenthal (1985) states that moving, or relocating, objects is an important way of changing the past:

> *Relicts are profoundly altered by being moved away from – or back to – their place of origin. Removal subsumes a wide range of actions: antiquities as small as a nail or as large as a temple may be shifted a few inches or halfway round the world, transported entire or reassembled, broken up into segments or reunited from separate fragments. Some artifacts – books, paintings, bronzes, medals – were made to be portable; others, whose meaning and value derive from and enliven their surroundings, are displaced with grave loss. Some artifacts are moved because everything cognate around them has changed; others, previously uprooted by war, theft, or accident, may be returned to former locales. Some relicts are dispersed from centres of origin or collection, others brought together from scattered sites. (Lowenthal 1985: 282-283)*

The physical relocation of objects is a significant procedure for changing their meanings, or resemiotizing them. Monuments are particularly prone to altering their meaning after being moved away from their original surroundings, since their value and meaning is to a large extent deriving from the environment. In the case of dark tourism, various objects, including monuments, referring to specific historical events are usually brought together from scattered places into one spatial unit, where meanings of these objects change. Therefore, if Lowenthal's view is taken into account, then even shifting the object a few inches (e.g., removing the monument from its pedestal) may be characterized as an act of relocation. In Šakaja and Stanic's (2011: 506) opinion, the elimination of pedestal should rather be considered as an act of deletion. According them, the strategy of relocation is mostly related to drastic changes of object location, such as movements from the centre to periphery, and vice versa.

According to Mazzucchelli et al. (2014: 4), museums, memorials, monuments, exhibitions, mediatic representations of spaces and places, landscapes or simply segments of environments play a role in the shared reminiscences of a community. The sites of dark tourism are places where collective remembrances are stored in a particular way. In these places, memory and thus meaning of objects and events is highly

dependent on the spatial environment in which these objects and events are exposed. Therefore, the spatial approach may be beneficial for explaining how the site of dark tourism functions as a resemiotizing practice of dissonant, or inconvenient, heritage. The spatial description of dark tourism site may lead to answers what new meanings are attributed to the objects of inconvenient past exposed in the particular site and thus how the objects are resemiotized in connection with their spatial surroundings.

2. The Meaning of Environment

2.1. Environment as a Means for Resemiotization

Environment may be considered as a material for inscribing messages of cultural and historical continuity. Lindström (2008: 230) states that any power "tries to use landscape image, which is one of the most stable reference systems for cultural identity, to create an illusion of historical continuity and stability even at times of turbulent change". Powerful – and those which intend to be powerful – political regimes are creating an illusion of their eternity by erecting a number of monuments, celebrating their leaders and marking the presence of that ideology in urban, as well as rural, environment. Nevertheless, sometimes these political regimes collapse, and then the objects associated with the former ideology lose their actuality. This often leads to the state of inconvenience which results in the restructuring of old surroundings by removing and / or replacing by something else the objects of unwanted past.

On the other hand, getting rid of inconvenient past by erasing its physical presence from the surroundings is not an easy task. According to Lankauskas (2006: 29), "letting go of the past is an inherently ambiguous and paradoxical process, one that hardly ever follows a straight trajectory toward a complete deletion of particular memories. Forgetting is often complicated and made problematic by recurrent moments of recollection". The majority of dark tourism sites can be characterized as spaces of recollection because various objects of unwanted, inconvenient or eclectic 'dark' past (for instance, Soviet rule, Cold War, Holocaust, etc.) are preserved and maintained there.

Isaac and Budryte-Ausiejiene (2015: 401) notice that most of the researches applying spatial semiotic approach are focusing on reordering, or resemiotization, of the

"public realm" (e.g., removal of old street signs, reorganization of public squares, etc.). Much less attention is given to the spatial structuring of dark tourism sites in relation to the resemiotization process. I would like to suggest that spatial semiotic theories can lead to a more complete understanding of resemiotization process in dark tourism sites. As a basis for practical analysis, a selection of conceptual tools from Amos Rapoport's, Kevin Lynch's, and Alexandros Lagopolous & Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou's theories will be used.

2.1. Three Levels of Environmental Meaning

An important question of all times was how human beings interact with their surroundings. In order to find the answer, environment-behaviour studies, or interdisciplinary study of environment-behaviour relations, have been developed. These studies are a means which help to understand how people and environments interact with each other (Rapoport 1994: 66-67). The environment-behaviour studies can be conceptualized in terms of three mayor questions (Rapoport 1987: 10): 1) how do people shape their environments; what characteristics of people as individuals or groups are relevant to the shaping of particular environments; 2) how and to what extent does the physical environment affect people, in what ways and in which contexts; 3) what are the mechanisms which link people and environments in this two-way interaction?

Rapoport (1987: 10) points out that culture is an aspect of the first question, the nature of environment is an aspect of the second question, while reciprocal responsiveness, or mechanisms that link culture and environment, is an aspect of the third question. There is no doubt that the cultural layer is of a high importance in understanding how people and environments interact with each other. Subsequently, Rapoport (1990: 13) states that people react to environments with reference to the meanings these environments have for them. The environmental evaluation is more a matter of affective response than of a detailed analysis of specific aspects, it is more a latent than a manifest function, and it is largely affected by images and ideals. Therefore, people tend to respond to the environment using affective words and phrases.

Rapoport (1990: 14) claims that individuals react to environments affectively and globally only before they start analysing and evaluating surroundings in specific terms. People prefer visiting specific urban areas not because of what they are but because of what they mean. For instance, tourists generally do not like places that are industrial, and hence smoky, unhealthy, dark, and dirty; however, they prefer visiting places with a rural character, and thus quiet, healthy, and gentle. Therefore, trees are considered as valuable environmental objects because they signify high-value areas and as well evoke rural associations. It could be presumed that material objects always first arouse a feeling which provides a background for more specific images, and these images then are fitted to the material.

Rapoport is certain that meaning is too broad term for describing built environments and material culture in general. Built environments may communicate "a different type of meaning". Hence, Rapoport (1990: 221) distinguishes among three levels of meaning: 1) *high-level* meanings associated with, for instance, cosmologies, cultural schemata, worldviews, philosophical systems, and the sacred; 2) *middle-level* meanings communicating identity, status, wealth, power, etc., or latent rather than instrumental aspects of activities, behaviour, and settings; 3) *low-level*, or instrumental, meanings related to accessibility, privacy, movement, way-finding or other information which enables users of environment to act and behave appropriately and predictably in those surroundings. According to Rapoport, lower-level meanings that steam from physical (incl. spatial) qualities of the built environment have to be analysed if one wants to get a more complete understanding of that environment. Unfortunately, in the scientific research, the analysis of lower-level meanings is often left aside.

Furthermore, Rapoport (2013) differentiates between perceptual and associational aspects of the environment, by building this distinction on a three-level classification of meanings:

> *This distinction is partly based on the existence of a hierarchy of levels of meaning associated with any objects in the physical environment which range from the concrete, through use and value to symbolic meanings. This distinction is clearly one of degree rather than kind and the perceptual and associational worlds are linked – the latter cannot exist without the former: the perceptual world is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the associational world. A setting can only be seen as suitable for a specific activity and as having some meaning after it is perceived as a setting. (Rapoport 2013: 316)*

In order to be able to create associations and symbolic meanings of the environment, one has to perceive his / her surroundings. Although meaning is culturally determined, the same forms of perceptual world can bring out very distinct associations for diverse groups in different time periods. Rapoport (2013: 318-319) develops this argument by pointing out that some of the associations are reinforced by powerful media, school, university, and so forth. The perceptual world, in which one lives and develops, leads through direct and taught associations to the associational world, embodied in images, which is then used to evaluate and judge environments. As an example, the freestanding house normally enhances feelings of ownership, territory, privacy and self-esteem. On the other hand, the environmental objects may vary with their significance or, in other words, associational values.

In the book *Meaning and Geography: The Social Conception of the Region in Northern Greece*, Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou (1992: 25-26) comment on Rapoport's theory by stating that Rapoport uses as his starting point the behavioural model to which he adds the layer of culture. Meaning for Rapoport has a dualistic nature because some levels of meaning are universal due to socialization process (e.g., media, school, etc.), while some other levels are relative due to their cultural specificity. In this manner, Rapoport introduces the problem of universals of meaning, and opens the way for analysing various environments not only from the behavioural but also from the cultural perspective.

Rapoport focuses on both cultural and perceptual mechanisms of meaning generation in environment, which are a focal point of semiotic approach to the environment. Interestingly, but Rapoport (1990: 37) is certain that the use of semiotics in the study of environment can be criticized due to lack of advance and its relations to semiotic theory. Rapoport claims that other sciences, such as anthropology, ethno-science, cognitive psychology, suggest better views to environmental meaning generation. So by criticizing semiotics, Rapoport actually uses it because semiotics provides an interdisciplinary approach to environment.

I propose the idea that Rapoport can be useful for the spatial analysis in the context of dark tourism. The meaning of dark tourism site might be understood not only from the official messages, communicated by the creator of the site, but also from the

spatial organization of the site, taking into consideration the visitor's point of view. Rapoport (1990: 221) confirms as well that the analysis of *low-level*, or instrumental, meanings, such as privacy and accessibility of the space, movement and way-finding in it, is a crucial aspect for a more complete understanding of what meaning that place is communicating to the observer. Thus the perceptual world, or environmental cues, is the basis for symbolic, or associational, meaning.

2.2. The Elements of Environmental Images

In the book *The Image of the City*, Lynch defines the notion of ***imageability*** (also known as visibility, legibility), as a parameter of a physical object that gives a high probability of evoking a strong image in every observer. This qualitative feature may be the colour, shape or arrangement of physical objects, helping to create a structured mental image of the surroundings (Lynch 1960: 9). Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou describe Lynch's concept of imageability as follows:

> *Legibility, or imageability, for Lynch would be both the morphological quality of the city or physical object in general which gives it a high degree of probability of creating a strong image in any observer, and the corresponding quality of the image or representation of the object or city. Thus, legibility relates both to the physical environment and to the subject components of identity and structure. (Lagopoulos, Boklund-Lagopoulou 1992: 23)*

As argued by Lynch (1960: 47), city dwellers understand their surroundings in predictable and consistent ways, by forming mental maps in their mind. For creating mental maps, individuals use five types of environmental elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Even though these elements are primarily used for the analysis of the cityscape, they may be of more general application since they seem to appear in various environmental images (e.g., parks, museums, residential buildings, etc.). These five environmental elements could be described as follows (Lynch 1960: 47-48):

1. ***Paths*** are the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally or potentially moves (e.g., streets, walkways, transit lines, canals, railroads). These

elements are predominant since people tend to observe surroundings while moving in them. Along paths other environmental objects are located. Therefore, paths could be considered as one of the most crucial elements for creating the image of museum exhibition.

2. *Edges* are the linear elements, the boundaries between two phases, linear breaks in continuity (e.g., shores, railroad cuts, edges of development, walls). They are not coordinate axes but rather lateral references. Although edge elements are not as dominant as paths, they are important for organizing the environment, mostly holding together generalized areas. For example, museum visitors know that it is forbidden to touch objects exhibited in glass showcases, separating them from the remaining environment.

3. *Districts* are medium-to-large sections of the city or another area, conceived of as having two-dimensional extent, which the observer mentally enters "inside of", and which are recognizable as having some common character. When visible from outside, districts are also used for exterior reference.

4. *Nodes* are points, the strategic spots of the environment which an individual can enter. For instance, nodes are junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths, moments of shift from one structure to another. Otherwise, nodes may be simply concentrations, which acquire their significance from being the condensation of some use of physical character. The notion of node is connected with the concept of path because joints are typically the convergence of paths, events or the journey. It is related to the notion of district too because nodes are typically polarizing centre of districts.

5. *Landmarks* are external, so the observer is not able to enter them (e.g., building, sign, store, mountain, tree, sun). Landmarks seem to be increasingly relied upon as a journey becomes more and more familiar. Moreover, they can be distant and close, large and small. A parallel could be drawn between the concepts of Lynch's landmark and Lowenthal's marker. According to Lowenthal (1985: 265), markers locate the object in one's mental map and thus help to identify the past. Contrary to landmarks, only small and close designators are typically characterized as markers (e.g, an exhibition description).

In general, paths, nodes and districts are accessible elements, edges and landmarks – inaccessible ones. At this point, Richter and Winter (2014: 85) suggest the following augmentation of the Lynch's theoretical framework: Lynch's accessible elements may be considered as zero-dimensional (nodes), one-dimensional (paths) and two-dimensional (districts); correspondingly, inaccessible elements may be zero-dimensional (landmarks as reference points), as well as one-dimensional (edges).

Lynch (1960: 48-49) claims that the image of a given physical reality may occasionally shift its type depending on a viewpoint. For instance, an expressway might be a path for the driver but an edge for the pedestrian. In addition, central area might be a district when city is of a medium-scale organization, and a node when one takes into consideration all metropolitan area. On the other hand, these categories seem to be stable at a level of individual observation. However, practically none of the element types exist in isolation: districts are structured with nodes, defined by edges, penetrated by paths, and sprinkled with landmarks. For instance, in dark tourism sites, all these environmental elements – paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks – can be found in one spatial unit and thus are meaningfully related. So for getting a complete understanding of dark tourism site, the description of all five elements has to be taken into account.

Lynch believes that people in urban situations orient themselves by the help of mental maps. People, who move in a city, or in a dark tourism site, are always involved in the process of way-finding, so they have to be able to recognize and organize the environmental elements in coherent patterns. Then they create mental images of their surroundings, based on the imageability parameter. Paths, edges, nodes, districts and landmarks can be useful for describing the dark tourism site as a spatial semiotic system.

2.3. The Spatial Logic of Environmental Images

Meaning and Geography: The Social Conception of the Region in Northern Greece, Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou (1992) aim to reconstruct the social representation of regional space and the conceptual structures through which space is

seen as a part of text that is implying context. These authors verify the importance of mental maps by claiming that the information about the perception of particular space might be collected not only through the verbal questionnaires, which were mostly used by Lynch, but also with the help of sketch maps drawn by the analysis subjects:

> *These sketch maps are for behavioural geographers also an expression of the mental maps of the subjects, accurate to a greater or lesser degree depending on their graphic ability. As we saw, the sketch map, according to D. C. D. Pocock (1975: 7, 11, 53) does not correspond to the whole depth of the mental map but only to its "designative" component, i.e., the information on the location and nature of spatial elements. For the same writer, this component is the "skeletal framework" of the global mental map, which in addition has an affective and symbolic element. (Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou 1992: 277)*

Hence, sketch maps are always to some extent inaccurate and therefore reflect a mind map only partially. Nevertheless, in sketch maps subjects tend to mark those environmental objects which are emotionally important and have a symbolical meaning to them, and that is why the analysis of sketch maps is a relevant and fruitful tool for understanding how the subject conceive his surroundings. Researchers are mostly interested in the content and accuracy of the map. Therefore, by drawing environmental maps, the dynamic and static structures of surroundings can be revealed. On the other hand, the dynamic spatial logic of environment can be reconstructed from the mental images. Representations, or sketch maps, are not necessary material for the reconstruction of the space.

Generally, individuals use similar static and dynamic patterns when they are reconstructing the spatial logic of the environment. Lagopoulos and Boklund-Lagopoulou (1992: 300-301) distinguish among eight dynamic models of structuring surroundings, such as:

1. *Central model:* the subject reconstructs space using the permanent central point of reference; the periphery might be marked or not marked.
2. *Concentric model:* space is assembled as a series of consecutive concentric zones revolving around the actual or abstract centre.
3. *Radial model:* the model guides to the recurrent use of radial elements all radiating from a marked centre. It could be considered as an expansion or a variation of central model.

4. ***Axial model:*** the subject first completes the reconstruction of a first part of space situated on one side of an axis and then passes to the other side of the axis; the axis can be truly existing or imaginary.

5. ***Biaxial model:*** space is organized according to a pattern of three parts of four quarters, e.g. two perpendicular axes. Hence, this reconstruction of space always revolves around centre, which either corresponds to the abstract intersection of the two axes, or to a marked element of the sketch map which coincides with the intersection.

6. ***Serial model:*** space is assembled by a series of consecutive areas that develop linearly in the same or antagonistic directions. In this way, the point of departure and the point of arrival might or might not comprise the two extremes of the model.

7. ***Peripheral model:*** space is constructed through a circular trajectory, in such way that the point of arrival and the point of departure are close to each other. The direction of movement can be clockwise or counter-clockwise. This model does not have a centre but might include a peripheral focus instead.

8. ***Pendulum model:*** the subject organizes space by starting from one part of it and moving to an opposite part, then moving to a part antagonistic to the latter that does not inevitably go along with the first part. After such several movements, the pendular or zigzag trajectory is created.

All previously described dynamic models of fundamental spatial logics are visually represented in *Figure 2* below.
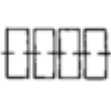
Figure 2. Fundamental spatial logics (Lagopoulos, Boklund-Lagopoulou 1992: 312)

To sum up, the information about spatial logic of environment might be collected from the sketch maps drawn by the subjects. Sketch maps are representations of both

dynamic and static patterns that people use for organizing and reconstructing the space. However, in this paper the analysis of sketch maps is not used as a method of data collection. Instead, the dynamic structure of dark tourism site is taken into account in relation to the cues of spatial environment. Thus, spatial organization of dark tourism site may indicate the dynamic structure of it.

3. The Case Study of Grūtas Park

3.1. The General Description of Grūtas Park

Figure 3. Lenin monument. (Picture is taken from www.grutoparkas.lt)

Soon after the independence from the Soviet Union in 1990, in Lithuania, as well as in many other former Soviet countries, monuments and statues celebrating communist leaders and signifying the presence of Soviet state in urban environment were torn down in various places. In 1998, a special Lithuanian parliamentary committee announced a national competition for initiatives that would guarantee careful recuperation and preservation of "the unduly forgotten iconographic legacy of socialism" (Lankauskas 2006: 29). Viliumas Malinauskas, the former collective farm administrator and the current capitalist entrepreneur with a successful mushroom-pickling business, won the competition.

Over the next few years, various socialist icons, differing in shape and size, were transported from all Lithuania to the small Grūtas village, located by Druskininkai city, approximately 130 km southwest of the capital Vilnius. Grūtas Park was finally opened

in 2001, ten years after the independence of Lithuania was reinstated. The establishment of Grūtas Park provoked the fierce national debate that polarized Lithuanians into those who supported this commemorative initiative and those who saw it as a sacrilegious act.

Despite the permanent disputes devoted to the appropriateness of the site, Grūtas Park is considered to be one of the most attractive and prominent tourist destinations in Lithuania. Currently there are one hundred eleven sculptures of various Soviet figures exposed in the park (e.g., Lenin, Stalin, Melnikaitė, Mickevičius-Kapsukas) and over 1,5 million other artefacts, such as stamps, coins, paintings, elective posters, etc. These artefacts are presented in three indoor expositions, named as follows: Soviet Museum, Soviet Art Gallery and Soviet Elections Post – Reader's Club. Furthermore, the statue exhibition and wooden houses with indoor expositions are located in the coniferous forest with an artificial river and are surrounded by watchtowers and barbed wire in order to create a reference to the Siberian labor camp, or the Gulag.

As it is stated on the official Grūtas Park website (www.grutoparkas.lt), the aim of the exhibition is "to provide an opportunity for Lithuanian people, visitors coming to our country as well as future generations to see the naked Soviet ideology which suppressed and hurt the spirit of our nation for many decades". Moreover, there is a café, a souvenir shop, a playing ground, a mini zoo and several exhibits of war artillery located in the park.

3.2. Grūtas Park as a *Dark Fun Factory*

.

More precisely Grūtas Park can be evaluated using criteria of dark heritage sites distinguished in Stone's (2006: 151) dark tourism spectrum (see *Figure 1*).

First, the objects exposed in Grūtas Park are tools for creating a secondary site referring to Soviet regime because objects are exposed out of their original surroundings, in the new and thus non-authentic environment. Lowenthal (1985: 282) proposes the idea that moving the objects is one of the means used for changing the past. The object, moved even several inches away, does not symbolise the same thing as it did before. So what could one say about the objects which were moved for hundred kilometres, from busy cities to the quiet Grūtas village?

Secondly, there are many "fun" elements existing in the semiotic system of the park, such as a children playground, a café, inviting a visitor to try traditional Russian meals from the menu exposed outdoors, and a souvenir shop, where one can purchase not only souvenirs but also can get a shot of traditional Russian vodka or some tea from the samovar. Tourists also can visit a mini zoo placed a little bit further from the area of exposition (*Annex 1*). Consequently, the park may be considered as entertainment oriented and having a well-developed tourist infrastructure: besides the main exhibition, it offers a number of alternative tourist attractions (e.g., a café, a souvenir shop, a mini zoo and a playground).

According to Lankauskas (2006: 30), Grūtas Park is interesting as a site of commemoration where the period of Soviet regime is externalized, objectified and made meaningful by using predominantly non-verbal media of recollection. In relation to Stone's (2006) theoretical proposals, it may be incorrect to agree with Lankauskas on the history-centric, or commemorative, orientation of the place. On the contrary, the park could be considered as heritage-centric, using a bit romanticized and commercialized way of representing the Soviet past. Romantic leitmotif of the park may be discovered immediately after entering it, when next to the path that leads to the main exhibition the stylized and colourful train of Siberian deportations catches the observer's eye.

There are many tourist attractions in the park (e.g., café, playground, etc.), thus the commercialization may be considered as one of the key aspects of the park. Strange and Kempa (2003: 387) confirm that nowadays it is very common to turn the painful past into the commercialized attraction. Williams (2008: 192) states that "Grūtas Park is *amusement*, a term that signifies several things at once – to be amused, to visit an amusement park, and to muse upon history at an outdoor museum". Furthermore, Patrizia Violi (2014) proposes the idea of *disneyfication* of memory – this notion could be applicable to Grūtas Park as well – because an "experientialist visitor" always wants to "have an experience" through the museum space. As a consequence, museums of dark tourism are redefining themselves from informative to performative places (Mazzucchelli et al. 2014: 13).

In connection with William's and Violi's findings, it could be claimed that Grūtas Park suggests non-authentic product interpretation and location and is purposeful,

created for the sake of visitor's amusement and new experience. Therefore, Grūtas Park could be considered as Dark Fun Factory: the park predominantly has an entertainment orientation and commercial ethic.

3.3. Grūtas Park as a Spatial Semiotic System

In Grūtas Park, monuments from different periods of the Soviet era are exposed in groups. According to Naef (2015: 102), Grūtas' sculptures are grouped into several circles depending on the figures they represent, as follows: 1) *the totalitarian circle,* including founding figures of Communist ideology, such as Lenin, Marx and Engels; 2) *the Soviet circle,* including statues of the activists of the Lithuanian – Soviet War in 1918–1919; 3) *the red circle,* dedicated to the Soviet partisans, including Marija, often referred to as Marytė, Melnikaitė; 4) *the circles of occupation and death,* representing the brutal side the Soviet regime, such as mass deportations, suppression of the Lithuanian partisans, etc.

There are many different elements (the exhibition of Soviet monuments with different historical background, three expositions of other artefacts, an animal zoo, a restaurant, etc.) co-existing in Grūtas Park. The description of ***paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks*** (Lynch 1960) may be useful for getting a more thorough understanding on how the park functions as a spatial semiotic system and thus resemiotizes the objects of inconvenient Soviet past.

The first group of environmental elements analysed is ***paths***, defined by Lynch (1960: 47) as "channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves". Paths are of a high importance for visitors of Grūtas Park because people tend to gather information from their surroundings while moving: along these paths, the environmental objects – park exhibits – are located. In Grūtas Park, paths are organized into two loops, and along them two different groups of the objects are presented: on the right side of the park, the objects of the Soviet and totalitarian circles are exposed (e.g., Lenin, Stalin, Marx, Engels, Mickevičius-Kapsukas), and on the left side of the park, the figures of the red circle are presented (e.g., Marija Melnikaitė). For deciding what is on the right and what is on the left side of the park, a visitor's position

after he enters the park is taken as a starting point. The tourist map is also created in connection with the spatial position of visitor who just enters the park, so he would be able to orient easily in the park (see *Annex 1*).

Landmarks, described by Lynch (1960: 78) as "the point references considered to be external to the observer", are also guiding the visitor of the park by letting him to foresee which exhibits will be exposed along the path that he enters. For instance, old street signs written in Cyrillic alphabet are marking the beginning of both paths: the right path is named as Lenin Street (see *Figure 4*) and the left path is named as Melnikaitė Street.

Figure 4. The Cyrillic street sign. (Picture is taken by the thesis' author)

From the study of Grūtas Park, it may be presumed that the right loop is named after Vladimir Lenin and the left loop – after Marytė Melnikaitė with a purpose. The majority of sculptures located on the right side of the park are Lenin monuments, and the remaining sculptures exhibited in Lenin Street are historically related to Lenin (e.g., Marx, Engels and Stalin are also considered to be main figures of Communist ideology). Accordingly, on the left side of the park, in Melnikaitė Street, the visitor's eye is caught by many sculptural variations of Melnikaitė, and the other monuments are historically related to this particular figure of the Soviet partisan movement.

It could be proposed that the dynamic patterns of the Grūtas Park are reconstructed according to the ***axial spatial logics***: the subject first completes the reconstruction of space situated on the right side of an axis and then passes to the left side of the axis (Lagopoulos, Boklund-Lagopoulou 1992: 301). In this case, the axis is imaginary, even though it may be perceived from the organization of the park and the representation of this organization in the tourist map (see *Annex 1*), from the perspective of tourist entering the park. On the other hand, the observer of the park, who is interested in visiting the mini zoo as well, may reconstruct the space according to different dynamic spatial logics. For such visitor, the statue exhibition may be a peripheral area of Grūtas Park, and the park may be constructed according to the central model, when the subject reconstructs space using the permanent central point of reference; the periphery might be marked or not marked. Furthermore, visitors who during the visitation of the park mostly spend their time in the café and / or souvenir shop may reconstruct the space according to radial dynamic model, where all elements radiate from a marked centre – in this case, the café and / or souvenir shop.

Thus, it may be presumed that the axial dynamic structure is typically used for the spatial reconstruction by those who are particularly interested in the statues. The axial spatial logic divides the Grūtas Park into two "districts". Lynch (1960: 66) defines ***districts*** as large structural areas "which the observer can mentally go inside of and which have some common character". On the left side of the axis, the park's area is unified by the representation of figures from the Soviet partisan movement, or *the red circle*; on the right side of the axis, the Communist ideology founders and the most prominent figures of Lithuanian-Soviet War in 1920s from *the totalitarian* and *Soviet* circles are exposed. From the visitor's perspective, the left side of the park may appear as more "feminine" and the right one – as more "masculine": on the left, mostly monuments dedicated to the famous Soviet women are exposed, while on the right monuments dedicated to the famous Soviet men are located. Such organization of the monuments is to some extent visually represented in the tourist's map as well (see *Annex 1*).

The next group of environmental elements that should be discussed is edges. Lynch (1960: 62) characterizes ***edges*** as the boundaries between two kinds of areas. In Grūtas Park, the monuments are exposed on the meadow, where the visitors are not

allowed to go. People visiting the park can observe objects only at a distance, from the path that guides them through the exposition. Therefore, the boundaries between the pathway and the meadow are serving a function of an edge in the park. These edges organize the structure of a park by separating the visitor's area, or the pathway, from the monumental area, or the meadow. According to Lynch (1960: 47), some edges may be barriers, more or less penetrable, closing one area off the other. Therefore, the edges limit observer's movements in Grūtas Park and give an opportunity to get an impression of the monument by looking at it from afar.

David Machin and Gill Abousnnouga (2013: 44-45) claim that "material objects can be created so that they can be approached, touched or can be kept at a distance from the viewers or framed off by some kind of boundary". These authors are primarily focusing on the physical boundaries, or barriers, and do not take into account the mental ones. On the other hand, Lynch's theoretical framework, edges could be considered as mental boundaries, constructed on the basis of environmental cues. In the case of park, there is an attempt of creating the distance between the exposition and the observer because the objects are located on the meadow, at least several meters from the path. Thus, the objects are meant to be approached from afar: the edge between the path and the meadow turns the monument into a distant landmark. Moreover, every object is also surrounded by the trees, which separate statue from the rest environment and turn it into the independent scenes. However, while statues appear as distant landmarks, their distant character is limited to a locally closed, rural context that does not have any global visibility.

The final group of elements that should be analysed is nodes. According to Lynch (1960: 72), *nodes* are "the strategic foci into which observer can enter, typically either junctions of paths, or concentrations of some characteristic". Paths in Grūtas Park are organized so that they intersect: at the collision point, previously discussed "fun" elements of the park, such as a souvenir shop, a restaurant and a children playground, are located. These objects are also presented in the tourist map by colourful pictures (see *Annex 1*). On a basis of personal observation, I propose that this junction of paths is the most important node in the park because it connects all paths – leading to mini zoo, statue exhibition, entrance / exit, so the tourist, willing to see monuments, inevitably has

to pass by these objects. Thus, the structure of the park hints the importance of "fun" elements by exposing them at the collision point.

Interestingly, even in the audio-guide of Grūtas Park, "fun" elements of the park are mentioned (Naef 2015: 103): "When visitors see this playground, they think we have recreated Disneyland in Grūtas. This is not a Disneyland. This playground is also a part of history. We want to show the humble Soviet playgrounds for the children to know as well". This statement may show how perhaps the creator of Grūtas Park attempts to induce specific associational values of the place. The authority, communicating such message of Grūtas Park to the audience, is aware of the presence of various "fun" elements in the park. However, the authority suggests appreciating Grūtas Park not as an amusement, but as a serious and authentic experience. On the other hand, the diverse environmental cues of the park (e.g., a playground, a mini zoo) do not support the message communicated through the audio-guide. Lower-lever meanings (Rapoport 1990: 221), deriving from the spatial structure of the park, support the idea that Grūtas Park is more oriented to the entertainment than to the commemoration.

3.4. Resemiotization of the Inconvenient Past in Grūtas Park

In this chapter, it will be discussed how resemiotization is taking place in Grūtas with relation to the spatial structure of the park. Resemiotization by Iedema (2001: 25) is characterized as a process through which relevant meanings "are conventionally resemiotized into alternative and less negotiable semioses". In the park, objects from the Soviet era are displayed in different ones than their original surroundings and even in different appearances: for instance, the majority of sculptures are without elevations, having some parts missing, etc. Therefore, it may be presumed that these objects get a new value and therefore meaning after they are exposed in the park.

Soviet monuments were perhaps primarily meant to be observed from afar and bottom-up because they were exposed on huge elevations, or pedestals, physically separating the observer from the memorial (see *Figure 5*). Machin and Abousnnouga (2013: 45) state that "barriers prevent close access which impacts on the social distance

of the interactive relationship" between the object and the observer. Thus, the barrier between the monument and its viewer could be treated as an indicator of social distance. In the case of memorials, barriers can be in the form of simple chains, or elevation where the figures are out of reach or other physical barriers that frame the monument away from the viewer.

Figure 5. Lenin monument in Lenin, currently Lukiškės, Square in Vilnius.
(Picture is taken from www.viv.lt)

In Grūtas Park, many pedestals are missing: the majority of memorials are exposed on the meadow, on the same level with the visitor. On the other hand, an edge, or a boundary, between the meadow and the pathway is creating a distance between the viewer and the monument. In the past, the elevation of Lenin memorial in could have been imposing a social distance (Machin, Abousnnouga 2013: 45), represented in a

vertical relationship between the object and the viewer. In Grūtas Park, the vertical distance between the spectator and object is erased by removing the pedestal and locating the monument on the same level with the observer. However, the edge between the pathway and the meadow creates a horizontal distance between the viewer and the memorial instead and turns the monument into a distant landmark that should be approached from afar (see *Figure 6*).

Figure 6. Lenin's statue (from Lenin Square) in Grūtas Park.
(Picture is taken by the thesis' author)

The meaning of horizontal and vertical distances between the observer and the object requires a further analysis. Helen Spencer-Oatey (1996: 2) states the vertical distance imposes status and the horizontal distance – solidarity. In the matter of vertical distance, relationships between two objects can entail superiority or subordination (high / low). In the case of horizontal distance, relationships between two objects can result in distance or closeness (far / near). There are a number of edges, creating the horizontal distance between the park visitors and the exhibition. In all three indoor expositions, warning signs are telling not to touch objects and also glass showcases are physically separating smaller exhibits from the remaining surroundings; in the sculpture garden, monuments are located on the meadow and far away from the asphalt paths, some of them are even on the opposite side of the artificial river, as watchtowers. Thus using

many different strategies, the vertical distance, imposing the social status, in Grūtas Park is replaced by the horizontal distance that does not have any references to the relations of superiority and subordination.

Frances W. Harrison (2012) treats the removal of pedestal as a mockery of the memorial: "the statues are also no longer on pedestals or the focal point of aesthetic design that would have attracted attention in an urban setting. Ultimately, the goal of the monument exhibit is to render Soviet ideology as if in a mock retribution, or as if "naked" in order to expose the oppression it yielded". Thus for Harrison (2012) the elimination of pedestal is perhaps an insult for the monument. In relation to this research, it is hard to tell whether the removal of elevation is an act of mockery. Instead, it rubs out the vertical distance between the visitor of the park and the sculpture, referring to the relations of superiority and subordination. The sculpture is not anymore in a higher position than a viewer, they both are on the same level, and it might result in a lower psychical tension between the monument and the observer.

Naef (2015: 104), similarly to Harrison (2012), claims that the interpretation of Soviet heritage in Grūtas Park is trivialized and highly related to irony and derision, allowing the observer to confront the painful memory without being unpleasantly affected by it. Therefore, the trivialization may be one of the reasons why the monuments, instead of being simply torn down and thrown away, continue existing as museum objects. In the *Figure 6*, one can see that Lenin monument is surrounded by smaller sculptures of Lenin's heads. From the park visitor's point of view, it may be considered as mocking and trivializing composition. Moreover, the vertical distance between the observer and statues of Lenin's heads is created, by putting the visitor to a higher position than these statues. The exact interpretation of this vertical distance can vary also depending on the visitor: for example, from mockery to an indirect reference to the subordination and weakness of Soviet regime, which should have led to the collapse of it.

Another strategy for resemiotizing the past is ***relocation*** of the monument. Lowenthal (1985: 282) points out that even moving a statue a few inches away could be treated as relocation, so the removal of monument from its pedestal may be considered as the act of relocating it. Differently, Šakaja and Stanic (2011: 506) defines relocation as "a change of place from central to peripheral area, and vice versa". In the case of

Grūtas Park, the majority of objects were moved from the centres of various Lithuanian cities to the peripheral, rural area. Grūtas village is located more than one hundred kilometres from Vilnius, where a trip by bus might take even up to 5 hours. From the location and limited accessibility of the park, Grūtas may be considered as a very secluded place.

With regards to the accessibility of the park, it is possible to talk about Rapoport's (1990: 91) described public and private domains of the environment. Before demolishing them, monuments were located in the main squares of various Lithuanian cities and thus were visible by many people. Therefore, during the Soviet times, monuments have been a part of public domain due to a high-level accessibility. Currently, only those who decide to visit Grūtas Park can see the memorials of the Soviet regime. The accessibility of monuments is low, and they are considered as a part of private domain – the park is a privately financed museum. The relocation of Soviet objects from centre to periphery is not necessarily a negative action. According to Rapoport (1990: 91), areas with low accessibility may mean that the objects located or the activities performed there are oriented to special groups of people. In the context of park, special group of people would be those who are interested in the exhibitions of Soviet heritage.

Lowenthal (1985: 283) states that "some artifacts are moved because everything cognate around them has changed." The majority of the sculptures exposed in the park were removed from their original environments after the Lithuania's re-establishment of independence from the Soviet Union in 1990. At least partially, the relocation of memorials could have been a consequence of changes in the political system of Lithuania. Switch from totalitarianism to democracy may have been one of the main reasons why sculptures celebrating communist leaders and representing ideals of Soviet society were removed from the central areas of various Lithuanian cities.

On the other hand, Williams (2008: 186) points out that Grūtas Park, which idea is based on relocation of communist-era statues city locations to a remote forest clearing, "takes already existing primary historical representations and gives them a second life as re-representations". People have to find an effective way to live with the traumatic communist past, and one possible method of doing that is removal of the object from the original location. Since both meaning and value of the monument depend on its

surroundings (Lowenthal 1985: 283), one should not talk about the same semiotic value of the object represented in the main city square and in the forest.

Conclusions

1. Grūtas Park opens an interpretation that rejects the former hierarchical and central position of the monuments and instead leaves a new interpretation somewhat ambigous, because it involves both elements of "seriousness" (in relation to authenticity) and ridicule (in relation to consumerism).

2. Grūtas Park could be considered as a *Dark Fun Factory* (Stone 2006)*:* the analysis of Grūtas Park suggests non-authentic product interpretation and location and is purposeful, created for the sake of visitor's amusement and new experience. It is possible to talk about the *disneyfication* of Grūtas Park – orientation to the experientialist visitor who is always willing to get new experiences from its environment. For that purpose, at the collision points, or nodes, various "fun" elements of the park (a café, a souvenir shop, and a playground) are located. Due to "fun" elements, park is suitable to various segments of people – those who are interested into Soviet historical past and those who are willing to have fun in the park.

3. In Grūtas Park, vertical distance between the monument and the viewer, caused by the removal of pedestals, is replaced by the horizontal distance, caused by the edge between the path for visitors and the meadow for monuments. However, horizontal distance, unlike the vertical one, does not have references to hierarchical status (superiority vs. subordination) and thus does not create psychical tension between the monument and the observer. Monument, instead of being a signifier of the presence of Soviet state in urban environment, becomes a museum object, having only historical meaning attached to it.

4. Statues exposed in Grūtas Park were relocated by moving them from the cultural centred places, such as various Lithuanian cities, to the culturally peripheral place –

rural area of Grūtas Park. Relocation has resulted in different accessibility of monuments: if before they were a part of public domain, accessible to all people, now they are a part of private domain – a privately financed museum. Now only specific group of people – those who are interested in eclectic Soviet heritage – are seeing monuments. Monuments are not anymore a part of everyday landscape, accessible by all city dwellers. Instead, they are a part of cultural, even though still inconvenient and that is why secluded, heritage.

Casbeard, Rebecca, Booth, Charles. 2012. Post-modernity and the exceptionalism of the present in dark tourism. *Journal of Unconventional Parks, Tourism & Recreation Research* 4(1): 2-8.

Culler, Jonathan 1990. The Semiotics of Tourism. *Framing The Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions*. University of Oklahoma Press.

Dearborn, Lynne M.; Stallmeyer, John C. 2010. *Inconvenient Heritage: Erasure and Global Tourism in Luang Prabang.* Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press.

Harrison, Frances W. 2012. Reviving Heritage in Post-Soviet Eastern Europe: A Visual Approach to National Identity. *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology* 20 (1), article 3.

Iedema, Rick 2001. Resemiotization. *Semiotica* 137 – ¼: 23-39.

Iedema, Rick 2003. Multimodality, Resemiotization: Extending the Analysis of Discourse as Multi-Semiotic Practice. *Visual Communication* 2: 29-57.

Isaac, Rami K., Budryte-Ausiejiene, Laurencija 2015. Interpreting the Emotions of Visitors: A Study of Visitor Comment Books at Grūtas Park Museum, Lithuania. *Scandiniavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 15(4): 400-424.

Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth, Wessler, Stanford, Avioli, Louis V. 1972. On Death and Dying. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 221(2): 174-179.

Kulcsar, Erika, Simon, Rozalina S. 2015. The Magic of Dark Tourism. *Management & Marketing Journal* 13(1): 124-136.

Lagopoulos, Alexandros P.; Boklund-Lagopoulou, Karin, 1992. *Meaning and Geography: The Social Conception of the Region in Northern Greece.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lankauskas, Gediminas 2006. Sensuous Recollections: The Sight and Taste of Socialism at Grūtas Statue Park, Lithuania. *The Senses & Society* 1(1): 27-52.

Lennon, J. John; Foley, Malcolm 2000. *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster.* London: Continuum.

Lindström, Kati 2008. Landscape Image as a Mnemonic Tool in Cultural Change: The Case of Two Phantomic Sceneries. In: Sarapik, V. (Eds.). *Koht ja paik = Place and Location: Studies in Environmental Aesthetics and Semiotics.* Estonian Academy of Arts: 227-238.

Low, Setha; Taplin, Dana; Scheld, Suzanne 2009. *Rethinking Urban Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity.* University of Texas Press.

Lowenthal, David 1985. Changing the Past. *The Past is a Foreign Country.* Cambridge University Press: 263-362.

Lynch, Kevin. 1960. *The Image of the City.* Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Machin, David; Abousnnouga, Gill. 2013. *The Language of War Monuments.* A & C Black.

Mazzucchelli, Francesco, van der Laarse, Rob, Reijnen, Carlos 2014. Traces of Terror, Signs of Trauma. *Quaderni di Studi Semiotici* 119: 3-20.

Naef, Patrick J. 2015. From terrorscape to leisurescape. A case study of 'Stalin World' in Lithuania. *Quaderni di Studi Semiotici* 119: 93-108.

Rapoport, Amos 1987. On the Cultural Responsiveness of Architecture. *Journal of Architectural Education* 41(1): 10-15.

—— 1990. *The Meaning of the Built Environment: A Nonverbal Communication Approach.* The University of Arizona Press.

—— 1994 On 'The Invisible Architecture': An Environment-Behavior Studies Perspective. In: Bouman, Ole, van Roemer, Toorn (eds.) *The Invisible in Architecture.* London: Academy Editions: 66-73.

—— 2013. *Human Aspects of Urban Form: Towards a Man-Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design.* Elsevier.

Resina, Joan R.; Ingenschay, Dieter 2003. *After-images of the City.* Cornell University Press.

Richter, Kai-Florian; Winter, Stephan 2014. *Landmarks: GIScience for Intelligent Services.* Springer Science & Business.

Šakaja, Laura, Stanic, Jelena 2011. Other(ing), self(portraying), negotiating: the spatial codification and values in Zagreb's city-text. *Cultural Geographies* 18(4): 495-516.

Sather-Wagstaff, Joy 2011. *Heritage that Hurts: Tourists in the Memoryscapes of September 11.* Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press.

Seaton, Anthony V. 1996 Guided by the Dark: From Thanatopsis to Thanatourism. International. *Journal of Heritage Studies* 2: 234–244.

Sharpley, Richard, Stone, Philip 2009. *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism.* Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen 1996. Reconsidering Power of Distance. *Journal of Pragmatics* 26: 1-24.

Stone, Philip R. 2006. A Dark Tourism Spectrum: Towards a Typology of Death and Macabre Related Tourist Sites, Attractions and Exhibitions. *Tourism: An Interdisciplinary International Journal* 54(2): 145-160.

—— 2012. Dark Tourism and Significant Other Death: Towards a Model of Mortality Mediation. *Annals of Tourism Research* 39(3): 1565-1587.

Stone, Philip R., Sharpley, Richard 2008. Consuming dark tourism: A thanatological perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research* 35(2): 574-595.

Strange, Carolyn, Kempa, Michael 2003. Shades of Dark Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 30(2): 386-405.

Trilupaityte, Skaidra 2014. Monuments, memory and mutating public space: Some initiatives in Vilnius. *Lituanus* 60(2): 24-41.

Wight, A. Craig, Lennon, J. John 2007. Selective interpretation and eclectic human heritage in Lithuania. *Tourism Management* 28: 519-529.

Wight, A. Craig 2014. *Tracking Discourses of Occupation and Genocide in Lithuanian Museums and Sites of Memory.* Doctor of philosophy.

Williams, Paul 2008. The Afterlife of Communist Statuary: Hungary's Szobopark and Lithuania's Grutas Park. *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44(2): 185-198.

Kokkuvõte

Ebamugavate minevikusündmuste resemiotiseerimine: Grutase park Leedus

Tragöödia ja surmaga seotud kohtade külastamine ning uurimine on vana ja ajalooline nähtus. Juba ammu olid inimesed huvitatud kohtadest ja vaatamisväärsustest, mis ühel või teisel kombel on seotud surma, kannatuse, vägivalda või katastroofiga. 20. sajandi jooksul arenes nn. must turism kaasaegse kultuuri ühe levinumaks osaks. J. John Lennon'i ja Malcolm Foley'i (2000) järgi määratletakse musta turismi hiljutiste ja alalooliste katastroofi ja surmaga seotud objektide külastamiseks.

Selles magistritöös analüüsitakse minevikusündmuste resemiotiseerimist Leedu musta turismi kontekstis. Musta turismi võib pidada ebamugava mineviku resemiotiseerimise viisiks. Rick Iedema (2001; 2003) kirjeldab resemiotiseerimist kui tähenduse muutust kontekstist kontekstisse; resemiotiseerimine on protsess, mille kaudu asjakohased tähendused on kokkuleppeliselt ümber asetatud alternatiivseisse ja vastupidavaisse märgisüsteemidesse.

Selle magistritöö eesmärk on uurida, kuidas Grutase pargis eksponeeritud nõukogude perioodi skulptuurid resemiotiseerivad ebamugavate minevikusündmuste ja perioodide mõtestamist. Edasised uurimisküsimused on: a) kuidas Grutase park toimib ruumilise semiootilise süsteemina; b) kuidas Grutase park toimib nõukogude perioodi probleemse pärandi resemiotiseerimisena? Uurimistöö meetodiks on Grutase pargi ruumisemiootiline juhtumiuuring.

Uuringu tulemused näitavad, et musta turismi kontekstis võib Grutase parki pidada nö tumeda lõbu tehaseks (ingl. *Dark Fun Factory*), sest see pakub minevikusündmuste ja -objektide ebaehtset tõlgendust ning asukohta. Seega Grutase pargi semiootilise ruumi analüüs, tehtud Rapoporti, Lynch'i ning Lagopoulos'e ja Boklund-Lagopoulou' ruumiliste lähenemiste põhjal, võib aidata vastata küsimustele, kuidas nõukogude aja objektid ja sündmused toimivad ebamugava pärandina.

Annex 1. The map of the Grūtas Park

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public

I, Egle Krušaite
(*author's name*)

1. herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to:

1.1. reproduce, for the purpose of preservation and making available to the public, including for addition to the DSpace digital archives until expiry of the term of validity of the copyright, and

1.2. make available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives until expiry of the term of validity of the copyright,

Resemiotizing the objects of inconvenient past: The case of Grūtas Park in Lithuania,
(*title of thesis*)

supervised by Tiit Remm,
(*supervisor's name*)

2. I am aware of the fact that the author retains these rights.

3. I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe the intellectual property rights or rights arising from the Personal Data Protection Act.

Tartu, **20.05.2016**