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Deliverable 2.1: Country based reports on historical discourse production as manifested in sites of
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1. Introduction: Looking for the Hidden

Collective memories are produced and reproduced in the society on various levels, including educational institutions, public debates, intergenerational memories, and (last but not least) museums. Even though the latter are often perceived as passive preservers of the artefacts from the past, they can be active meaning-makers of the processes of the past, and vigorously constructing collective identity. This paper asks how historically sensible topics are represented and interpreted. This particular research focused on the Art Museum of Estonia, specifically on its branch of contemporary art – the museum that exhibits modern art since the 18th century. The name of the museum analysed is Kumu¹ and its role as a museum is presented on its homepage as follows:

„Kumu's role is to be both an educational and entertainment centre, a booster of art and artistic life, a place for reflection that carries a message of stability, a place that creates and provides experiences, and a creator and interpreter of meanings.“ (Art Museum of Estonia, Kumu).

On the introductory page, neither the word ‘history’ nor ‘past’ appears. Yet, its role is constructed as an active participator and guide in cultural life and thus it aims for the role of influencing if not guiding some forms of collective identity. This paper concentrates on the area that has not been officially the priority of the particular museum – specifically, how it represents and interprets past and history in its cultural and art framework, how this relates to other representations of the past in the society and, last but not least, how young people receive and interpret the messages presented in this museum. Therefore, the fact that the museum is not

¹ The name Kumu has two meanings. It is an acronym for the words ‘art museum’ in Estonian (*‘kunsti muuseum’*), and “*kumu*” also means ‘hearsay’ and ‘sensation’ in Estonian, which the museum hopes its activities will provoke in the Estonian cultural landscape. (According to Kumu home page.)

seeing itself officially as an active participant in constructing history discourses indicates that discourses of the past may be somewhat hidden. Nevertheless, their significance in the society is big enough for artists or art curators to take it up, making them more meaningful for the research question at hand.

1.1. The Exhibitions

Kumu is the first national museum that has been erected during the period of regained independence.² Its erection and building process was accompanied by debates in the public sphere and political circles. Even though the architectural competition for the building was launched in 1993 and the winner (Pekka Vapaavuori from Finland) was announced in 1994, the construction works did not start until 2002 and the museum was opened in February 2006. During this period, the topic of importance of the museum was often discussed by the media, since the building of the house and finding financial resources for it took some time.³

Considering the representation and interpretation of history, two exhibitions by Kumu were chosen for the analysis: a) **“Lets Talk About Nationalism. Between Ideology and Identity”** (N) (from 4 Feb to 25 Apr 2010), and b) **“Fashion and the Cold War”** (FCW) (from 14 Sep

² Kumu is actually one of the five branches of Art Museum of Estonia, but at the same time serves as headquarters of the Art Museum of Estonia. The museum of contemporary art as such did not exist separately before 2006, yet most of its collections were part of Art Museum of Estonia. Thus, it can be disputable if it is a new museum or not.

³ Similar discussions and political battles have been taking place in connection with the erection of the new building for Estonian National Museum (ENM) in Tartu. Although the architectural solution competition was held in 2005, the construction works have not started yet due to financial problems and political combats. In some discursive fields, the fact that the art museum was built before the national museum was interpreted as proof of the state's reluctance to acknowledge the importance of Estonian (ethnic) national inheritance, and its inability to find financial resources for building of a new establishment has been seen as a political decision that does not value the inheritance enough.

2012 to 20 Jan 2013). Both exhibitions dealt with problematic topics that have their roots in the past and representations of the past.

The first exhibition (N) was an international contemporary art project. Twenty two artists and five film directors from different countries represented their work that dealt with the topic of *nationalism* in one way or the other. The curator of the exhibition was Rael Artel (1980), a freelance curator.⁴ The exhibition actively questioned and criticized the taken-for-granted notions that nationalism has planted through ideology in people's everyday lives. The goal of the exhibition, as put by the curator Artel in the catalogue, was:

“to pose critical questions about contemporary nationalism, to acknowledge the problematic nature of the currently prevalent national discourse, and to create a counterweight in the public sphere. [...] This exhibition will cast doubt on the dominant national agenda's truths, which are spared (self-) criticism, and will approach the topic of contemporary nationalism from many angles.” (2010: 14)

Nationalism was presented as an invisible part of our daily lives, the “ideological machinery” organising our everyday existence. The exhibition tried to analyse critically the sources of ideological nationalism and identity. The artists presenting their work mostly represented Eastern and Western European countries.⁵ Eastern European artists were somewhat more predominant as compared to their Western counterparts. The political scene of the years preceding the opening of the exhibition had witnessed several conflicts based on nationalism: in Estonia, the case of the

⁴ At the time of the exhibition she was a freelance curator, recently (Nov 2012) she was appointed to be the head of Tartu Art Museum (the second largest town in Estonia).

⁵ One of the artists was from Turkey, another of Israeli origin but living in Prague, and a Dane living in the USA.
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Bronze Soldier being one of the most remarkable;⁶ the racist murders in Hungary and national problems in former Yugoslavian countries were also strong triggers to the key problems dealt with in the show. Most of the works presented nationalism as controversial topic suggesting that the implications that may be straightforward can become multilayered. Thus, even though it can be claimed that the exhibition dealt with contemporary (social and political) topics in modern art and did not openly deal with historical themes, most of the questions raised had their roots in history.

The second exhibition (FCW), however, openly dealt with history-related topics, yet (at first glance) leaving contemporary politics aside. In the introductory chapter of a book (catalogue) published for the exhibition, the first sentence reads: “*With the Fashion and the Cold War exhibition, the Kumu Art Museum continues the interpretation of the cultural processes in the decades following World War II.*” (Liivak, 2012: 5). With this statement, the museum positions itself as an active meaning creator for interpretation processes and not just a mere presenter of historical artefacts. Furthermore, the curators Eha Komissarov (1947) and Berit Teeäär (1970) declare in their introductory article that “*The exhibition working group believes that Fashion and the Cold War provides a new viewpoint for dealing with Soviet cultural and art life.*” (Komissarov and Teeäär, 2012: 7, marking by R.N). They also claim to feel to be fulfilling ‘the social need’ with taking up the topic and by shedding ‘*light on the polemics that have now sprung up around the assessments of Soviet fashion*’ (ibid., 7-8). In other words, though dealing

⁶ 27-28 April 2007 – ‘The Bronze Soldier’, symbolizing the victory of the Red Army over Germany, was removed from the centre of Tallinn to the Military Cemetery. The statue symbolised the occupation in Estonian memory and was thus disapproved as a symbol in the centre of Tallinn. For the Russian-speaking community, it symbolised the victory over fascism and for many it was a part of their national identity. The removal of the monument led to riots of young people in the streets.

with a history-related subject, the curators aim for a message for broader discussion topics in the society as well. This is well accentuated also in the cultural and social events that were organised and initiated by the museum in the framework of this exhibition, including film evenings, a conference on the topic, audience days (providing excursions and activities for children), education programme, etc. The intention of encouraging public discussions over the topics can be seen also in the creation of a Facebook page and posting actively about the topic many months prior to the exhibition. In addition, a call to submit the pictures and stories for a competition “My favourite dress” (of one’s own or one’s parents’ or grandparents’) was launched on the Facebook page. The stories were posted online to the page; the best were chosen to be part of the exhibition and granted prizes. In short, the museum involved the audience to deal with the topic, discuss and ponder on the subject already before the actual exhibition, provoking public debate. Also, the exhibition had broad media coverage.

1.2. Methods and data

Analysing a qualitative case study, this paper acknowledges its limits: it reveals only a part of the debates and dilemmas connected with memory issues in the Estonian society. However, it aims to point out some of the concerns and problems in the society that need to be dealt with. The fact that these problems have arisen in the context of art exhibition is also meaningful, since this indicates the sensitivity of these topics perhaps even more vividly.

As previously stated, the case study concentrates mainly on two exhibitions presented in Kumu. The main criterion for choosing the exhibitions was their appeal to social memory. As the field work took place from February till October 2012, one of the exhibitions (N) is analysed

retrospectively, the other (FCW), however, was still open when the fieldwork ended. Thus, both cases have their limitations as well as bonuses. Being studied retrospectively, there can be aspects that are forgotten about the exhibition. Yet, only the most meaningful aspects of the exhibition stay in mind, which make them valuable for the research purposes of this article. By the same token, examining of an exhibition recently opened enables studying the immediate expressions and reactions, while being unable to see the project in its entirety, since the reception process is still going on. Nonetheless, having studied exhibitions at different stages enables having two different angles hopefully complementing each other.

In addition to exhibitions, the dataset of this study consists of ethnographic observations and semi-structured qualitative in-depth interviews. The observations (6.5 h) were all conducted in the framework of the FCW exhibition, since the other (N) was closed by the time the fieldwork started, and included:

- (a) participation in informal presentation of the exhibition to the press prior to opening thereof, led by one of the curators. Sept 13th (1 h);
- (b) participation in history lessons (3) in two different schools in Tallinn (three different groups). The schools included both a school for Russian-speaking youth and an Estonian school, and the lessons were meant to serve as introductory background for the exhibition and precede a visit to the exhibition. Oct 3rd (3 h);
- (c) participation in the visit to the museum by those who attended the abovementioned history lessons. Oct 3rd (1 h);

(d) participation in the educational programme for pupils organised by the museum's educational department. Oct 12th (1 h).

The ethnographic fieldworks were mostly recorded and transcribed; field notes were also made in the field diary. Several additional materials were collected and analysed, such as catalogues of the exhibitions, materials for education programmes created by the museum's educational department, study materials for the schools, essays about the exhibition for art history class, etc.

The respondents can be grouped as (a) experts (delivering the knowledge about the past to young people), and (b) young people (aged 17-22).

There were four experts interviewed in the research project, all of whom were associated to the mediation of the two exhibitions, either by being involved in the curation of the exhibition or mediating the exhibition in the museum's educational programme or in the history class at school. The experts were inquired regarding their opinion on the role of Kumu in the Estonian society and the position of history and their understanding of problematic or controversial periods in the Estonian history, but also asked specific questions about the exhibition (for further details, see Appendix I). Two experts were involved with N and the others with FCW exhibition.

In all, 27 young people were interviewed. The sample was gender-balanced with 14 female and 13 male respondents. In terms of ethnic composition, eight youngsters were of Russian and 19 of Estonian origin. Two individual in-depth interviews, one group interview (two respondents, for standardization reasons marked as focus group no 5), and four focus-group interviews (five to six participants) were conducted.⁷

⁷ For details, see chart.

The dynamics of focus group interviews differed. The three groups whose history lessons and exhibition visit were attended were formed by their teacher. Hence, they were not attending the exhibition or the interview on their own initiative and rather did that on the teacher's request. This influenced the atmosphere of the interview: some young people gave answers reluctantly and expressed their disinterest in the subject, especially those in Estonian-speaking class. The other two Estonian groups, by contrast, were highly interested in the subject and thus, very cooperative. Also, the in-depth interviews were conducted with youngsters willing to attend in the project. The interviewees can be, hence, divided arbitrarily into two groups: interested and disinterested. In the context of this paper, being not interested is treated as sourceful as being not interested: if the saturation of the topics is achieved in all groups, it means that their prevalence in the society is remarkable enough to even reach the ones remote to the discussions.

The language of the interviews depended on the context. Two native Russian speakers preferred to talk in Estonian during the interview (which might have influenced their responses), the Russian-speaking focus group spoke in their native language, yet at times some questions were asked in Estonian and then translated to Russian (due to the researchers' poor Russian skills). The fact that the researchers interviewing the Russians were ethnic Estonians might have influenced the answers of the Russian-speakers. However, this factor may be useful for the research purpose, as they expressed their opinions that they feel were important to communicate to the Estonian community. Having a Russian-speaker as an interviewer might have predisposed that some things are mutually understood and thus need not to be spelled out.

The interviews took place at several locations (at the Tallinn University, in café or school settings) and lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. Similarly to expert interviews, the questions included

broader ones about the role of museums and periods of history to specific questions about particular exhibition (for details, see Appendix II). All the interviews and other study materials were recorded, transcribed and analysed using the NVivo 9.2 software. The method of analysis involved coding the text with the focus on the text and the codes emerged during the analysis. The names of all respondents have been changed to pseudonyms and additionally endowed with specific codes implying to research country (EST) and characteristic of interview, FG for focus group, E for expert interviews and R for respondent each followed with specific number corresponding to participant's table.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

Memory is a phenomenon that can connect and separate, legitimise and criminalise, glorify and condemn. It can be accentuated in everyday routines or national commemoration ceremonies, at home as well as in parliament. Thus, it has many sides that are interconnected, yet sometimes need to be separated due to analytical purposes. In memory studies, the theories of Aleida and Jan Assmann have gained support (A.Assmann, 1999; 2006; J.Assmann, 2008). These two theorists distinguish collective memory on *cultural* and *communicative* level. The first type of memory includes cultural 'high' texts that have lasted through time; the second marks memory that is passed on in everyday communications. Though Assmanns distinguish also the two memories along the lines of time (cultural memory dealing with topics that happened over 100 years ago and communicative with things that happened at most two generations ago), other theorists are suggesting that cultural and communicative memory should not be differentiated along the lines of time but rather, genres (Erlil, 2005; Welzer, 2002; 2008). In other words, rather

than looking *when* the cultural memory text was produced, they urge to see *how* the memory is passed on – whether by established ‘high’ cultural forms (books, films, exhibitions) or via informal communication (conversations, biographical media coverages etc.). In the key of this research, museums can be regarded as the stronghold of *cultural* memory, and in cases of these exhibitions, deal with topics that are also part of *communicative* memory. Hence, it will be interesting to see how these levels of memory interact with each other and how young people interpret the *cultural* memory in the framework of their knowledge of *communicative* memory.

As sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel states,

‘acquiring a group’s memories and thereby identifying with its collective past is part of the process of acquiring social identity, and familiarizing members with that past is a major part of communities’ efforts to assimilate them.’ (2003: 3).

During their coming of age, young people are socialized into society and thus it is crucial how the past is presented during the years of their socialization. Also, considering the different mnemonic communities in Estonia, by making Russian young people accept the Estonian version of the past provides grounds for assimilating them into the wider Estonian society. And, vice versa, by providing the stories of Russian mnemonic communities to Estonian youngsters, the two ethnic communities might come closer. Large amount of mnemonic socialization is constructed in school and museums (Zerubavel, 2003: 5), which makes them important objects for research.

To apply for collective identity, past is often constructed via what James Wertsch (2002) has called ‘schematic templates’ or what Michael Corsten (1999: 258-260) sees as ‘discursive

practices'. Schematic templates mean that there exist specific patterns of how past is narrated, either via creating a powerful (foreign) enemy (as in Russian history, see Wertsch and Karumidze, 2009) or presenting it via national martyrdom (as in Estonia, see Tamm, 2008). If the past narrated does not fit into the schematic template familiar to particular social or ethnic group, the presentation of the past seems unconvincing. Similarly, discursive practices imply that the past is arranged in a certain way which predisposes accentuation of certain aspects of history, leaving out the others. Different ethnic or age groups (generations) can have different discursive practices, evaluating different aspects of the past differently, thus validating mutual experience in discourses (Corsten, 1999: 261; Misztal, 2003: 62; Weisbrod, 2007: 22). These theoretical insights are important also in the light of this research, since it focuses on how these discourses accentuate among young people. Also, by studying representatives of two different ethnic communities we can look to what extent these 'schematic templates' or 'discursive practices' coincide and contradict.

The past is often a source of nostalgia. However, the nostalgia towards certain eras can be different: either *restorative* or *reflexive* (Boym, 2002). The first type means that nostalgia reflects a longing for the time with the aim to restore some aspects of it, the second one means that nostalgia helps one reflexively analyse the past and the roots of one's identity. In terms of the Soviet past, then, it means that the second type of nostalgia does not prove the ideological and political grounds of the era; rather it helps to complement one's identity by reflecting on the sources of its development. The young interviewed, however, can not have *reflexive* nostalgia towards the past since they have not lived during the time. Yet, their parents can and via

communicative memory accentuate different aspects of Soviet time in the key of *reflexive* nostalgia.

1.4. Historiographical outline

Along with other post-socialist countries, Estonia faces problems of interpreting history of the turmoil of twentieth century contradictory events. Having been part of the Russian imperial empire, it gained its status as an independent state shortly after the communist coup d'état (Nov 1917), in February 1918. Its relatively short period of independence ended during the Second World War, in June 1940, when it was incorporated to the Soviet Union and occupied by Soviet troops (however, Soviet Union did not enter the war officially until the next year, 1941). Soviet occupation was replaced shortly afterwards by German occupation in 1941, which lasted until 1944 when the Soviet regime was forcefully re-established. Soviet annexation lasted until 1991, when Estonia regained its independence (Soviet troops left in 1994). Estonian memory culture has been dynamic and has changed alongside with social changes. The main sources of controversies throughout last decades have been:

- a) The first period of independence (Was it a “golden age”? How to evaluate its authoritarian regime?);
- b) Incorporation of Estonia into the Soviet Union in 1940 (Was it legal or illegal? Voluntary or forced incorporation?);
- c) German occupation (Was German occupation milder and “better” than the Soviet one? Were the Germans “liberators” from the Soviet regime or just another totalitarian regime?);

- d) Fighting in Soviet/German army (Did those fighting under totalitarian regimes fought for their homeland or for the regimes?);
- e) Restoring the Soviet occupation in 1944 (Was it liberating the country from the Nazis or calculated occupation?);
- f) Soviet era in general (Was it a time of repressions and deportations, suffocation of free will and freedom or time of stability? Is one entitled to have good memories from this era or is it a totalitarian regime which is to be unanimously condemned?).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the history as known by official Soviet ideology was devalued and rewritten. The official memory policy discourse prevailing up to today was largely created at the time. The new republic used history as a source for legalising its political agenda of independence, by depicting the era of first independence as the ‘golden age’ disrupted by Soviet occupation. The Soviet era was constructed as the age of ‘rupture’ or discontinuity, an age of repressions and long suffering, often using metaphors like the period of ‘long night’ (Jõesalu, 2010). This discourse constructs the nation by stressing its sufferings throughout the course of its long history, underlining the stubborn nature of the nation, which survived despite all those tough times (Tamm, 2008). This discourse is mainly challenged by Russian-speaking ethnic minority (although not unanimously so). The Russian-speaking minority⁸ constitutes almost 30% of Estonia’s 1.3 million population. A large part of this community tends to be in the sphere of influence of Russian media, thus interpreting history differently. As Estonian and Russian relations have been tense during the past decades, this can potentially be a source of conflicts.

⁸ The Russian-speaking minority consists of different ethnicities, including Ukrainians, Belorussians, etc.

During the turn of the century, the discourse of disrupted ‘golden age’ has gradually been complemented with other memory discourses. They do not necessarily challenge the official view, but rather complement it, sometimes competing with each other. The official discourse has been transforming as well. To bring out its nuances would exceed the scope of this paper, it is sufficient to say here that from uncompromising condemning of the communists the discourse of resistance ‘from within’ appeared more vividly on the official memory discourse since the 2000s (Jõesalu, 2012).

Among the main trends emerging during the turn of the century was addressing everyday life of the Soviet time, offering certain discourses of ‘normalization’ of the Soviet time, suggesting that the regime also had a human side and that people were capable of happiness (Kõresaar, 2008; Jõesalu, 2005). Also, certain (reflexive) nostalgia towards the era has been visible since then.

From the standpoint of this research, it is important what goes on in history lessons and hence, in history textbooks. In Estonian schools, the official discourse of rupture and discontinuity is represented. History-related curricula are focused on Europe and Estonia, creating some discontent among Russian-speaking teachers feeling that Russian history should be better represented (Kello and Masso, 2012)⁹. Estonia’s past is constructed via the country’s striving towards independence, depicting the events resulting in loss of sovereignty as central in the historical narrative and the Estonian nation as a victim of historical processes. Russia and Russians are depicted as meaningful ‘others’ and represented as being involved in most important events and wars, perceived as an uninvited intruder (Pääbo, 2011). The ideological interpretations of the past differ between the two ethno-linguistic groups and thus, the ability to

⁹ Roughly, 20% schools in Estonia are Russian-speaking.

critically translate different “lifeworlds” is missing in textbooks for Russian-language schools (Kello and Masso, 2012).

Most of the museums dealing with history tend to represent the official memory policy discourse (Estonian History Museum, Museum of Occupations, etc.). However, since the turn of the century, some of the museums have been presenting alternative discourses, revealing the nostalgic side of everyday life in Soviet times (Jõesalu and Nugin, 2012). While the reception of the pioneering exhibition (“Things in My Life”, ENM 2001 see further on the exhibition in Jõesalu and Nugin, 2012) was controversial, raising opposing voices to museumification of the Soviet everyday, the subsequent exhibitions have raised decreasingly less comments on the ideological scale. The first exhibition tried to display a wide array of Soviet everyday life, while the following shows have been increasingly specialised.¹⁰ KUMU’s FCW exhibition continues to bring out the everyday side of Soviet time.

Vast amounts of books, films, tv-shows and plays have been produced on the controversial periods of Estonian history. These present all those discourses that are present in Estonian memory culture. There are certain periods of history that are presented rather similarly and rarely with irony (i.e., the period of Stalinist repressions, for example, Sofi Oksanen’s “Purge”¹¹; or the War of Independence in 1919, e.g., “Names Engraved in Marble” (a film based on a book prohibited in the Soviet period). Other periods may be more ambiguous, especially the period of ‘mature socialism’ (from 1960s to 1980s), which is growingly pickled with ironic nostalgic inputs (see Jõesalu and Nugin, 2012), causing also some debates among different age groups. In

¹⁰ For example, an exhibition showing Soviet plastic bags (ENM 2004) or an exhibition presenting Soviet Estonian lamp design (Museum of Applied Arts, 2011)

¹¹ Sofi Oksanen is a Finnish writer who has ethnic roots in Estonia (her mother is Estonian). Because of this, her works are often being treated as part of Estonian cultural heritage.

most cases, the ‘producers’ of nostalgic past are those born in the 1960-1970s; they managed to live under the Soviet rule only as children and youngsters and thus did not experience the downsides of the regime as adults. Due to their nostalgia towards Soviet cartoons, they have sometimes been called the ‘cartoon generation’ (Grünberg, 2009). Two influential TV-shows have been aired recently, one (representing the official memory policy discourse) telling about the first independence period and the loss of it (“Windward Land” 2008-2009), and the other (representing the nostalgic-ironic discourse) about the absurdities during late Soviet period (“ESSR”, 2010-2012).

2. Constructing and Interpreting the Narratives

2.1. Memories of ‘difficult past’ and the dominant historical narrative

Estonian hegemonic history narrative is not actively challenged and disputed on daily basis in the Estonian-language public sphere. If one had to define some ‘battlefields’, however, one could claim that the main discursive frontlines about Estonian history can be roughly divided in two: (a) the cultural misunderstandings between the two prevailing ethno-linguistic groups; and (b) the discrepancies between the dominant discourse of rupture and the alternative discourse of normalisation about the Soviet era. The first one is more severe and the two discourses can at times contradict each other to the point of actual conflicts and political battles (the case of Bronze Soldier in 2007, the problems with Russian-Estonian border treaty, etc). However, the conflict remains somewhat hidden in everyday life, since the communities are relatively separated and Estonian media is overwhelmingly dominated by the Estonian version of the story. In other words, there is not much ‘voice’ given to the other community to express and debate

about their own version in Estonian-language based public space. The second discursive battlefield is not very visible either, since the alternative discourses of normalization do not oppose or challenge the dominant discourse of rupture but rather blur its borders while still remaining in its general framework.

In the following, the two major frontlines are analysed and presented using data from particular research project to see how perceptions of the past and historical narratives interact. In the first section of the analysis, the data from expert interviews, ethnographic observations, and written materials (catalogues) will be presented to discuss how particular exhibitions aim to contradict or complement the current discourses and what have been the objectives of these exhibitions: the actual target group, any particular messages meant for the young, etc. The second section concentrates on data concerning young people and their opinions – in other words, how do the discourses resonate on them.

2.2. “The More Dramatic the History is, the Better it Works”¹²? Historical discourses of ‘difficult past’ and the sites of memory

2.2.1. The Role of the Museum

As noted, Kumu is one of the core museums presenting Estonian cultural heritage. The importance of Kumu was pointed out by the experts as well – most of them acknowledged that its role extends far beyond just exhibiting arts (it also hosts film festivals, jazz concerts, conferences, etc). According to an expert, history teacher Mart (1978, ESTE3), Kumu is a business card of Estonia representing our culture to foreigners; nevertheless, he hoped that ‘first and foremost’, Kumu is for Estonia and Estonians.

¹² A quote from the interview with expert ESTE2 (Helju, 1947).

Concerning the role of Kumu as past mediator, there were three issues raised in the expert interviews. Firstly, (a) being a heterogeneous organisation, the purpose of the museum can be interpreted controversially by different departments of the institution: either as an active meaning-maker or a passive presenter of artefacts. Secondly, (b) the curator's intentions to diversify and show the ambivalence of the particular topic may be 'killed' by the educational department's ambition to create simple educational schemes and labels. Concerning these two statements, respectively, depending on the position of the mediator (the curator or educational tour guide) some intended messages can be lost 'in translation'. Thirdly (c), the changing representation language (new media and audiovisual materials) also have an impact on reception of the exhibitions, sometimes fragmenting the impression. In the following, the three issues are discussed and illustrated.

As mentioned in the beginning, both the official homepage and catalogues of the exhibition see the role of Kumu as an agent of constructing meanings in art and guiding its interpretation. Since it often deals with art from previous periods, it thus also has an ambition to construct historical narratives. However, the expert working in educational department pondered on the role of a museum rather as presenting artefacts and not so much providing clear messages:

ESTE1 (Tanya, 1986): art history and art... well, naturally, they are tied to real history but well... you can see perhaps from there... that the art is not directly readable, like, you can see different sides to it... develop something else... everyone finds what he or she wants, that... this art is rather like a fact of history, that has remained... that mm... well naturally you could form an exhibition which communicate a certain message, but here in

Kumu in the permanent exposition... I have not noticed that.

In her interview, Tanya (ESTE1) conceptualised the role of all history museums as neutral presenters of the past rather than creators of narrative discourses. Even though she admitted that the exhibition dealing with nationalism had critical messages for the society to think about, she remained modest in acquiring the permanent exposition¹³ the role of an active meaning-maker. Tanya (ESTE1) also admitted that history is ‘amorphous’ and without a certain shape, indicating that there is no ‘objective’ or ‘correct’ history, yet she believed that history museums in Estonia (including Kumu) have been successful in presenting history rather neutrally. Representing the education department, Tanya (ESTE1) saw the role of the museum rather as educating than shaping young people ideologically by promoting certain narratives.

Another expert, Helju (1947, ESTE2), who was involved in exhibiting the Soviet art history part at the permanent exposition, suggested in the interview that the permanent exposition also constructs certain narratives by canonising some artists and works and leaving others out. She even indicated that composing the show caused tensions between her and art communities, especially among artists still alive. The discrepancies of her and Tanya’s (ESTE1) interpretation of the role of the museum are not coincidental, as she presented the tensions between the educational department and curators as inevitable:

ESTE2 (Helju): It is like this in all the museums around the world... mm all curators are in sharp confrontation with the educational department since it demands simple, childish

¹³ The exposition exhibits Estonian art since the 18th century until the 1980s.

and fool-proof schemes that this is this style, this is that stuff... contemporary art research has long ago grown out of these schemes and dealt with random problems, constructing rather arbitrarily this history, like, and there is a big cleavage there... well of course such post socialist national state as Estonia should be moderate and stem from the certain construction of history....

The other two experts admitted that Kumu might have means to shape historical narratives. Yet, Riina (1980, ESTE4) claimed that the permanent exposition follows the classical historical narrative without challenging it. Mart (ESTE3) admitted that even though history is exhibited there, Kumu has not reached his consciousness as a 'history-producer'. Hence, it has to be kept in mind that this site of memory constructs history in a complicated way – the intentions of the curator may not be communicated to the audience (including young people) the way intended, since when dealing with a great museum, there are several filters that potentially can shape the message.

In addition to mediating the message, a lot depends on the language it is mediated in and whether the audience 'understands' the language or narrative templates used by curators. While Riina (ESTE4) had somewhat *laissez faire* attitude towards the autonomy of the audience, Helju (ESTE2) tended to be more critical about the reception capability of contemporary youth, describing them as living in an 'intensive mental scheme' owing to the Internet and spending time intensively communicating in virtual social networks (Facebook). Her train of thought about the young people lead to a broader critique of contemporary individualized society, drawing parallels with Jean Baudrillard's (1981) simulacrum and suggesting that Facebook

rather separates than unites people and replaces human contacts with virtual fragmented interactions. Therefore, along with social change, the museum has to communicate and mediate its messages by new means in order to reach its audience:

ESTE2 (Helju): [...] I am just saying that aside with museum education mm... aside with all these spheres there have emerged absolutely new enormous fields with great attraction potential, which does not care about all this... [...] and the museum has to take more pains to entwine its strategies [to communicate its messages] and it is becoming more complicated...

This statement is well in line with Mart's (ESTE3) observation about the new roles and media of museums. He admits that use of the new technologies may lead to superficiality in the treatment of the topics, but it makes things more interesting. In his perception, the purpose of the museum today is 'to promote people to think along' rather than just show what happened. However, he pointed out that many young people just do not care about history:

ESTE3 (Mart): [about his role as a teacher] and you can do maritime characters or what not, you can be incredibly cool teacher even, in your subject... but it just doesn't interest them. And that's it. [...]

One thing is that... that maybe what annoys is that contemporary youth is so superficial, that they... they don't know anything and then I have... I get the urge to lash this history out to them that... that then... then this conservative approach is very good, because it is most methodical, you see. At the same time, you see, I like this humorous interpretation of

the topic as well, you know. But this precedes base knowledge.

Thus, there is a paradox in communicating the message – in order to make it interesting for young people, it has to be in the ‘language’ they are socialized in (new media, fragmented clips), thus risking superficiality and, respectively, that the message will be lost. On the other hand, using traditional ways of representation may cause lack of interest, and then the message will be lost as well.

2.2.2. The Divided Society?

One of the watersheds in memory construction, as mentioned, is the divide between two ethno-linguistic communities: Estonian and Russian-speaking community. The need to overcome or at least blur the edges of these borders was voiced, yet mainly two issues were raised which make the task hard. Firstly (a) the hegemonic position of Estonians and Estonian institutions (such as Kumu, or in a broader sense, history textbooks and schools) determined a lot in receiving the message. Secondly, (b) constructing (Estonian) nation requires certain surrounding schematic templates and these are often unavoidable structures that have to be taken into account when exhibiting the past in a museum such as Kumu. These claims will be exemplified below.

Young people can go to museums and see ‘our’ or ‘their’ history, depending on the schematic templates (Wertsch, 2002) used: if these succeed in speaking to the constructed narratives youth have been socialised in or not. One can change the attitudes only if the templates or discourses can create a dialogue; otherwise, it will be rejected as incompatible. However, rejection towards a museum can develop even prior to visiting it:

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ESTE1 (Tanya): At the moment Kumu is the biggest museum, firstly, it is like... almost... one can say... National Museum... it is really at a very high position and it can create like... this kind of... a little divide that there are people... mmm ... especially among Russian-speaking population who deliberately don't go to Kumu under any circumstances that this is just this kind of disposition...

The comparison with National Museum is remarkable, since the particular museum is perceived in the society as the main preserver and representer of Estonian ethnic identity and thus can seem as 'alien' to the Russian community. Even though Kumu does not aim for ethnic distinguishing openly, the permanent exposition is very much built up so, leaving thus a clear message of its purpose. Not all agree that this construction is justified:

ESTE4 (Riina): well it seems to me that this... like... the part of permanent exposition is... like very conservatively or, say, classically built up... in chronological sequence... mmm... then there are I think those Baltic German artists that were active in the beginning [of the 18th century] on the first floor and then the artists who worked before the First World War and, on the second [floor] after the Second World War and of course there are almost entirely [ethnic] Estonian artists, there are no... or, in my opinion, absolutely no... artists of any other ethnic origin... are absent, in Estonian art discourse like... it follows similar things or... similar patterns like Estonian state... there are a lot of male artists and... like artists with pure Estonian blood... mm... like yes, in this sense it confirms the picture that we have here around us...

As pointed out by Riina (ESTE4), these confrontations largely reflect the processes taking place in the society in general; in other words, Kumu uses the same schematic templates that are prevalent in the society. Even though its dividing aspect is acknowledged, sometimes it is perceived as inevitable:

ESTE2 (Helju): well the time norms eligible for art are as narrow and restricted ... say, demagogical like they were during the Soviet time, since always... mmm... there are some things, you see... if for the society the national interest is awfully important... and all this stuff and and... some kind of political profile and mm... then... well... inevitably these things are amplified and this creates situations where dialogues and conflicts and confrontations are already written in these patterns....

However, experts found that museums are still capable of challenging this confrontation. Helju (ESTE2) mentioned that the museum could oppose to what she described as the social construction of the dominant picture of ‘awful Russians and poor Estonians’. Moreover, the entire exhibition of nationalism was built up to challenge the dominant discourse of ethnic Estonian-centredness; however, as Riina (ESTE4) put it: not exactly ‘break’ it but provide an alternative thought to this discourse, which, in her words, has already transformed into being ‘the truth’. Riina (ESTE4) stressed that the catalogue on nationalism exhibition was the first in Kumu’s history to be translated to Russian in full.

The strategies of coping of the Russian community may differ, but as seen by the experts, the

tactic is handling it without open opposition. According to Tanya (ESTE1), some Russians just ignore the museum. Another strategy mentioned by Tanya (ESTE1) is concentrating on the bright sides and ignoring the bad. For instance, she described that when at the nationalism exhibition there was a jacket with the Estonian flag colours on one side and the Russian colours on the other (depending on how the jacket is worn it is either lining or cover), all the pupils talked about friendship and none brought up the conflicting side, regardless of the ethnic background of the group.

The history teacher teaching his subject in Estonian in a Russian-speaking school acknowledged that he has a difficult task, since he communicates his subject not only in a foreign language for them, but also from the perspective of a different nation, even though he claimed to do everything he can to avoid this attitude. In other words, rephrasing McLuhan's (1964) famous thought on medium being the message, one could point out that 'institution is the message'. The teacher holds the hegemonic position by default and the tactic of simply ignoring is often used:

ESTE3 (Mart): ... actually, in this sense, my Russian pupils hold their mouths shut... that... that they even do not show that they might have a different opinion. Like... and they are... like you saw yourself... they are not quiet, but they just do not care... you see. And ... in this sense, like, Estonians are more connected to these subjects. But, [...] for [Russians] it is in a foreign language...

Ethnographic observations during the project confirm this train of thought. Due to language issues, the lesson conducted for Russian classes was by far thinner in terms of information,

stories, and contextualisation of the knowledge. This was so largely due to the language issue – words needed to be translated and dictations were slow. However, the interest in the subject was rather low as well, especially in one of the classes – the pupils did not listen and had conversations with their neighbors. Thus, as stated by researchers (Kello and Masso, 2012), due to the fact that the translation of “lifeworlds” is missing, the mediated message is not reaching the Russian students. Another possible aspect was suggested by Tanya (ESTE1), who pointed out that while many Russian young people are eager to integrate into the Estonian society, they do not feel welcome there; they just cannot find their place in this society. The Soviet invasion is often perceived as Russian invasion:

ESTE1 (Tanya): in this sense, Soviet state and Russian people are not entirely one and the same, they are not synonyms, but very often it is treated exactly like that... and naturally some people feel that they are really insulted.

In other words, even though all the experts sense the confrontations and unjust treatments in the constructed history, there are certain patterns around them in the society that are difficult to change. And thus, many come to the museum already having these schematic templates as prerequisites in their heads.

2.2.3. Trying to Break Through – Opposing the Dominant Discourses

The following section concentrates on the two main strategies for negotiating hegemonic discourse as seen by the experts. They saw a possibility for this in (a) drawing back on the ethnocentric ideological history narrative; and (b) diversifying the unifiedly negative treatment

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of the Soviet period.

In order to mobilize collective identity and rebuild the independent state, the discourse of victimization of the Estonian nation who finally took their fate into their own hands was necessary for legitimization of the political agenda at the time. National identity was the main mobilizer of collective identity in the 1990s, which helped to topple the Soviet regime. It had to delegitimize the regime and create the discourse of rupture (or 'long night', Jõesalu, 2010). The loss of the first independence (1918-1940) helped to cultivate the narrative of victimhood and the period of the first republic as the 'golden age'. However, the context has changed by now and while this discourse can unite the collective identity of ethnic Estonians, it can exclude the others as can be seen in the previous subchapter:

ESTE4 (Riina): mm... this is why I think that the national ideology that... in the end of 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was in the position of resistance movement... mm... and and... everywhere in Eastern Europe this [ideology] could restore democracy in the region and change the situation here... But at the same time it seems that for the last 20 years it has continued intemperately without any critical revision and... in contemporary world... in contemporary Europe, where there is an experience of multicultural world... then it seems to me its not relevant any more, it needs revision or restatement... this line of thought in the form it is manifested in Estonia or Eastern Europe in general.

This ethnic-centered national identity is also seen by Riina (ESTE4) as a broader phenomenon influencing Estonian politics and financial investment decisions. She doubts if thinking in such

national terms is adequate in the twenty-first century and does not believe this could happen in Germany or Netherlands, for example.¹⁴

The schemes of hegemonic discourse of Estonian history were criticised by other experts as well:

ESTE2 (Helju): Art is broader and more ambivalent and it is next to impossible to construct the development schemes of the society in such a primitive way that is done today at school ... but... but naturally... well you see, I don't know what the best way to construct a nation is. Of course, a nation has to have a good opinion of itself, it has its history and the more dramatic it is, the better and... and... and all this works but... but people are very different and naturally then emerge awful caricature and absurd versions and variations and imaginations and and and...

Such schematic templates dominating in history textbooks were brought out by Mart (ESTE3) as well. He pointed out that Estonians may suffer from a certain 'inferiority complex' due to losing the independent state in 1940.¹⁵ In his opinion, the victimization discourse concerns the era of the entire Soviet period and he called it 'exposing one's sufferings' that nobody really cared about. It is significant that none of the experts actually challenged the notion of the Soviet era as negative and the loss of independence as illegitimate. Yet, they suggest that the picture

¹⁴ Here, she brought the example of building the Estonian National Museum and doubted if that was necessary. Indeed, in spring 2012, it was announced that the initial financing scheme (finances from European Union Regional Funds) had to be dropped. In public media, this raised a debate that was predominantly opposite to Riina's (ESTE4) view. Since the financing scheme was still unclear regardless of the National Museum's decades-long efforts to acquire a new building, this was interpreted as neglect of national identity and, in its extreme forms, a threat to survival of the cultural identity.

¹⁵ The legal side of the incorporation to the Soviet Union is sometimes a source of debates. Officially, the new elected government applied for the membership in the Soviet Union, yet the election of the government was legally questionable due to military pressure and Soviet occupation.

may be more complex. This may stem also from generational discursive practices (Corsten, 1999). Noteworthy, the topic of ‘normalisation’ of the Soviet period and bringing in more colours to it was raised by the experts who had personally experienced the period. This discourse has been also called ‘a right to happiness’ (Jõesalu, 2005), suggesting that people who experienced some of their happiest years during the period coined in official discourses as the ‘long night’ want to bring into the picture their personal memories. This is a reflexive nostalgia, an urge to contextualize one’s identity in the past, yet without trying to legalise it ideologically.

ESTE2 (Helju): To show a bit more confusing pictures of reality, to show simply the situation [...] where many lifestyles, mentalities and things existing side by side and how they quietly interact with each other, are in certain dialogues and how this all works...

ESTE3 (Mart): I think that [at FCW] there was the message that there was life during the Soviet time (laughs) that sometimes seems to, say, among younger generation, there seems to be understanding that... like... there was nothing, like. That actually a whole independent world and not bad in itself, it was interesting.

In his history class (for Estonian pupils), Mart (ESTE3) combined the textbook-style facts about the Soviet everyday life with stories of his personal memories, or memories from his parents (communicative memory, as defined by the Assmans). In his interview and during our conversations in the course of fieldwork, Mart (ESTE3) admitted that this period of his childhood is important for him and that he has some nostalgic feelings towards it: he started his lesson by showing an old commercial from the Soviet time, advertising minced chicken meat.

This reflexive nostalgia can also be cynical and ironic (see Berdahl, 2010), since Mart (ESTE3), being born in 1978, was not involved in ideological repressions, nor did the Soviet regime shape his career (which started during the regained independence period). Thus, the childhood memory of the past allows him to look at that era with a certain type of humour, depicting this time as absurd and yet humorous (see Jõesalu and Nugin, 2012).

The dominant discourse itself is not static either and this was expressed by the experts as well. For instance, Mart (ESTE3) pointed out that the unanimous perception of the first period of independence, i.e., president of Estonia, Konstantin Päts, is transforming. He indicated that his portrait, once so much worshipped, is not exhibited any more (since his regime was actually authoritarian).

Interestingly enough, even the dating of the Cold War was contradictory among those involved with the exhibition. While on the wall of the exhibition hall the Cold War was dated from 1946 to 1989, those leading the excursions did not confirm the dates. The curator guiding the tour for the press suggested that Cold War started in 1949. The leader of the educational programme dated it in three different ways during a single tour. First, she pointed out the dates displayed on the wall of the exhibition hall; then, when talking about jazz, she explained that jazz was forbidden during the Stalin era (in Estonia, in 1944-1953), which she defined as the one *before* the Cold War; finally, when talking about Khruchev (1956-1964), she pointed out that because of him, the Thaw era started, which was an era *after* the Cold War. This suggests not so much the incompetency of the tour guides but rather the inconsistencies in official discourses about the period.

2.3. ‘Every Day is a Day, which is History Tomorrow.’¹⁶ Transmission of Memory among Youth.

2.3.1. The Role of Museums in Transmitting Memory

The position of Kumu was acknowledged among all the interviewees, with some focusgroups using superlatives to describe its importance. Mostly, its purpose was seen as being educative, but it was also seen as being broader and crucial in attracting the attention of the youth:

ESTFG5R2 (Kristi): [about the role of Kumu]... to make historical topics look cool and to bring them closer to young people, because Kumu is, after all, a modern museum, like... and young people come here more likely than to, say, history museum or... mmm... Estonian National Museum...

ESTFG5R1 (Piret): Yes, Kumu is somewhat more amorphous or dynamic compared to the others [museums] and it goes along with all kinds of festivals and constantly here, well, the expositions are renewed and such things, like...

Nevertheless, young people were somewhat more modest to attribute Kumu the role of urging debates or raising critical issues in the society. Some of them admitted that it might have happened, but such debates had not reached them. Most likely, the general concept of a museum as a neutral preserver and exhibitor of ‘facts’ prevails:

ESTFG3R2 (Karl): ... I think a museum could exhibit the... whatever artefacts or pictures

¹⁶ A quote from an interview with ESTR2 (Veronika).

or things... [...] I think the role of a museum is not to mold someone's truth, or, opinion... like...

These types of answers may also stem from the wording of the question asked by the interviewer. If asked straightforwardly, young people tended to deny Kumu's role as being in active dialogue with the society; and yet, when discussing the particular exhibitions, this perception could change, depending on the group. Inquiring about the potential impact of a museum on someone's opinions or convictions can be tricky, since people might be reluctant to admit the influence of others on their dispositions. Another aspect is that the potential of the exhibition to start a dialogue exists only when the aforementioned schematic templates among the recipients are at least partly compatible with the curator's. In terms of the FCW exhibition, then, this had to do with the notion of the Soviet era:

ESTFG3R3 (Fred): For example, this exhibition... well, everyone goes there with an opinion... for instance, we go there like, thinking that all this negative era... and then we examine there everything from this negative perspective. We, like, look for negative insights from everywhere... and well... our opinion remains the same... it, like, does not touch me. Even if they had... I don't know... shown how nice and cool this time has been... nevertheless, I would have come out of the exhibition hall, thinking it was a bad time.

This focus group was clearly on the position of dominant historical discourse with the condemnation of the Soviet era as solely negative, the time of 'rupture' or the 'long night'.

Hence, the exhibition did not manage to 'speak' enough with these youngsters to urge them think further on the topic, as is the purpose of museums according to their history teacher Mart (ESTE3). While this group was rather indifferent as to what was exhibited and had little to say what could have been done differently, another group was more critical towards the composition of the exhibition:

ESTFG2R1 (Andrey): Well, the era wasn't reflected there in full, there the good side was shown, but the bad wasn't.

ESTFG2R2 (Marina): ... if they had shown how common people were dressed...

ESTFG2R3 (Irina): Workers...

ESTFG2R2 (Marina): ... if they had brought some kinds of shirts, if they hanged there... but here there were dresses and more like...

ESTFG2R1 (Andrey): Costumes, hats...

ESTFG2R3(Irina): In other words, there should have been....

ESTFG2R1 (Andrey): A little bit of a contrast...

In other words, as the contrast with their perception of the Soviet era was too wide, these respondents did not 'buy' the picture of that time that they saw as presented as too colourful and beautiful. This notion of the time being depicted too positively was expressed in other groups as well, or as Ronald (ESTFG1R3) expressed, he could not find that there was anything 'wrong' with that period while looking at the exhibition. However, based on ethnographic observations (tour by curator and educational programme) positive depiction was hardly the aim of the exhibition:

(Guide of the educational programme; to the pupils): Write down [in the formula given to pupils at the beginning of the tour] what is Soviet fashion, what it had to be. The Soviet fashion had to be durable, practical and commonplace, write down three keywords. Durable, practical, commonplace. This is thus the Soviet fashion, its main values. But the Western fashion – what could that be? The Western world valued independence, freedom of choice, since it is possible to take different choices and have individuality. This is what the Western world valued.

Also, the curator during her guiding tour stressed confrontation and everyday combat with the deficit in shops, as well as the Soviet state's striving to fight back 'Western influences'. The quote above also illustrates what Helju (ESTE2) meant when talking about '*schemes of the society in such a primitive way that is done today at school*' and how she described the confrontation of curators and educational units in the museums, which offer '*simple, childish and fool-proof schemes that this is this style, this is that stuff*'. Thus, the mediation of the past is multilayered. Not only are there discrepancies between education tour guides and curators (one offering simple pictures and the others trying to pass a notion of complicated life of negotiating the fashion codes under limited possibilities), but often both messages can be lost due to being perceived as too contradictory with discursive practices that dominate the narratives of the past or because the exhibition does not meet the schemes offered by educational tour.

However, the message was not 'lost' to all respondents. Many acknowledged that the exhibition broadened the picture they had about the Soviet era. Piret (ESTFG5R1) said that the museum

succeeded in giving the era what she called a ‘human side’ that history textbooks fail to offer, showing that in everyday life people still had the same ambitions even if strained by the social conditions.

Hence, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact extent as to how much Kumu manages to exert impact on its target groups, challenge the existing discourses or urge discussions about the past. In this context, perhaps Veronika’s (ESTR2) quote is illustrative:

You know how some films are – you don’t understand what the film is about during the entire movie – there are such psychological movies. You watch the movie and don’t get what the film is about. But afterwards, when you leave the building, you start noticing, what is here and what is there...

2.3.2. Society Divided by the Past Transmission

When asked about problematic or controversial periods in history that can cause tensions in the society, different periods were brought up, but in all of the interviews the tensions between the Estonian and Russian communities were mentioned. The reasons for the differences were perceived differently, as well as the extent of the strains that these dissimilarities cause. Some pointed out that Russian youngsters are under the influence of Russian media and thus value the Soviet era differently:

ESTFG4R3 (Merit): It seems to me that the information targeted to them is the Russia-biased information that... mmm... there are those who target them more and... and...

since in Russia the situation is like... the Soviet time is not exactly treated as bad... then yes, they have this picture and we have another...

However, Merit's (ESTFG4R3) suggestion was not confirmed by the particular Russian-language focus group, since they were the most critical towards the exhibition's depiction of the Soviet era in overly colourful palette. While the experts acknowledged that Estonians have a certain role in strengthening the divide in two different history narratives, young people had somewhat more black-and-white versions of the two discourses. Some perceived that Estonians had the 'right' and Russians the 'wrong' version of history. As Fred (ESTFG3R3) put it, Russians study about Estonia's incorporation to the Soviet Union as a voluntary act, which in his opinion is 'complete rubbish'. However, when asked if the young had actually experienced tensions caused by diverse interpretations of the past, none could give any examples from their everyday life. Rather, they claimed to have read or heard about these strains. As expressed by Piret and Kristi (ESTFG5R1 and ESTFG5R2), such discrepancies cause dissents rather than tensions.

In most of the interviews, the most obvious impacts of these tensions of interpreting the past were seen in politics, especially in relations with the Russian state. While some respondents had sophisticated understanding of the foreign relations, mentioning the ongoing negotiations with WTO and Russia, others had just vague ideas:

ESTR1 (Aleksandra): Take for instance Russia. This trade or, how was it... [looking for words in Estonian] from one state to another, this... right now there is none, right? I don't know actually, I guess there is none, yes. Like when in 2004 Estonia had a very good economic condition, then we had trade with Russia... yes. And I think that it was a

big mistake that Estonian politics did this [removed the Bronze statue]. And then the economy started to decline, like...

Aleksandra's (ESTR1) version of the source of economic crisis (cooling of trade relations with Russia) as well as the fact that trade stopped are not correct, but this discrepancy is not important here. The details of the trade relations between other states are hardly among the common knowledge of most of the high school students, so rather than the accuracy of the facts, it is of interest here that she reasons the failures of contemporary foreign politics with perceptions of the past. This means that a lot of current affairs are reasoned in the key of history, or, in similar vein, history is projected to contemporary relations even if not that many facts are known about them.

The 'othering' of another ethnic community is common among Russians, too. However, their position is not hegemonic, and they sense it. The different version of history is passed to them by communicative memory, i.e. mainly by their grandparents or parents. Marina (ESTFG2R2) described how her grandparents read her history textbooks and wondered '*well... how can this be?*' The Russian focus group concluded that Estonians write history '*the way it is useful for them*', yet noting that this is characteristic also to other nations (for example, Germans and Americans). Depicting Russians as the 'significant other' responsible for much suffering in Estonian history (Pääbo, 2011) has been noticed by the pupils as well:

ESTFG2R3 (Irina): For instance in the Estonian textbook it is written that Russians are like, bad, that they occupied Estonian land and... in general, I don't know, they're mocking, or...

ESTFG2R2 (Marina): Negatively...

ESTFG2R3 (Irina): Well, yes, that's the evaluation. They love Germans, but Russians... they don't.

This is concomitant with what Tanya (ESTE1) told about Russian young people who feel rejected in the Estonian community. The communicative memory and official history discourse offers them two different images incapable of dialogue. Hence, the feeling of rejection is somewhat understandable. One of the respondents went as far as to suspect there was a certain scheme behind the fact that history is taught in Estonian to them:

ESTFG2R2 (Marina): Yes... To my mind, overall history is done [to be studied in Estonian] by Estonians for us not to know it [everybody laughs]. [To the others:] But it's the truth – we don't understand a thing when we read. I study in Estonian school, I read and I still don't understand what is going on...

The others' reaction (burst of laughter) indicates that the opinion was not unanimously shared as a serious intention of the Estonians. Marina (ESTFG2R2) might have not meant it wholeheartedly herself, but she adds that because of the language issues they know a little about history and thus, they rather listen to what they are told at home.

As previously suggested by expert interviews, many youngsters cope with these discrepancies by just ignoring them or without giving them much thought. The attitude – what was in the past should be left in the past – is quite common among them even though they share their parents' disposition about distortion of history by the Estonian hegemonic discourse:

ESTFG2R2 (Marina): We have completely different lives and... around us is contemporary world and we address our lives there...

ESTFG2R4 (Dimitri): We think more about the future than about the past.

ESTFG2R2 (Marina): Yes, computerized infotechnological society and...

ESTFG2R4 (Dimitri): ... we have more urgent problems.

Another strategy of coping was trying to understand both versions, as done by Veronika (ESTR2). Owing to her fluent Estonian, she did not only read Estonian media but also had many Estonian friends. She admitted that on several occasions she was the one in the company to tell the others (Russians) that they may not be right and nobody knows where the truth lies. In addition, she had attended several international events during which she had also witnessed heated debates or even conflicts over the past between youngsters from other countries (like Poland and Germany). She tended not to take sides and found that the past should not be a source of conflicts:

I believe that people just did what they could afford to do at the time and we, living in a contemporary world and having so many interesting projects, so many good things in our lives... we cannot just see there and get to know what happened there.

2.3.3. Making Sense of the Past – Intergenerational Memory Transmission

While some Russian youngsters reasoned their lack of interest in the past by their wish to avoid the tensions it could generate, some Estonians just expressed their disinterest in the subject in general. In two of the focus groups, young people admitted that history museums are not among the places they would visit quite willingly. Most of the focus groups claimed not to discuss the

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problematic periods 'too much' with their friends and only a few recalled someone posting anything on the topic in social networks (like Facebook). Some said that if they discuss history with their friends, it is usually not about the difficult past but rather some other topics (the weapons during the French Revolution, topics in art history). However, their knowledge about the tensions allows one to believe there are enough discursive fields around them to get the knowledge about these subjects.

The subjectivity of history was acknowledged in all interviews, although the extent differed. In the third focus group, Indrek (ESTFG3R1) suggested that it is not important for everybody to share a similar understanding about history as long as the understanding is generally 'correct', albeit a bit distorted. By contrast, Marina (ESTFG2R2) found that it is impossible to find a single point which could be agreed upon.

Among Estonian respondents, there was a mutual understanding of that in the Estonian society, the past is still generally understood in a similar manner; the difference lies in nuances. Even the differences with the Russian community were not seen as crucial, since, as Karl (ESTFG3R2) put it, those having another version constitute only a small part of the society. According to Fred (ESTFG3R3), Piret and Kristi (ESTFG5R1 and ESTFG5R 2), academic treatments and school classes managed to treat all the periods neutrally, not indulging in evaluations. Veronika (ESTR2), by contrast, told how her teacher had encouraged the pupils to look at conflicting treatments of the past events in history books (where, for example, the geographical positions of the troops differed by hundreds of kilometres), making them analyse the texts critically.

The evaluations of the past, however, were not claimed to be missing at home. Although some stated that the topic of the past rarely or never comes up, many admitted that home is a place

where you contextualise the knowledge acquired in school. For example, Kersti (ESTFG1R5), a regular follower of the aforementioned comic TV-series ESSR, said that she watched the show with parents who ‘mediated’ and explained details and meanings about that time. She admitted that otherwise she would probably not understand anything.

The importance of intergenerational communicative memory was mentioned already in the previous subchapter. When the ‘official’ or hegemonic discourse and communicative memory collide, primacy is given to the closer circles:

Interviewer: So you rather believe what is told at home?

ESTFG2R4 (Dimitri): Yes, rather than the one written.

ESTFG2R2 (Marina): Because the one who wrote in the text book is a stranger...

ESTFG2R1 (Andrey): This is written by someone else...

ESTFG2R2 (Marina): ... this is politics, and politics is not always the truth, lets put it this way.

Home, however, is not a homogeneous discursive field, either. Different generations remember and interpret the past differently. Not only did older people study by different history textbooks at school; most of them had lived through the problematic history periods in question. Regardless of ethnic composition, young people reflected that their grandparents tend to be more positive towards the Soviet period. Kersti (ESTFG1R5) and Elise (ESTFG4R5) both recalled disputes among their parents and grandparents about the evaluation of Soviet time. In both cases, the oldest generation tended to depict the era more positively than the younger ones, and, Kersti (ESTFG1R5) and Elise (ESTFG4R5) admitted that in these cases, they chose their parents’ version rather than grandparents’.

Thus, the ‘normalisation’ discourses of the Soviet period mentioned above were not missing from homes (Kõresaar, 2008; Jõesalu, 2005). The evaluation of Soviet era was indeed one of the most unanimously defined ‘problematic issues’ about the Estonian past. While in some groups, the assessment to the time was undisputedly negative, there were voices that longed for more versatile treatment:

ESTFG4R6 (Aivo): I think that in connection with the Soviet period... maybe... maybe... like... Estonians have a feeling that there is this one quite unified interpretation that they have to follow or obey... say... when... that this is the kind of period which, along with everything that goes with it, is aimed to be shown... well, it is needed to be presented as bad as possible and in this sense, when an Estonian maybe, like, backs from this... this... view... this is purely bad and then it may seem that he/she betrays his/her nation or compatriots, well, this is of course very fresh topic and its painful for many...

Aivo (ESTFG4R6) also pondered upon the question of what to think of people who had been members of the Communist party and the need to start understanding rather than labelling them. In similar vein, Piret and Kristi (ESTFG5R1 and ESTFG5R 2) expressed their wish to learn things besides what they titled as the ‘neutral’ academic discourse, about personal experiences and everyday life. This urge to find out and diversify the discourse is also part of home socialisation and the discourses there. However, during the recent decade a lot of cultural production has contributed to the normalisation as well. In addition, as noticed by ESTFG4, there emerged certain nostalgia for the period. When asked further about the occurrence of these phenomena, they defined it as longing for the items and material environment resurfacing in vast

amounts of nostalgic products (i.e ice cream) and pubs and cafes with Soviet interior. As it were, these places were also popular among the young themselves, although as they said, it was rather because of certain 'retro' atmosphere; since they had not lived during this era, it did not evoke any feelings in them. However, for their parent's generation, this may be a source of reflexive nostalgia.

Not having lived during the Soviet era can be treated as a resource by many young people. As Maarja (ESTFG4R1) reasoned, the absence of Soviet experience enables her generation to avoid the inheritance of the Soviet regime that the older generation has acquired without even acknowledging it. This 'inheritance' was also brought up by Kristi (ESTFG52) and both respondents treated this phenomenon negatively, referring either to corruption, or the urge for materialism. This goes to suggest further that young people are not passive recipients of dominant discourses or even merely the narratives of the home discursive fields, but rather creatively rework them in order to construct their own (positive) identity. Thus, not only lived experience can be mobilized as symbolic resource (Nugin, 2010), but also an un-lived one.

Even though some wished for more nuanced treatment of the problematic periods, young people mostly did not feel that there was lack of discussions about the past. Rather, it depended on personal interest. As Piret (ESTFG5R1) expressed, there just has to be a possibility for debating about various issues and a 'platform' for that; in her opinion, these are quite sufficient in today's Estonia. Veronika (ESTR2) supported her view in her own poetic way:

ESTR2 (Veronika): Actually I just do not get the picture, how much is much and what are we talking about? If in every song there were a few words or a couple of sentences about what happened in the 1940s, would it be enough or still wouldn't? I don't know.

Everything is as much as it is and maybe more there isn't. Every day is a day which is history tomorrow. And then what – do we sing every day about every day?

3. Concluding Remarks: Communicative Memory as the Key to Diversify Hegemonic Historic Discourses

The two discussed exhibitions offer interesting cases of the interaction of *cultural* and *communicative* memories, when established institution of *cultural* memory offers topics that are also part of *communicative* memory. Therefore, being on the hegemonic position of one of the most important museums in Estonia, it is canonising some *communicative* patterns into *cultural* memory. However, one can also arbitrarily distinguish two different types of institutional tools within the museum: permanent exposition and temporary exhibitions. The former has more power in canonising the discourse of the past, the latter less. The temporal character determines also the symbolic importance of the exhibition and those artists represented at temporal exhibitions are not necessarily canonized. Also, the analyzed exhibitions are not challenging the prevalent narratives but rather offering nuances to diversify the hegemonic discourse.

This research has shown that the museum is a heterogeneous institution and active interpretation of the past by curators may meet the reluctance of the educational department to pass on certain narratives. Or, on the contrary: the idea of ambivalence may be killed by the tour guides' aspiration to give simple schemes and explanations. In other words, depending on the position of

the mediator, *communicative* or *cultural* memory schemes are used to pass on the narratives of the past. The discursive practices that either curators or authors of study programmes have been socialised in become important as well – either they take the position of hegemonic discourses or they enrich the exhibition/programme with the touch of personal memories.

All the experts interviewed acknowledged the role of history in dividing ethnic communities and felt the need to overcome this watershed. However, sometimes the patterns and schematic templates established by hegemonic discourses precede the interaction between museums and the young people, and thus they either can turn a deaf ear to the messages (by not visiting nationally highly positioned established museums or simply not paying attention at school). Therefore, attempts to create a dialogue may be futile. Thus, often already the institution (for example, museum or teacher) is perceived as speaking from the hegemonic perspective, and the messages are interpreted accordingly.

It is complicated to pinpoint the exact outlines of the official history discourse or the alternatives, since often the latter serve as diversifying the hegemonic discourse (rather than challenging it). The official discourse is not static either. However, one can trace a certain ambition by the experts to blur the borders and soften some rigid convictions produced by schematic templates available in Estonia. In sum, the most questionable aspect of this discourse for the experts was the victimization narrative, which needs automatically the ‘enemy figure’ or the one ‘guilty’ and thus, this collective identity formation type may exclude some while including others. Hence, giving a more nuanced understanding of the past is necessary, not only because of the demonization of Russians, but also since there is a possibility to ‘give back’ certain generations their right to happy memories within the regime otherwise condemned.

However, the schematic templates in which young people are socialized may also determine a lot in their transmission of the messages in the museum. If the schematic templates are too widely apart from the narrative patterns used in the exhibition, then the dialogue is not likely to emerge and thus, the impact of the show is also questionable. In addition, not only the narrative, but also the way it is passed becomes important when aiming to target the young who are socialized in new media. Tensions existing in the society were acknowledged and denied at the same time by young people. One of these denial strategies consisted in reluctance to study history, which is a source of conflicts. In case of some Russian respondents, one could conclude that the victimization (and ‘othering’) discourse of history causes young people to turn their eyes from the past to the future. They had, however, opened their ears to the *communicative* memory transmissions at home. Instead of being passive receivers of the intergenerational memory, all young people had to negotiate their interpretation inbetween generational tensions about the history perception among their parents and grandparents. Also, they constructed their own (positive) identity by contesting the generations who had or had not lived under the Soviet regime. Lived experience can be used as a resource for strengthening identity, and the same goes for unlived experience.

The paper also has suggestions regarding further research areas. For instance, the dynamics of intergenerational relationships remained somewhat unclear – how much exactly do the young trust their parents or grandparents in transmitting the past and in case of intergenerational disputes, which side do they tend to take? In similar vein, according to previous researchers, their parents’ generation should be indulged in a certain reflexive nostalgia towards the era, yet in focus groups it was mostly mentioned that the grandparents had more positive attitude towards

the regime. Hence, how do these nostalgias differ and are they being transmitted? What types of reflexive nostalgias are there about the Soviet past? Is restorative nostalgia prevalent among the older generation as well?

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Appendix I

Questionnaire structure for the experts

- How do you see the role of KUMU among other museums? What is KUMU's role in constructing history narratives? Presenting art trends? Who could be the main target group? How do you define the 'public mission' of KUMU?
- How KUMU is related to contemporary Estonian society? What are the message/messages intended to mediate?
- Is there a certain history treatment you want to represent with current exhibition? How many things are said 'out loud', how much is left for the audience to interpret?
- Youth and the exhibition – are there special messages for the young people? Could age influence the interpretation of the exhibition, are there different messages for varied age groups?
- Is there an ongoing discussion about the representation of history in Estonian society? Could there be more of it, is it enough?
- In your opinion, what are problematic periods/events in Estonian history? Are there any 'untold' or 'forgotten' periods in Estonian history? How are these periods presented in public discourse? How they are presented in KUMU? Does (and if, how) the representation of these periods vary in different museums? Does (and if, how) KUMU differ in this respect? Does particular exhibition address problematic periods? How?
- What kind of changes have been taking place during the last decades in the society and specifically, in ways history is represented in the museums? Has interest in museums grown? Do you think history museums can challenge the dominating narratives of history?

Appendix II

Questionnaire structure for the young people

- In your opinion, are there 'problematic'/'untold' periods in Estonian history? What are these? Do these periods have an impact on contemporary Estonian society? How? Can you bring some examples? Is political scene influenced by these periods?
- Do you discuss these issues about 'problematic periods' with your friends? In your view, are these subjects represented in culture: books, films, songs? Are these periods discussed on the sites of social media (Facebook, Twitter)? Do you post on these topics, do you comment on these topics? How (and how much) these subjects are treated in school? At home? Are there conflicts or controversies between different treatments of these periods? Are these periods treated differently by different social/ethnic/generational groups?
- In your view, what is the role of museums in history treatment? What is the role of KUMU? What is the position of KUMU among other museums? Does 'objective' history treatment exist?
- About particular exhibition: are there 'problematic periods' represented? How they were represented? Does their treatment coincide with other narratives in the society/other museums? Was the past represented in the exhibition in the similar way you understand it?
- Did you like the exhibition? What did it give you? What impressed you the most? Did it address some problems of contemporary Estonian society? Do you think those who have visited the exhibition have now a better understanding of the problems in the society?
- Did the exhibition visit change or influenced your opinions and understanding of the history?

Appendix III

List of the participants

Participants	Interview type- ESTR(in-depth interview) ESTFG(focus group)	Exhibition (N/FCW)	Ethnographic observation during history lesson	Ethnic composition as stated by respondent	Additional details of the group
Aleksandra (female)	ESTR1	N		Russian	
Veronika (female)	ESTR2	N		Russian/ Estonian	
Andres (male)	ESTFG1R1	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Oskar (male)	ESTFG1R2	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Ronald (male)	ESTFG1R3	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Tiina (female)	ESTFG1R4	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Kersti (female)	ESTFG1R5	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Britta (female)	ESTFG1R6	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Andrey (male)	ESTFG2R1	FCW	Yes	Russian	
Marina (female)	ESTFG2R2	FCW	Yes	Russian	
Irina (female)	ESTFG2R3	FCW	Yes	Russian	

Dimitri (male)	ESTFG2R4	FCW	Yes	Russian	
Vladimir (male)	ESTFG2R5	FCW	Yes	Russian	
Sofia (female)	ESTFG2R6	FCW	Yes	Russian/ Estonian	
Indrek (male)	ESTFG3R1	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Karl (male)	ESTFG3R2	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Fred (male)	ESTFG3R3	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Hardi (male)	ESTFG3R4	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Marek (male)	ESTFG3R5	FCW	Yes	Estonian	
Maarja (female)	ESTFG4R1	FCW		Estonian	Art history class
Liisa (female)	ESTFG4R2	FCW		Estonian	Art history class
Merit (female)	ESTFG4R3	FCW		Estonian	Art history class
Ellen (female)	ESTFG4R4	FCW		Estonian	Art history class
Elise (female)	ESTFG4R5	FCW		Estonian	Art history class
Aivo (male)	ESTFG4R6	FCW		Estonian	Art history class
Piret (female)	ESTFG5R1	FCW		Estonian	History students
Kristi (female)	ESTFG5R2	FCW		Estonian	History students

