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Memorials to the Holocaust Victims in Minsk, Belarus

History, Design, Impact

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Contents



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Poto on a cover: the Pit memorial in Minsk, 1992, by V. Miaževič

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Introduction

During the recent lecture at KTH Open Lab, an Israeli researcher Rachel Kallus described her local context as an intersection of different cultures and interests (Kallus, 2018). While working with the community based-projects she interacts with Jewish, Palestinian, Ethiopian, and Russian groups that are looking for their place both in the society and in physical urban space. The fact that her work takes place in Israel, though, leads to a discussion broader than just a city scale. As a country Israel basically appeared for hosting the entire nation which used to seek the place to establish its national state. However various groups still struggle for their place in the cities, this phenomenon has left the city limits and nowadays happens globally. Thousands of people are looking for a new place to live due to wars, discrimination, persecution, and climate change escaping from the places of their origin.

Although international organizations declare everyone's right to have a place to live and a freedom to choose it (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948) the numerous groups, obviously, do not have these opportunities, hence, the basic rights turn into rare privileges. Someone's location in physical space still affects his or her access to goods, mobility, education or even safety (Young, 1999) in a city, national or international scale. Therefore, limitations linked to a place of origin are related not only to a quality of life but sometimes to a chance to stay alive by finding a shelter. So, an origin begins determining a life's value. This statement transforms a theme of exclusion and displacement from an exclusively socio-spatial problem into an ethical issue.

Coming back to a dramatic example of Israel, in addition to millions of Jews who died in the concentration camps and shooting operations of the Holocaust, thousands of them perished on their way to a new home being displaced from their countries even after the war (Wyman, 1989). Though the example of the Holocaust was unprecedented I consider it as a suitable lens for looking at the current global issues of socio-spatial segregation, displacement, and massive migration. Such an approach seems to be particularly important at the moment when communicative and personal memory about this event is disappearing and transforming a great humanity's drama into an abstract history lesson.

Therefore, the inclusion of a certain group to physical or social space is linked to its status in a society. The status, in turn, represents the access to the resources. Additionally to physical and social space, Henri Lefebvre distinguished another dimension, which could be called discursive space. According to Lefebvre, these three spheres produce the space by mutually affecting and supplementing each other (Lefebvre, 1991). This allows concluding that socially and spatially excluded groups, most probably, are pushed out from discursive space as well. Thus, a lack of representation of a certain group in media, art or politicians' speeches potentially leads to its stigmatization and further discrimination. In my thesis, I took into account all of these three spheres while studying commemorative spaces such as two memorials to the Holocaust victims in Minsk, Belarus.

Using the abovementioned research lens, this study examined the chosen memorials and identified how these

spaces were formed. Both of the studied memorials are located on a territory that used to be a part of Minsk ghetto during the Second World War. Additionally, World War II and the Holocaust in Belarus had specific features, which required an introduction into Belarusian socio-historical context. Due to an attention that this study pays to discursive space, this thesis also briefly describes the politics of memory that were formed in Soviet and contemporary Belarus. Literature and media review as well as a work with archival documents allowed to discover how the design of the studied memorials was formed and what actors were involved in their creation. In turn, media review in combination with direct observations and interviews shed a light on social practices that have taken place around the chosen memorials. Therefore, this research comprehensively analyzed physical, social and discursive spaces and their relations that together formed two memorial sites in Minsk.

I

Socio-Historical Background of Belarus within the Studied Subject



Belarus and Minsk in the Second World War. Minsk ghetto

Although Belarus suffered from the most dramatic loss of population among all the countries (Rudling, 2008) the exact numbers of victims including Jews are still not known. Additionally, the boundaries of the Belarusian state changed twice in 1939 and 1945, which makes a precise calculation even more intricate. Due to this reason, recent works tend to provide separated numbers. So, Leanid Smilavicki states that a pre-war population of Belarus was 10,528,000 citizens while 9,200,000 of them lived in its contemporary boundaries. The official after-war statistics claimed that 2,200,000 Belarusian inhabitants died in the hostilities, actions of extermination, as well as due to the wounds, starvation, and diseases. Some researchers in the 90s, though, provided with a number of 3,000,000 victims (Смиловицкий, 2000).

Ascertaining an actual proportion of the Jewish population in pre-war Belarus is also quite problematic though, obviously, Jews composed a significant part of the citizens. For an approximate calculation scholars categorize Belarusian Jews into three major groups. The first one includes those who lived in Eastern Belarus. The second group refers to Jews who populated western regions annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939. Finally, the third group was a number of Jewish refugees who escaped from Poland in 1939-1941. In total, an amount of Jews who lived in Belarus by the moment of Nazi occupation can be approximately evaluated as 800,000-900,000 (Смиловицкий, 2000; Kotljarchuk, 2013). The amount of perished Jews, in turn, varies in different sources from 245 thousand to one million. In any case, numerous sources claim that around 80% of Belarusian Jews died during the war. According to the census of 1939, Jews constituted almost 30% of Minsk inhabitants while by 1959 this number decreased to approximately 8% (Смиловицкий, 2000).

World War II came to the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. A term Great Patriotic War refers to hostilities that took place in 1941-1945 on the Soviet territories and is still commonly used in post-Soviet countries including Belarus (Ластовский, 2009). On June 23 and 24 Nazi planes were already bombing Minsk causing dramatic damage to the city. In these circumstances the communist leaders of Belarus managed to organize their own evacuation to Moscow and a partial evacuation of children to the East. In the rest, by the moment of Nazi

occupation, that happened several days after, Minsk did not have a formal rule or any plans of evacuation or resistance (Epstein, 2008).

In a month after the occupation, on August 1, 1942 Nazis established a ghetto in Belarusian capital. It was located in today's city center and included 39 streets. Different sources provide with a number of the ghetto prisoners that varies from 80,000 to 100,000 people (Ботвинник, 2000). This figures make Minsk ghetto one of the largest in Eastern Europe and the second largest in the Soviet Union after Ukrainian Lviv (Юфе, 2014). Noticeably, almost all the inhabitants of Minsk ghetto were killed except for those who managed to escape. This was an extremely risky but the only possible way to stay alive (Epstein, 2008). Additionally to the ghetto, Nazis created a developed infrastructure for Jews' annihilation in the city and its suburbs that comprised concentration and death camps, roads, railways, etc. (Ботвинник, 2000).

One of the reasons why so many Jews perished in Minsk was a fact that Minsk ghetto had existed much longer than ghettos in other major cities like Warsaw or Vilnius. Due to numerous factors, it was liquidated among the latest in October 21, 1943. A partial explanation for this was Minsk's strategic location on a way to Moscow and, hence, the necessity to place here military and administrative reserves of the Nazi army. This *"enormous machine of occupation"* (Смоляр, 2002) was requiring the maintenance and, of course, labor including high-qualified professionals from the Jewish population (Epstein, 2008).

Another distinction of Minsk ghetto was the frequency of the pogroms and extermination operations on its territory. While in other ghettos such actions took place periodically with months of a relatively safe life between them, in Minsk every week was darkened by at least a local pogrom on one of the streets. Such an oppressive atmosphere affected both people's emotional state and the practices that were common at the time (Смоляр, 2002).

Additionally to a permanent danger, an economic, social, and cultural status of Jews in pre-war times also determined their lifestyle and types of the resistance in Minsk ghetto. Due to a fact that the population of the Soviet Union was quite homogenous in economic and social terms, inhabitants of the ghetto did not have anything to exchange for food or other goods, especially by the second year of the occupation. Regarding cultural life, Jews were not allowed to institutionalize themselves in the 30s, therefore barely had their national art and community leaders before the war, which caused numerous difficulties in forming the resistance movement during the Nazi occupation. All the above-mentioned circumstances resulted in a fact that, by contrast to other ghettos, Minks did not have restaurants, shops, theaters or other places regular for a peaceful life (Смоляр, 2002).



Figure 1. An entrance to a Jewish cemetery in Minsk ghetto. Graphichs by M. Żytnicki, 1973

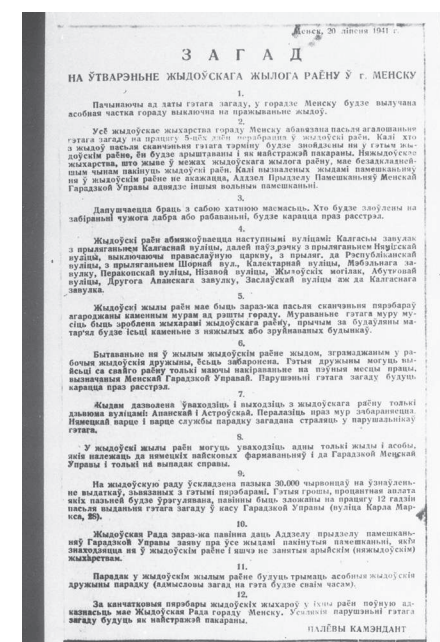
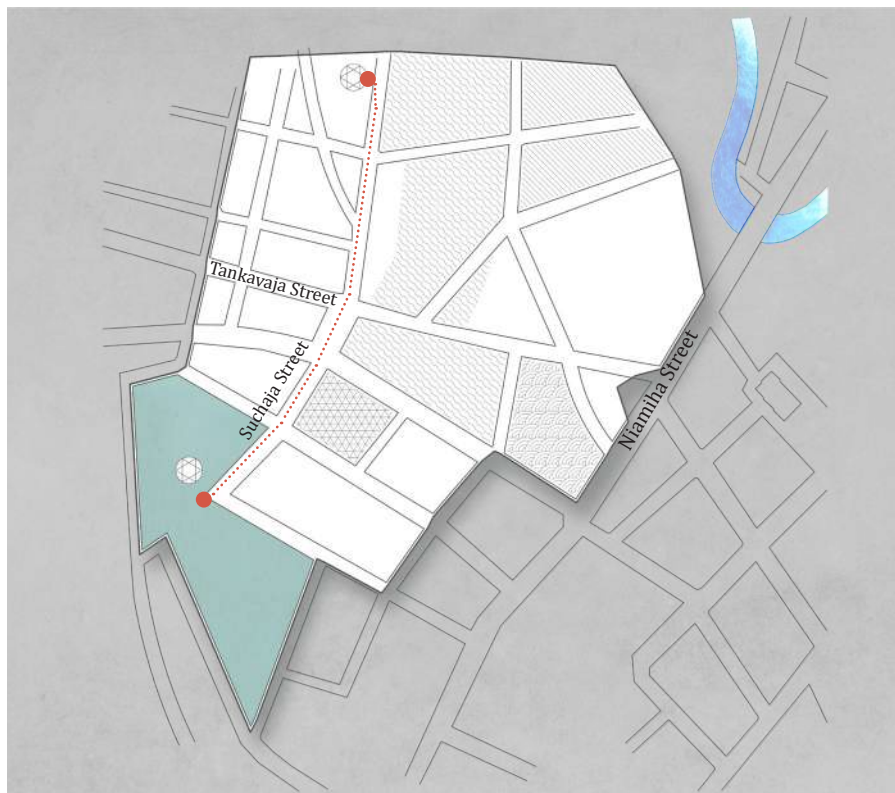


Figure 2. An order regarding establishing Minsk ghetto in June 20, 1942



Map II. Minsk ghetto, according to the memories of L. Melamed



Places of the pogrom on November 7, 1941



Places of the pogrom on November 20, 1941



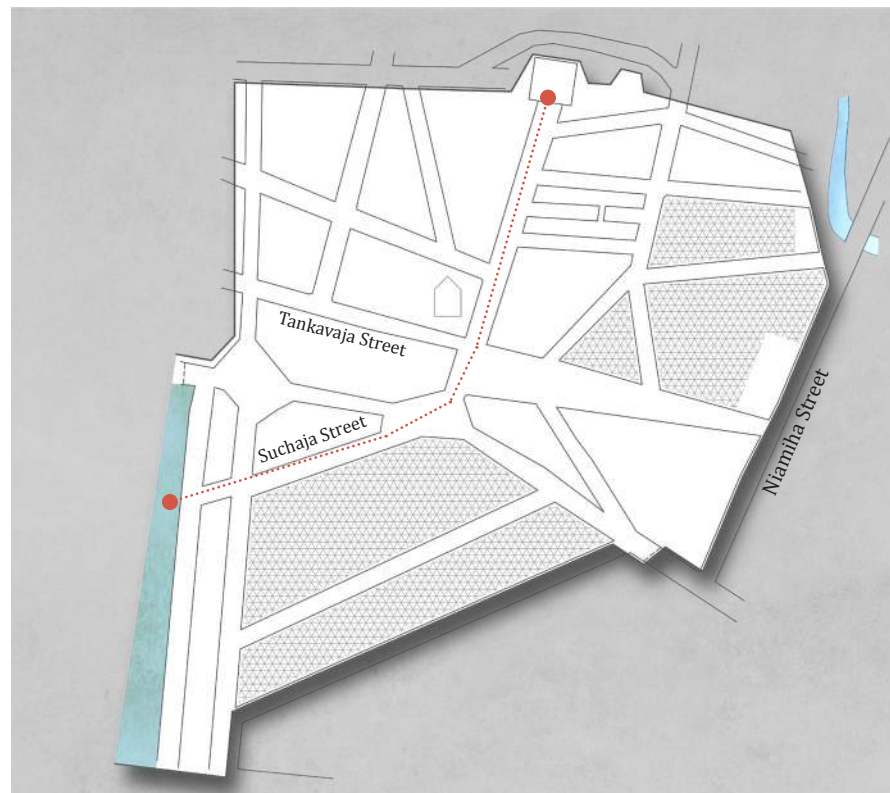
Places of the pogrom on July 21, 1942



Place where «Hamburg Jews» lived on November, 1941



Burial sites of the pogrom on March 2, 1942



Map III. Minsk ghetto, according to the memories of A. Rubenčyk



Building of Judenrat (local Jewish administration)



Zonderghetto (an area where Jews deported from Europe lived)

Memory about the Holocaust in Soviet Belarus

A contemporary Belarusian memory about World War II and the Holocaust is still significantly affected by the Soviet politics of memory but, according to the researchers, has gained its own characteristics (Ластовский, 2009). For analyzing them, though, it is necessary to study their background which was formed in the Soviet era. In this respect, a researcher Andrej Katliarčuk refers to a concept of *"path dependence"* that started to be applied to historical science. While doing his evaluation of the current memory politics in Belarus he takes into account its Soviet past that to a high degree determined the present culture of remembrance (Kotljarchuk, 2013).

Whereas in Europe the Holocaust played a role of a foundation in forming memory culture as it is known today, in the USSR it was presented by the state memory politics as an ugly and inescapable consequence of capitalism. Therefore, since the Holocaust was simply explained by the "nature" of capitalism there was no necessity for its problematization in the Soviet official discourse. Moreover, while for European intellectuals an experience of Jewish genocide became a frontier between past and new ethical standards, new understanding of humanism and social responsibility, in the Soviet Union even

a term Holocaust was not used due to a fact that the event was not distinguished as a separated phenomenon (Ассман, Хлебников, 2013; Huyssen, 1994).

Researchers' opinion regarding the Holocaust's status in the Soviet memory politics slightly differs but they mostly agree about the existence of significant limitations in its regard. So, according to an American scholar Zvi Gitelman, the Soviet politics of the Holocaust in general neither denied it nor focused attention on it (Gitelman, 1994). By contrast to Gitelman, a Swedish researcher Andrej Katliarčuk claims in a more radical way that the history of the Holocaust was deliberately silenced and even *"marginalized"*. Moreover, in his reflection on the Soviet politics of memory, he introduces a powerful term *"politics of forgetting"* that, according to him, were applied to the Holocaust by authorities (Kotljarchuk, 2013). What is essential, a principal distinction of the Soviet public representation of the Holocaust was its consideration as a part of the genocide against *"peaceful citizens"*.

Gitelman sees three main reasons for the appearance of such an attitude. Firstly, due to non-democratic conditions, the Jewish community had limited opportunities in spreading knowledge about the Holocaust. As he mentions, the only publication that was regularly writing about the Holocaust in the Soviet Union was a monthly magazine *Sovetish Heymland* which, though, was still quite ideologized. Secondly, none of the European countries lost as much of the non-Jewish population as the Soviet Union did; hence, in the European context the death of Jews was more "visible". Finally, Soviet authorities had political reasons for not shedding the light on the

Holocaust as a distinct event. Gitelman claims that in the 40s-50s such reasons were Stalin's and his adherents' anti-Semitic and *"anti-cosmopolitan"* views. Later, in the 60s-70s, October Revolution as a *"legitimizing myth"* of the Soviet regime had to be replaced by a newly formed myth about the triumphal victory of the Soviet people over Nazism. In this legend, obviously, there was no place for Jewish national agenda (Gitelman, 1994).

Regardless the common features in Soviet memory politics, attitude towards the Holocaust had some regional characteristics. So, whereas a history of Ukraine published in 1982 did not even mention Jews in regard to the Holocaust, a work developed in Estonia in 1973 freely explored this subject and, furthermore, Estonian collaboration with Nazis (Gitelman, 1994). Regarding Belarus, it used to represent, for example, some bottom-up practices of memorialization that were common in other Soviet republics. One of them was an installation of informal memorials built by the citizens in remembrance of their relatives in early post-war years. Nevertheless, Belarus still had local peculiarities. Some sources even claim that Belarusian authorities paid special attention to the history of the Holocaust like none of the Soviet republics did (Ойленбург, Керпель-Фрониус, Ноймеркер, 2016). Partly developed memory culture was possible due to a well-preserved archive of documents related to the Nazi occupation regime and life in ghettos (Gitelman, 1994) but, for sure, there were political reasons for this as well.

A politician who made, probably, the most significant contribution to the memory about Belarusian role in World

War II was a leader of Soviet Belarus in 1965-1980 Piotr Mašeraŭ. His famous statement, according to which the republic lost its *"every fourth"* citizen, laid a foundation for the future memory politics and, moreover, Belarusian national identity that has been influenced by the war more than any other event (Kotljarchuk, 2013; Rudling, 2008). Even though such a math was not accurate a phrase started to be repeated and symbolize common grief, which completed a status of a *"nation-hero"* with a new title of a *"nation-martyr"* (Ластовский, 2009). Additionally, local politics of memory tended to highlight a crucial role of Belarusians in the victory, specifically, through an image of a *"Partisan Republic"* (Rudling, 2008). It is also noticeable that Mašeraŭ's politics of memory additionally blurred the distinctions between the Holocaust and the extermination of Belarusian people by ignoring a factor of ethnicity and accenting a national character of a tragedy. Although several major memorial complexes were erected during this period none of them commemorated Jews as a specific group of victims (Kotljarchuk, 2013).

What is worth mentioning is that the Holocaust was not the only taboo in the Soviet and, in particular, Belarusian memory politics. Other aspects of the war like, for example, Belarusian collaboration with the Nazis were also excluded from the official narrative because they contradicted an abovementioned myth about the heroic victory of the solid Soviet nation (Kotljarchuk, 2013). This myth still strongly affects Belarusian official and public discourse to a certain degree continuing the Soviet tradition of remembrance (Ластовский, 2009).

Memory about the Holocaust in contemporary Belarus

Though for a long time the Holocaust memorialization in Belarus had been controlled by the Soviet state and isolated from the global context a process of the massive commemoration of its victims has started approximately at the same time as in other European countries. In Sweden, for instance, this process became a part of the integration to the European Union and has massively begun with a governmentally initiated campaign Living History in 1997. Anne Rothe suggests that a cause for new politics of memory was an aspiration to demonstrate Swedish adherence to European values (Rothe, 2015). Even in Germany with its reputation of a pioneer in the Holocaust memorialization, this process reached its peak after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Ассман, Хлебников, 2013). Thus, a new stage in the Holocaust commemoration in Belarus was chronologically quite synchronized with a similar European tendency of the 90s. This turn, though, was caused by the local conditions, specifically, a much higher level of freedom in comparison to a Soviet period.

After the collapse of the USSR, Belarus acquired its independence and, hence, an opportunity to form new politics of memory. The Jewish organizations finally were able to institutionalize themselves. However, according to Rudling, a new authoritarian leader Lukašenka made the biggest contribution to the memory about World War II. Being selected in the elections in 1994, he started a search for a new coherent ideology that could legitimate his regime. The first efforts were controversial and even paradoxical; they introduced such notions as *“Orthodox atheism”* or *“market socialism”*. Belarusian language as a foundation for a

new national state also did not seem convincing due to the effective politics of Russification applied in Belarus in the Soviet era. The solution was found in referring to the memory of the Great Patriotic War and a unique role played by Belarusians in the fight against Nazism (Rudling, 2008).

One of the key transfers from the Soviet politics of memory was an application of the term “genocide” to the entire nation. The only difference constitutes the fact that today by nation politicians mean not Soviet people but Belarusians. It is worth mentioning that recently installed memorials commemorate Jewish victims, which is a perceptible progress in comparison with the previous period. However, Katliarčuk points out that the official rhetoric of the president Lukašenka still does not separate the Holocaust and an extermination of other citizens. This, according to Katliarčuk, is a major terminological mistake due to a fact that genocide has a very precise meaning. Essentially, it is classified as an act done with a special intent. By contrast to Jews, Belarusians were never pursued because of their ethnicity. Numerous extermination operations against Belarusian people were caused by the temporary circumstances of the war but not special politics of the nation’s annihilation (Kotljarchuk, 2013).

Despite undeniable connections between the Soviet and Belarusian memory politics, researchers distinguish significant changes. They have started in the 90s or even in the late Soviet era. This period is characterized by two major tendencies in the memory politics common for the Post-Soviet countries (Kotljarchuk, 2013). The first of them is

a *“nationalization”* of the memory. So, an appropriated myth about a key role of Belarusian partisan movement nowadays contributes to forming and enhancing Belarusian national identity (Ласковский, 2009). The second factor that characterizes contemporary Belarusian memory politics is a shift of focus from heroic actions to the civilians’ struggles. After publishing new statistics, a Soviet formula about *“every fourth”* has been replaced by a statement that *“every third”* Belarusian died in the Great Patriotic War (Kotljarchuk, 2013).

Regarding contemporary Holocaust memorialization, Kotljarchuk portrays its state mostly in positive terms though a factual situation seems to be more contradictory. His main argument in this debate is a fact that the government and the president personally have been actively involved in the memorialization of the Holocaust victims. Additionally, he argues that dozens of the Holocaust monuments have been installed in Minsk and smaller cities since the 90s, and 45 of them were erected *“with the support of the state”* (Kotljarchuk, 2013). However, it is important or sometimes even essential not who financed a memorial but who initiated its installation. Moreover, the actors that managed the process of its implementation, maintain it, and visit it in the present are also symptomatic and worth consideration.

In this regard, authors of a digest published by International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in 2015 mention that activities related to the Holocaust commemoration in Belarus are usually supported by the local authorities while the initiative usually comes from other institutions. A positive role of Belarusian officials was also appreciated by Simon

Mark Lazarus Foundation which aims to indicate all the Holocaust extermination sites in Belarus by installing stone stelae (Lazarus, 2015). By the date of August 2018, the organization has managed to erect 114 Holocaust memorials out of approximately 500 of the planned (each for a known site). Being started by a British couple nowadays it is a collaboration between the original activists and two American family foundations.

Such a mission was called “*noble*” by an Israeli researcher Leanid Smilavicki who, though, criticized the way it had been implemented in a Jewish cemetery of Belarusian town Turov. According to his investigation, one of these same-looking memorials appeared in 2014 on a place of a former memorial installed in 1946 by the local community. Money for an original simple stone with the inscriptions in Russian and Yiddish were given by the relatives of the local Holocaust victims and collected by a head of a provincial store. For avoiding an official approval it was decided to make the generic title “To the victims of fascism. 1941-1945”. Besides, the Yiddish language and the memorial’s location in the Jewish cemetery referred to a memorized group clearly enough. In the latest decades of the Soviet era former citizens of Turov who lived in Israel, the USA and Germany were supporting financially the maintenance of the cemetery. Therefore, for years the memorial had been a meaningful place of commemoration formed by a grassroots initiative. Regardless, this fact was ignored during the erection of the new stone that was installed directly on the old one instead of organically including it to the new memorial (Smilovitsky, 2017).

Even though Belarusian memory culture can be called quite homogeneous (Ластовский, 2009) it still experiences certain tension and contradictions.

Among other positive factors that signal about achievements in the Holocaust memorialization Katliarčuk mentions recently opened museums, for instance, the Museum of Jewish History and Culture in Minsk (Kotljarchuk, 2013). This doubtlessly positive fact, though, requires some explanation. Firstly, the museum was organized with the efforts of the Belarusian Jewish community and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and is still maintained by them (Akapian, 2015). Secondly, despite its significant contribution to archiving and studying the Holocaust, unfortunately, this small museum can be barely called public. Probably, due to limited resources, a visitor should previously give a call for making an appointment. After arriving and coming through a security post in a separated building one should cross an inner courtyard of Minsk Jewish Community House and seek an entrance to the museum itself. Thus, in current conditions with a lack of governmental support, it can make just a modest impact in the memory landscape.

The State Museum of the Great Patriotic War, by contrast, occupies a huge newly designed building and attracts dozens of tourists and locals being a significant part of a dialog about the war. However, its exposition sheds the light only on the period of Nazi occupation and a homogeneous idea of genocide against Soviet people but not Jews in particular. According to the Soviet tradition, a term Holocaust is not used there at all. During my visit in August



Figure 4

2018, in two large halls, I found only one plate which mentioned Jews by stating “During the Nazi occupation on Belarusian territory, according to different sources, from 500,000 to 800,000 Jews perished” (fig.3). Additionally, copies of the historical document were exposed on a column, and an installation shaped like a silhouette of grouped people demonstrated an amount of the ghetto victims in different Belarusian settlements (fig.4). While in the books devoted to the Holocaust in Belarus description of the Nazi occupation regime usually serves as just an introduction to its history, the main state museum of World War II factually uses the introduction instead of the story.

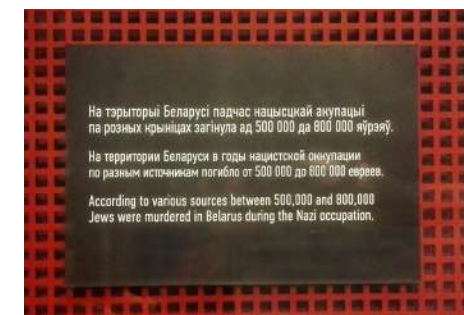


Figure 3



Map IV. Minsk city center with the studied memorials

Holocaust memorials in Belarus

Due to a dramatic impact of the Second World War on Belarus, this subject is well represented in the literature. The Holocaust history, by contrast, for a long time had been a taboo, which caused its poor representation in the Soviet times. New studies and publications of the victims' memoirs started to appear in the 90s, and some of them mentioned the Holocaust memorials among other themes. Just a few of the found sources, though, focused its full attention on the questions of memorialization.

So, several sources about the Holocaust history in Belarus contain a chapter or an appendix related to the Holocaust memorialization. One of the most valuable for my research was a book "The Holocaust in Belorussia, 1941-1944" written by Leanid Smilavicki in 2000. In addition to the comprehensive description of the Holocaust in Belarus, it includes a chapter dedicated to the after-war commemoration of its victims. This brief but informative introduction into the topic sheds the light on bottom-up initiatives of memorialization, informal traditions of commemoration, and governmental practices of their control in post-war Belarus. Also, the book distinguishes the main tendencies in the use of Jewish cemeteries in this period. This chapter is complemented with a list of the Holocaust monuments and memorials in Belarus, which also specifies their type, location, a date of the erection, and a number of Jews that perished there (Смиловицкий, 2000). Similar but slightly fewer information is provided in the book "Executioners testify" that was mostly composed of archival documents and published in 2009.

One of the rare sources related directly to the Holocaust memorials is a publication of Marat Batvinik "Monuments to the genocide of Jews in Belarus" made in 2000. Like two abovementioned books, it includes the table with monuments and memorials to the Holocaust victims erected in Belarus. The book also provides with a brief introduction to the Holocaust in Belarus generally as well as in its settlements and introduced a brief history of major extermination sites (Ботвинник, 2000). Though, this work barely describes the memorials from any other perspectives except for historical; it serves rather as a structured catalog of the memorial sites without their analysis. However, this work demonstrates that in Belarus, by contrast to the countries that did not experience the Holocaust on their territory, the memorials to the Holocaust victims are usually linked to places of Nazi crimes.

Another segment of the analyzed literature is represented by the memoirs of Minsk ghetto prisoners. It is noticeable that such books tend to have a similar structure that includes two parts: personal memories of the former prisoners and archival documents related to a history of Minsk ghetto. Additionally, a common feature of such publications is a small number of copies. Finally, publishing of these books often happens due to a support of the international foundations like, for instance, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee or IBB Johannes Rau in Minsk and Dortmund. As an example here can be provided a book "We remember! We bequeath to the world to remember..." (Крапина, 2012) that was published

by a charity civil organization "Гилф" in an edition of 300 copies. The work has an abovementioned structure and demonstrates a typical for such books title that rather applies to the emotions than reflects the content.

Therefore, work with this type of literature allowed making several conclusions. Firstly, representation, preservation, and transfer of a memory about the Holocaust in Belarus are still mostly performed by the Jewish community and related organizations. However, it is important to admit that, for example, Minsk Municipality was mentioned as a partner in such activities multiple times. Secondly, there is an obvious lacuna in a scientific knowledge about the Holocaust and the Holocaust memorials in Belarus. Though personal memories are a valuable source of information about historical events, in these publications they are usually not conceptualized. Regarding the memorials, one of the studied by this research memorial, Yama, is frequently mentioned or used as an illustration inside the books or even on their covers. None of the publications, though, is focused on the memorial as an independent subject for examination, and it is mostly presented as a symbol of the community's grief.

Figure 5.
March, 2, 1990. The Pit memorial.
Photo by A. Talačko



Figure 6. March, 2, 1992.
The Pit memorial.
Photo by V. Miazhevič

Among all the studied sources I can distinguish the only effort to evaluate the aesthetical qualities of the Holocaust memorials in Belarus. Additionally, it attempts to follow the evolution of the tools that have been used in the contemporary Belarusian memorials. It is an article written by a sculptor Pavel Vajnicki that, regardless of its small volume, articulates numerous complex issues of the memorialization in Belarus. One of them, for instance, is Soviet taboo on mentioning the ethnicity of the victims; another one deals with a shift of the memorials' focus from a cult of the heroic victor to empathy to peaceful victims. As the most principal current problem Vajnicki distinguishes a common use of sculptural tools instead of spatial instruments. He finds such a literal figurative expression of the memorized events outdated; in addition, it does not fully use the spatial potential of large-

scale memorials. This article mentions both of the studied by my research memorials, and its insights contributed to my work significantly.

As literature review also demonstrated, none of the analyzed sources mentions direct observations as a method applied to Belarusian public spaces and memorials in particular. For sure, this does not mean that it is not used by the scholars at all though allows assuming that it is not widely spread among Belarusian researchers. Moreover, public life around memorials barely appears as a subject of their works, which are mostly focused on their historical or memory aspects. All abovementioned allows me to state that this research is, probably, the first one that aims to study the design and history of Belarusian memorials in a respect to social practices caused by them.

Methods for the analysis of memorials

Due to a fact that memorials are not a new subject for researches the existing studies are focused on a wide range of questions. While some of these works study exclusively spatial properties of the memorials, others examine memory about certain events and consider the memorials only as its physical representation. Despite such diversity in approaches and optics, literature review allowed finding similarities between them and, hence, drawing some principal conclusions regarding memorials' analysis. The crucial aspects of the memorials that I distinguished as common for the used sources formed a base for my research method, which is described in the next chapter.

One of the papers that I used for forming my research method suggests its own definition of a memorial and a method to evaluate its properties. In this work, such an analysis was made by examination of three post-1990s-war memorial sites in Croatia. According to this paper, in addition to a function of remembrance, memorials also play a therapeutic role by providing the ways to deal with the traumatic past and construct the future. The paper highlights the importance of both memorial's ability to preserve a memory and its ability to heal. In the authors' idea, this combination can be achieved by designing contemporary memorials as an integral part of public space and providing with conditions for reflection, debates, and exchange (Bojanić, 2017).

For evaluating several case studies authors use the parameters of accessibility, scale, and a so-called "*concept of manipulation*". The latest is based on three criteria and their interconnections: "*elements of focus*", "*vista*", and "*walking choreography*". Researchers divide the accessibility into such subcategories as a location of a memorial site, distance from the center, and usage. In the criterion of scale, they specify the number of inhabitants in a settlement, a function of a place and a fact whether it is public or not. Regarding the "*concept of manipulation*", they consider a compositional dominant of each memorial as an "*elements of focus*". A "*vista*" they apply to a type of a prospect that is available for the user while exploring a memorial. "*Walking choreography*", in turn, describes the user's movement in a relation to the focus, for instance, through or towards it (table I).

Table I. The table is taken from the paper Design of memorials – the art of remembering. Method of place regeneration, Prostor, vol. 25, №2 (54)

Analysis	Memorial Bridge, Rijeka	Water Tower Memorial, Vukovar	Gordan Lederer Memorial, Hrvatska Kostajnica
Regeneration	Recovery-urban-designed landmark	Rehabilitation-urban-integrated landmark	Recovery-landscape-designed sign
Conclusion on Regeneration: Healing model	HEALING CULTURE	HEALING HISTORY	HEALING NATURE
A. ACCESSIBILITY			
Location	In the center	in the center proximity	on the periphery
Distance from center	200 m from main pedestrian street	1 km from center	3.22 km from the center
Usage	Urban public place and infrastructure	Urban park	Park in natural landscape
CONCLUSION	PUBLIC	PUBLIC	VISITING
B. SCALE			
City (inhabitants)	128.500	27.500	2.700
Intervention	Pedestrian bridge	Park and museum	Sculpture in landscape
CONCLUSION	PUBLIC: EXPOSED	PUBLIC AND VISITING: EXPOSED AND INTIMATE	EXPLORATORY AND VISITING: INTIMATE
C. CONCEPT OF MANIPULATION			
C.1. focus	Vertical extension of bridge	Water tower	Sculpture
C.2. vista	Canalscape and Urbanscape	Townscape, Riverscape and Landscape	Townscape and Riverscape
Conclusion on walkscape: Vista vs. focus	Vista through whole memorial	Vista views from the focus and panoramic on the top of the focus	Townscape from the memorial area and Riverscape from the focus
C.3. walking choreography	Horizontal, directed and circumventing around the focus with possibility to pass through.	Wandering in park around the focus, vertical and zig-zag through focus and circular on the top vista point of focus.	Directed on the meandering path and wandering around focus, with possibility to look through the focus.
Conclusion on walkspace: movement vs. focus	Towards, through and around focus	Around the focus, through the focus and on the focus	Towards the focus and around focus

Therefore, though memorials are evaluated here from an exclusively architectural perspective this approach looks beyond their volumetric properties. The chosen places of commemoration are considered as a part of urban space and, hence, as a variety of dynamic spatial experiences. According to the authors, these experiences are supposed to increase users' awareness of the past and reflection on the future. This connection, though, is not obvious from the paper.

While the work intends to find a correlation between described properties of the memorials and their "*healing*" effect it rather managed to make a comparative analysis of three places. Nevertheless, this paper articulates the importance of memorial analysis in a mandatory connection with the urban context and spatial practices of visitors though, without suggesting universal solutions.

The second paper that contributed to my research method is quite remarkable due to a fact that it is based on a famous memorizing technique. A so-called “*art of memory*” appeared in the Classical period as a part of rhetoric (Yilmaz, 2010). For memorizing the speeches those who were practicing the art of memory had to pick an “*image*” that represented the memorized and a “*locus*” – imagined or real space where the chosen images were placed in a certain order. Mental walks through these places allowed memorizing and remembering the speeches precisely. According to the suggested approach, a memorial serves for remembrance of a certain event by being such an image situated in a certain location. Additionally to these two elements – image and locus – the author adds to her analysis method a factor of their relations to each other.

Although the paper suggests a solid method of memorial evaluation its conclusions seem debatable; besides, its practical implementation to actual cases with all their complexity causes numerous difficulties. The first of them is a proposed definition of a memorial itself. This approach takes into account only one aspect of the memorials – remembrance – while more often authors pay attention to other of their functions including, paradoxically, oblivion (Степанова, 2018; Yurchuk, 2014). While preservation of the memory is often considered as a political mission a right to forget or, at least, not to recall traumatic memories is an individual’s need. Additionally, such a method seems to conflict a contemporary vision of the memory in general by assuming that we remember the “true” past but not construct our own version of it (Хлебников, Ассман, 2013). Therefore, a

memorial is not mandatorily supposed to simply provoke the remembrance of an event, especially not only one particular way to remember it.

Another weakness of the suggested tool is in its subjectivity and again, as it was mentioned above, its narrow perspective of the memorial purpose. According to the paper, a strong connection between an image and an event creates a clearer message to the public. By contrast, the weaker their relations are the bigger amount of individual connotations is possible. While this correlation itself does not cause any doubts the conclusions based on it, for sure, do. So, a diversity of potential connotations is seeing here as rather a negative characteristic that can prevent “right” understanding of a memorial. Does this mean that there is a “right” version of memory and history? Must a memorial serve for its translation instead of encouraging or at least allowing the plurality of individual interpretations?

In addition, there is no persuasive and universal way to evaluate a degree to which an image represents the essence of the memorized event. Furthermore, even the most precise and expressive images tend to stale. As a successful example of an accurate image the author provides a “*railway, which disappears in the darkness of the gate of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp*” that, according to her, has similar associations for the most of the people. A railway and a wagon appeared in two recent Belarusian memorials and while in the latest one (fig.7) this image is artistically and spatially interpreted by the authors’ collective the earlier one (fig.8) simply claims that people were transferred to the Belarusian camp this way.



Figure 8. A memorial in Trascianeč

Doubtlessly, originally these used to be strong symbols, on the one hand, of a fateful road without a way back and, on the other hand, of debugged machinery in this production of death. Today, though, a use of an old powerful metaphor risks to make a newly designed memorial something what visitors expect to see in regard to the Holocaust and, hence, a part of a cliché about it.

Figure 7. A memorial complex in Blahaŭščyna



Regarding the second aspect of the art of memory, locus, the author makes several significant conclusions that can be controversial but definitely useful for the memorials analysis. So, the author claims that “*detachment*” of the memorial site from the regular conditions in which it exists forms unique space for the visitor’s perception. As Yilmaz states, this makes memorization more “*effective and long-lasting*”. Although “*effectiveness*” is a debatable category in regard to memory and a memorial it is hard to not agree that a sharp contrast between the memorial site and its surroundings can become an impressive spatial tool. This, indeed, can enhance a visitor’s experience, highlight a role of a memorial, and create a special atmosphere suitable for dealing with specific emotions. Another aspect of a locus, “*guidance*”, has similarities with what was called “*walking choreography*” in the previous study. As much as detachment, guidance can intensify the user’s experience by constructing a certain narrative of routes, landmarks, and viewpoints.

Though the location of a memorial is identified as extremely important by this paper as well as by other researchers (Young, 1994; Yurchuk, 2014) this does not mandatory mean that a memorized event should be physically represented in a site where it actually took place. So, Russian writer Maria Stepanova in a biographical novel, or, according to the author, romance “*In remembrance of remembrance*” describes a moment of her visit to a house where her Jewish ancestors used to live. Being highly impressed by this experience she imagined the whole lifestyle of her family in this courtyard, tried to memorize every minor detail and smell, touched every

surface and remembered its texture. After a couple of days she found out that, in fact, her family was occupying a different building nearby. This incident she comments with a phrase: “*This is, basically, everything I know about memory*” (Степанова, 2017). Thereby, in this case not a place or its historically accurate location but the images constructed by her contributed to her perception the most. Not a place but rather an existing discourse affects a visitor.

What is essential for my research about both papers is their attention to the spatial properties of the memorials and spatial experiences that their design provokes. Despite differences in the approaches both works articulate that in studying memorials a research should be focused not on a memorial exclusively but its complex relations with a context and a user. James E. Young goes further by claiming that the art of memory “*consists in the ongoing activity of memory, in the debates surrounding these memorials, in our own participation in the memorial’s performance*” (Young, 1994), which adds to the memorial analysis discursive and social dimensions.

In addition to works that study memorials, I analyzed some researches on memory studies. So, the survey performed by Elena Ivanova in 2004 was focused not on the memorials to the Holocaust but on memory about it. Despite this fact, a method of discourse analysis that she used can be valuable in application to memorials as well. The main source of information for her research became a number of essays written by high school pupils from Eastern Ukraine. Being asked to share their knowledge about the Holocaust,

teenagers demonstrated dramatically different levels of awareness and attitudes towards the phenomenon. Through analyzing the written narratives and their emotional tones the author managed to construct a coherent understanding of what students knew and thought about the Holocaust. Instead of gaining knowledge about separated facts via questioners this research dealt with whole narratives that varied depending on pupils’ educational or ethnical backgrounds and even gender (Ivanova, 2004).

Such an approach demonstrated that a careful consideration of discourse in which memory (memorials) exists can significantly contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The way users, designers, and politicians talk about the memorials signals about a focus of public attention as well as lacunas in public knowledge about the Holocaust and places of its commemoration. Additionally, this instrument can be especially substantial for studying Soviet and Belarusian contexts where a language on the memorials followed a very specific canon. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, such a word as “*Jews*” was simply excluded from it.

III

Approach and Methods



Studied cases and criteria for their choice

"Only if we focus on the public function of the monument, embedding it in public discourses of collective memory, can danger of monumental ossification be avoided."

Andreas Huyssen, 1994

For my research, I chose two memorials to the Holocaust victims in Minsk, Belarus. One them is Yama, which means a Pit in translation from Russian. The second memorial is located in a former Jewish cemetery and, by contrast to the Pit, does not have such an informal title. Both of the memorials are situated in the central part of the city that belonged to Minsk ghetto. During World War II, they were major extermination and burial sites.

Today's Pit memorial consists of several parts installed in different time periods by different actors. The first of them is a so-called "black obelisk" that was a result of a grassroots initiative run by the Jewish community in the early after-war years. Another one is represented by a bronze sculptural composition and a menorah-shaped stela that were installed in 2000 with a participation of the Belarusian government (fig.9). Additionally, an alley to the Belarusian Righteous among the Nations was established nearby this place in the middle of the 90s. In my research, I aimed to provide a history of these "layers" that have so many differences but today compose one significant place of commemoration by overlapping one

another. Also, my aspiration was to analyze how the design of the memorial and social practices that happen there have changed through the time, and how they have determined each other.

While the Pit had been started as a typical Soviet after-war commemorative practice, a memorial on a former Jewish cemetery has begun its history much later, in the 90s. This memorial also consists of several parts that, by contrast to Yama, do not create a whole ensemble but, in fact, look quite disintegrated. The first part is represented by a so-called Pantheon of Memory, a compact circular square with stone stelae around that have been funded mostly by foreign actors starting from the beginning of the 90s (fig.10). Tombstones from the former Jewish cemetery lay on the grass nearby creating an irregular pattern on the surface. Another part of the memorial is a Broken Hearth, a sculpture that appeared here in 2008 with a full financing from Minsk Municipality. As in a case of the Pit, I aimed to follow the history of this place, which, though, turned out to be quite problematic due to a lack of available sources. In addition, I performed an analysis of social practices that take place there and attempted to identify a

correlation between them and the memorial's design.

Due to my intention to study social practices around the memorial sites, the key criteria for my choice were their location and availability to the public. As it was mentioned, numerous memorials to the Holocaust victims in Belarus were erected on the places of extermination sites. Therefore, many of them are located outside of the cities or in their peripheries, which does not guarantee a permanent presence of people. Additionally, some places of commemoration have a specific regime of access like, for instance, a memorial to the Holocaust victims by the Stockholm synagogue. As far as it was built on the fenced territory of the synagogue, the memorial is available for the visitors only during the working hours. Finally, Minsk is my home city, hence, I knew its context well and I had an opportunity for conducting field observations and organizing necessary meetings. In respect to my interest in users' interaction with the memorials, I formed the following requirements for the cases' choice:

- location in the urban environment;
- location in the city center or good connection with it;
- free access for the public.

Figure 9. Sculpture Walking to Death

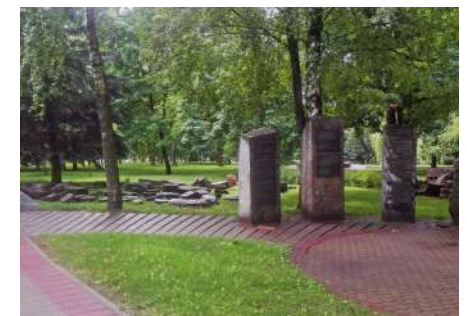


Figure 10. Pantheon of Memory

Research questions and sources of information

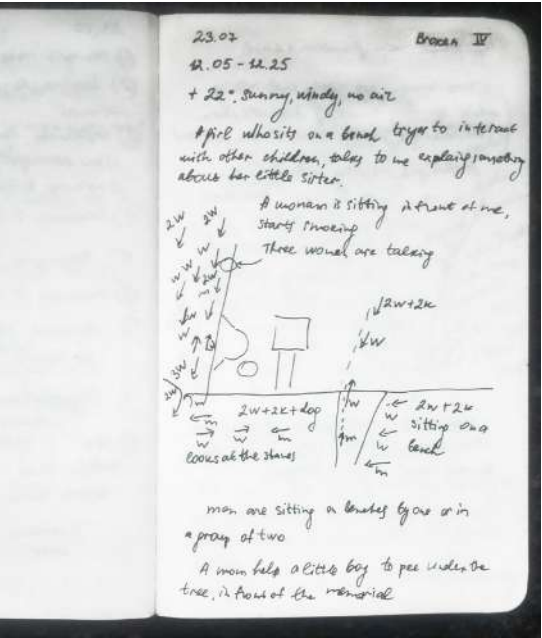


Figure 11. Diary for direct observations

The preliminary literature and media review allowed me to form a set of empirical research questions relevant to the chosen cases. The questions were formulated in a respect to the political, social and urban context in which the memorials have existed. I divided the questions into four categories that

include such aspect as decision-making, design, message, and public reaction. For answering each of the questions I used multiple sources like literature and media review, work with archival materials, results of the direct observations and interviews. A detailed list of the questions and corresponded sources is presented in the table.

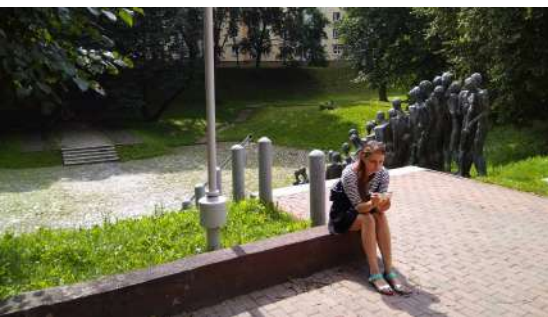
Table II. Research questions with corresponded sources of information

1. Decision	
a) Who did initiate and finance the installation of the studied memorials?	a) Literature and media review, archival materials, interviews
2. Design	
a) How did the design/appearance of the studied memorials change through time?	a) Literature and media review, archival materials, interviews
b) What aspects of the Holocaust are presented in the studied memorials and why?	b) Literature and media review, direct observations
c) Whom are the studied memorials commemorate? What were the reasons for choosing these particular groups?	c) Literature and media review, direct observations
3. Message	
a) How did the author/s define his/their message to the public?	a) Literature and media review, interviews
b) What were the tools for transferring this message?	b) Observations, literature and media review, interviews
4. Reaction	
a) Have the studied memorials provoked any public reaction?	a) Literature and media review, interviews
b) Do the citizens interact with the studied memorials and, if so, how?	b) Observations, media review, interviews

Method

The methods for this research are qualitative and explorative case study analysis performed in several stages. The first stage included a broad literature review. The second stage involved a comprehensive review of the archival documents, municipal policies, newspapers, and websites. The third stage was represented by a series of direct observations of the memorial sites. Additionally, two interviews were done as the fourth stage of my research. Finally, the last stage involved analysis of the collected data. I did not have initial assumptions or a hypothesis at the beginning of my research. Though, after the preliminary analysis of the chosen memorial sites via literature and media review I formed several empirical research questions, which are provided above. All the further research was structured and performed with a respect to these questions and the aim to answer them.

Figure 12. The author during the direct observations



Documents review

Due to a lack of text sources related to the design of the Holocaust memorials in Belarus, visual information became an indispensable source for my research. The work in the archives of Minsk and Minsk region contributed significantly to this study, especially a search in the Belarusian State Archive of Photo Documents in Dziaržynsk. Pictures, videos and even artworks allowed me to follow the evolution in the appearances of the memorial sites. Additionally, some of them captured social practices that had taken place there. Also, review of Minsk Municipality's official decisions was made. It provided with valuable information regarding certain transformations of the studied memorial sites that were poorly described in the literature.

Direct observations

Direct observations aimed to study the design of the chosen memorials and social practices that happen there these days. My main tools were photographing, counting, tracing, mapping, and keeping a diary (Gehl, Svarre, 2013). A series of seven observations was conducted in the period from July 16 to August 16. Each session's duration was from 15 to 20 minutes. For gaining the most comprehensive understanding of the social practices, my field observations were performed at different time and days of a week. Therefore, one observation was performed in the

morning before the beginning of the working day, one in lunchtime, one at the end of the working day. The rest of them were conducted in the weekend or between these key hours. During the direct observations, I was counting the passersby specifying their gender and, in some cases, approximate age, tracing their routes, and making notes in the diary. The notes usually described interaction with the memorials or any atypical activities.

Interviews

During my thesis project, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Interviews questions were categorized into four groups. The first of them dealt with a personality of the interviewee and his/her role in the Holocaust memorialization in Belarus. The second group of questions involved history and design of the memorials. The third one was related to the memorials' idea. The final group was asking about memorials' use and role for the city or certain social groups. Since interviews were conducted in Russian, in the appendix I provide with a full list of the questions with a translation into English.

The first person I interviewed was a head of the Museum of Jewish History and Culture in Minsk Vadzim Akapian. In this conversation, I focused mostly on the last group of questions related to the use of the chosen memorials and their role for the Jewish community. Thanks to this

meeting, I also accessed to the books that were published in a small number of copies and spread mostly within the community. The second interview involved Halina Levina, a daughter of an architect Leanid Levin who played a key role in designing both memorials. Due to a fact that Halina is also a current leading architect in Levin's architectural bureau as well as a famous Jewish activist, she was able to answer all the questions to a certain degree. Besides, this interview took place in Levin's studio where publications, physical models and graphical materials for both memorials are collected.

In addition to the interviews, I also had two significant informal meetings. The first one was with an Israeli researcher of the Holocaust in Belarus Leanid Smilavicki. Another one involved a head of a Belarusian-German center for the Holocaust studies in Belarus "History workshop" Kuzma Kozak. Both of these conversations were valuable for this study and made my search for the sources much easier.

Approach to the memorials' analysis

Literature review demonstrated that analysis of the memorials is been performed by the scholars with the use of numerous different methods. Their choice mostly depends on the research questions and studied contexts. This review, though, allowed making one principal conclusion regarding memorials studies. In addition to the physical properties of the memorials, analysis of social practices and discourse is needed.

These three dimensions perfectly represent three elements of the theory of space developed by Henri Lefebvre. While describing “production of space” he distinguished three interconnected spheres: representations of space, representational space, and spatial practice (Lefebvre, 1991). In my research, I attempted to apply this theory to the space of chosen memorials. By studying all of these three dimensions, I explored how the memorial spaces have been formed in the way the public sees them today.

Therefore, each sphere described by Lefebvre corresponds with a particular aspect of the studied memorials. The dominant sphere, or representations of space, is the “space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers”, in a word those who conceived this space. In application to the memorials, this sphere is represented by their physical appearance formed by architects, sculptors, and decisions of the politicians. Representational space is lived “through its associated images and symbols” and constructed mostly by artists, philosophers, and writers. Within my method, this dimension of space is represented by the discourse that forms the memorials and, at the same time, is partly formed by them. Finally, a spatial practice is perceived, experienced space combined by everyday and urban realities, individual routine activities and city routes that link them to each other. This sphere includes activities that take place around the memorials.



IV

Findings



History of the black obelisk

As it was mentioned, this research aimed to take into careful consideration the actors that initiated the construction of the studied memorials. In my idea, this could actually explain a lot about their meaning for the citizens. In this regard, a paper written by a historian and a former head of the Jewish Museum in Minsk Inna Herasimava served as indispensable help. Her detailed research on the Pit memorial describes a process of the creation of the earliest object in this place, black obelisk, which truly turned it into a significant space for sharing a common grief, commemorating dead, and discussing the future. Due to a fact that several activists of the obelisk's installation were arrested a few years after, KGB archives shed some light on this story (Герасимова, 2008). Additionally, memoirs of Minsk ghetto prisoners and their descendants contributed to my search a lot.



Figure 13. Black obelisk, 1967. Photo by V. Marcyonka

This memorial with an informal but well-known name Yama, which means a Pit in Russian, was established on the territory of a former Minsk ghetto on a place of a deep sand career (Ботвинник, Шамрук, 2004). For explaining this location, a story of the memorial should be started not with a moment of its installation but with a brief prehistory. On March 2, 1942, on the Jewish holiday Purim, during one of the major Minsk pogroms, Nazis and their local collaborators murdered several thousand people. That day, according to the administrative decision, Judenrat had to gather 5 thousand people under the pretense of construction works. For ghetto prisoners, though, it was obvious that a large extermination operation had been preparing (Смоляр, 2002). When people did not show up in the morning Nazis started to reach them at homes in the surrounded ghetto. Those who could not leave were shot immediately; the rest were forced to go to the main square. According to the witnesses, during this operation Nazis were killing the inhabitants of the ghetto right on its streets and the main square, by the entrance to the ghetto, and by the legendary Pit (Ботвинник, 2000; Мало-мед, 2008). After the massacre several hundreds of murdered Jews were buried in the career; the rest of the victims on a Jewish cemetery nearby (Ботвинник, 2000).

Regardless a fact that the “Purim massacre” (Смоляр, 2002) became one of the biggest in Minsk ghetto, the

information about its history is fragmented and controversial. For instance, some sources refer to the Pit as a place where Nazis killed all the victims of that pogrom (Cohen, 2017), while, in fact, people were killed all over the ghetto; even those who were shot next to the career were staying on its edge but not in the bottom. The number of the dead also differs. So, according to the occupation documents, a number of victims reached 3,412 people whereas documents from the Belarusian National archive provide with a number of 6,000 (Ботвинник, 2000).

Starting from the end of the war in 1945, activists in Minsk were trying to formalize the Jewish community at the synagogue; one of their aims was an installation of a monument in the Pit. When after almost two years in 1946 the Jewish community was legalized, city authorities rejected an official application for a memorial's construction. Due to significance and even a sacral meaning of this mission, a group of activists had started the process without a formal approval. For manufacturing the obelisk they hired a Jewish stone master Marduch Spryšēn who could create it out of an old gravestone from the cemetery in the former ghetto. This, though, was problematic since the Jewish cemetery was in a jurisdiction of several state institutions. Luckily, heads of those organizations were Jews who supported the initiative and secured it with the necessary permissions (Герасимова, 2008).

The entire community was to a certain degree involved to the project since everyone lost someone in the Pit (Спришен, 2008). For example, a famous Jewish writer Hajm Malcinski wrote a text for an inscription first in Yiddish and then in Russian; additionally, he personally obtained its official approval. According to the memoirs, as an influential figure of the Jewish community, he was repeatedly asked to represent the project. For getting a formal permission he had to go up to the sixth floor, despite a fact that he lost his leg in the war. While talking to an authority from the censorship committee Malcinski mentioned his mother, wife, and a little son who were buried in the Pit. He managed to approve not only the text in two languages but an erection of the monument as well. As a result, the black obelisk was installed in 1946 with the help of numerous Minsk Jews who donated their money or were involved in its design or approval (Герасимова, 2008).

In fact, this inscription carved on a black stone in two languages makes the Pit truly unique. It says "In bright remembrance for all eternity of the 5,000 Jews who perished at the hands of the cruel enemies of humanity – fascist German fiends". Due to this fact, Gitelman called the black obelisk the only memorial in major Soviet cities that mentioned Jews as a specific group of victims (Gitelman, 1994). Kotljarchuk, in turn, also claims that it became the "first urban monument in the Soviet Union" that directly pointed out at the ethnicity

of a memorized group (Kotljarchuk, 2013).

In another way, though, the black obelisk was a typical example of the post-war unofficial memorialization initiated by victims' relatives or local communities. Fortunately, by contrast to some other places of commemoration, the obelisk in the Pit was not demolished or replaced by its "sterile" Soviet copy in 1948-1952 during Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign (Gitelman, 1994).

This campaign, though, dramatically affected those who took a part in the obelisk's erection. Starting from 1949 several members of the Jewish community who were engaged in its creation were arrested for the "Anti-Soviet activity". In fact, the Soviet state wanted to prevent them from creating a strong community inside the homogenous Soviet society; besides, they supported the national state of Israel, which was not acceptable within the Soviet ideology (Герасимова, 2008). Formal reasons for the arrests, though, were quite absurd. So, Marduch Spryšėn was arrested for possessing 20 records with Jewish music, which was enough for incriminating "cosmopolitanism" and "bourgeois nationalism". Today it is hard to believe but a stone master Marduch Spryšėn got 10 years of working camps (Спришен, 2008) for preserving the memory about the Holocaust. Thus, in addition to its previous status, the Pit acquired a new meaning. For decades it had become a symbol of Jew's struggle for their identity and memory.

Figure 14. Opening of the black obelisk, 1946.
Photo from a book «Выжить – подвиг. Воспоминания и документы о Минском гетто»



History of the walking shadows

Figure 14. Opening of the reconstructed Pit on July 10, 2000. Photo E. Kazjulia



After the decades of the hidden Soviet anti-Semitism, at the end of the 80s a public debate around the Holocaust memorialization finally became possible. An idea of the Pit's reconstruction appeared in this period though it faced both a lack of support and financing. So, for instance, religious Jews were against any sculptural representation of people in the Pit due to a fact that it was prohibited by the religious canon in the interiors of synagogues (Левин, 2011). Nevertheless, the process of reflection and discussion had started.

A personality that played a key role in the Pit's reconstruction was a famous Soviet architect Leanid Levin who also had been actively involved in the life of the Belarusian Jewish community. Probably, a combination of his professional authority and reputation among the Jewish population allowed implementing this project as well as many others. Being in his thirties, in 1970 Leanid Levin and his colleagues won the most prestigious Soviet award, Lenin Prize, for a project of a major memorial complex Chatyn dedicated to the civil victims of the Great Patriotic War in Belarus (Левин, 2011). Additionally, from 1991 till his death in 2014 he had led a Union of Belarusian Jewish Public Associations and Communities. As a part of a generation of so-called "*children of the war*", he saw the Holocaust commemoration as a significant mission for modern Belarus (Левин, 2012). Therefore, since the 80s Levin had developed the idea of the Pit's transformations.

The beginning of the 90s turned out to be a crucial moment in the Holocaust memorialization in Belarus. So, numerous

events were happening during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Minsk ghetto's liquidation. Among them were exhibitions, meetings, and a procession through the former ghetto with the participation of the government members, foreign representatives, and survived prisoners. In 1992 for the first time, Levin exhibited his project proposal for the Pit (Левин, 2005). A big event in a so-called Russian theater in Minsk became not only an honorable celebration of Belarusian Righteous among the Nations but also a stage for the first public discussion of his work.

It took almost ten years and much effort for implementing new design in 2000. A new dominant of the memorial became a bronze sculpture Walking to Death designed as a row of the schematic people's figures walking down to the bottom of the Pit (fig.14). For designing this sculpture Levin involved famous Elza Polak who at that moment lived in Israel being already aged and weak. Polak created the sculpture on a base of Levin's sketches in her expressive and recognizable manner. A physical model for the future memorial made by her was taken to Minsk and further developed by a Belarusian sculptor Aliaksandr Finski. While in original Levin's idea these figures were conceived as more detailed, the final sculpture represented them in quite a stylized way. Levin himself called them the "*shadows*" claiming that these twisted human silhouettes were supposed to represent that anyone could be on their place on the way to death (Левин, 2011, 2012; Рубинштейн, 2014). Today the shadows are walking down the hill along the stone stairs that lead to a large round paved area in the Pit's bottom.

According to an interview with Levin's daughter Halina, a small paved area in front of the Pit was originally covered with cobblestones that recently were replaced with simple concrete tiles. On the right side of this area, there is a granite menorah-shaped stela with a number of metal plaques (fig.15). They inform what individuals and institutions sponsored the construction of the memorial mentioning among others a fund of Belarusian president. On the left side from the sculpture, there is a narrow path with the old trees along it. Next to each tree, a metal plate with a name stays. This path serves as an alley to the Righteous among the Nations memorizing Belarusians who were saving Jews during the war (fig.16). It was built in the middle of the 90s, and considering general tendencies in Belarusian politics of memory of this time, this part of the memorial can be interpreted as a state's effort to integrate Holocaust history to Belarusian national narrative (Портнов, 2011). In fact, the creation of the alley was not authorities' but Levin's idea, and most probably represented his actual deep gratitude to those who risked their lives for saving Jews (Левин, 2012).

Thanks to a meeting with a daughter of Leonid Levin and a current leader of his architectural bureau Halina, I got a

general impression of the original design for the Pit memorial. Its physical model, which was exposed in the Russian theater in 1992, demonstrates that initially the surrounding of the black obelisk was conceived as more picturesque and irregular. The stairs leading to the bottom of the Pit were supposed to have different widths for becoming organic continuations of the slope. Additionally, the shape of the paved area in front of the obelisk, by contrast to today's symmetrical outline, was also designed irregular in a respect to the complicated landscape. Another part of the original project, the boulders chaotically lying on the slope, was not realized at all. Regarding a monument's message, as Halina Levina said, an original design also suggested an installation of the memorial stones symbolizing five major pogroms that happened in Minsk ghetto. These stones would have complemented the character of the landscape and played an informational role; besides, a stone is a symbol that represents the Jewish commemorative tradition. In addition, Levin conceived memorial signs with the names of Belarusian ghettos and numbers of victims for each of them. The last element that was not implemented in reality was a wall with autographs of the few survived ghetto prisoners.



Figure 16



Figure 15

Informal memorial, formal practices

In the early after-war years, right after the black obelisk's installation the Pit was visited and maintained by people whose relatives were shot or buried in the career. However, arrests of Jewish activists and overall anti-Semitic atmosphere in Soviet Belarus in the 50s caused that just a few people were coming there for commemorating the Holocaust victims. Being threatened by the potential consequences some of Jews preferred to avoid this place (Нордштейн, 2000). Archival photos of this time reflect that at that moment the Pit was surrounded by the wild grass and bushes, and the closest to the career structure was a small country-look-like house with a rickety fence (fig.17).

Figure 17. 1967. Photo by V. Marcyonka



Figure 18. June, 1963. Photo by T. Ananjina



Though, political regime and a situation around the Pit had been changing through the time, which at a certain point transformed Yama from a peripheral forgotten wasteland to a significant place of collective remembrance. Numerous memoirs claim that this happened in the 70s though one source points out at a particular event that changed the Pit's status. According to Michail Nordštejn, in 1975 on May 9 a group of Jewish activists organized in the Pit a major meeting dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of the victory. That day one of the event's initiators, an officer and a veteran of the Great Patriotic War Davidovič made an inspiring speech despite the presence of authorities, KGB agents and the police. His call to remember the Jews who perished in the Pit affected the community strongly, and next year several thousand people came to the meeting (Нордштейн, 2000). Such annual events, though, were still highly controlled by the police that in the early 80s started to use loudspeakers with Soviet songs nearby the Pit for blocking an opportunity for public speeches. Nevertheless, thousands of Jews were

coming to meet each other, articulate their problems and even sign petitions, which, though, were mostly ignored by the state (Спришен, 1997).

During this period the Pit could have experienced major changes, which, fortunately, did not happen. So, according to the authorities' plan, the black obelisk was supposed to be replaced with a new Soviet memorial with a reference to anonymous "peaceful citizens" (Нордштейн, 2000). Moreover, the rumors were saying that the officials had a radical idea of leveling the Pit with the ground (Левин, 2005). While the latest was an assumption, a project for a new memorial was actually designed. For protesting against this decision the same activists wrote a letter addressed personally to Belarusian leader Mašeraŭ and collected more than a thousand signatures. Although they never got an official response the project was canceled (Нордштейн, 2000). Nonetheless, Yama went through some transformations since a newly constructed nine-story residential building cut off a part of the Pit's site.



Figure 20. 21 October, 1993. Photo by Minkovič



Figure 19. 1992. Photo by Minkovič

Figure 22. Opening of the Alley to the Righteous among the Nations, 1996. Photo by V. Miazhevič



As it was mentioned, the 90s became a crucial point in the memory politics in Belarus, which, of course, affected the social practices that were happening by the memorial. Archival pictures from the 90s and the beginning of the 2000s demonstrate a rise of attention towards the Pit from the local and international authorities. For instance, in 1992 Yama was visited by Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs Shimon Peres (fig.19). The events were becoming more and more formal starting to include public speeches, laying the flowers, and bringing white-blue Israeli flags, which was unimaginable in the earlier decades (Нордштейн, 2000).

During this period thousands of people were staying by the Pit's edge, stairs, and on its bottom not only on the Victory Day but also on the anniversaries of the ghetto's liquidation in October and a legendary March pogrom. The neat cobblestones replaced thick grass; candlesticks and metal plaques with the names of Belarusian ghettos were installed by the black obelisk (fig.20). The opening of the sculpture Walking to Death became the most pompous event accompanied with the guard of honor and a speech of the president Lukašenka (fig.21).

Figure 21. Opening of the reconstructed Pit on July 10, 2000. Photo E. Kazjulia





Figure 23



Figure 24

Today, in addition to three major dates, the Pit celebrates International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January though representatives of the Jewish community admit that fewer people come to these meetings nowadays. This, probably, happens due to a massive migration of Jews that became possible after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Akopian, 2015). Official visits, obviously, still happen here: during my observation of the Pit, I found by the obelisk two large flower wreaths from a Jewish charity organization and the state of Israel (fig.23). Even though this makes the memorial site look visited and it is well maintained the everyday life of the Pit can be barely called eventful.

The field observations that were conducted by me this year in the period from 16 July to 16 August aimed to discover what practices are common nearby the Pit these days. Though, unfortunately, none of my observations happened during the public events the collected results shed a light on everyday

practices by the Holocaust memorials in Minsk, which is a poorly studied area. Thus, according to my calculation, out of 342 people who were passing by the Pit and, hence, had an opportunity to see it 29 interacted with the memorial in some way. By interaction, I mean any kind of contact including a detailed exploration of the whole memorial as well as just reading an inscription on the menorah-shaped stela, taking a look at the Pit, and even discussing it with a companion from the distance. Among those 29 only 14 went down the stairs and took a look at a whole memorial. For some of the visitors, obviously, a lack of a physical access played a role. For instance, a young mother with a stroller had to stay on the top of the Pit while her friend and their kids were exploring the black obelisk in the bottom. The same happened to two other groups of visitors: while some of their members went down others decided to wait for them on the paved area by the stairs.

Probably, the most remarkable practice noticed during my observations represents a specific kind of tourism or even a pilgrimage. During one of my sessions that took place around midday, a big group of visitors came to the Pit. It was the largest group of people I had seen there; additionally, their behavior was quite specific. Three women of different ages and two young men were walking to the memorial being followed by four children. Some of the adults were carrying the flowers and while coming closer to the stairs they started to divide them among the kids so each of them, according to a Christian Orthodox tradition, had an even number. While the main part of the group came down the stairs to the obelisk two men and a woman stayed on the paved area by the sculptural menorah and waited for the rest. Meanwhile, after laying of flowers a young woman had a chat with a couple that arrived at the memorial before them. After finishing she came back upstairs and stopped on the stairs for discussing the memorial's history with the children.

It was obvious to me that this visit was carefully planned and had a special meaning for these people, so I asked those who stayed upstairs what the purpose of their visit was. During a brief conversation, I found out that this big family arrived from a Russian city Nizhny Novgorod for spending their vacation in Belarus. Interestingly, their family trip had a very precise focus: their aim was to visit all the so-called Hero Cities and local memorials related to the Great Patriotic War. Hero City was an honorable title

that was established in the Soviet Union and given to thirteen cities that expressed "outstanding heroism" in the war including Belarusian Minsk and Brest (Smorodinskaya, 2007). In addition, in this vacation, they went to major memorial complexes Chatyn and Red Coast in other regions of the country. The family members seemed very enthusiastic and expressed deep knowledge of the subject by operating, for instance, names of the memorials' authors. By the moment of our conversation, they managed to visit all the Hero Cities except for Murmansk, Kyiv and Odesa.

Therefore, this observation gave me an impression of a very specific social practice. This large family, factually, was pilgrimaging to the places of memory about World War II. As it was clear from the behavior of adults, transferring knowledge about its events to children was one of their aims in this trip. As an older woman mentioned, they did not have any Jewish roots but they thought of the Holocaust as "*unfair*", so decided to express their respect to its victims.

Generally, visitors' behavior by the Pit allowed assuming who of them came to the memorial for a purpose and who just noticed it while walking. By indirect signs like a photo camera, a use of a navigator, a content of conversations, body language, etc. I can suppose that besides a big group of Russian tourists only 4 visitors came to the Pit specially. The rest of those who interacted with the memorial seemed to be passersby that noticed the Pit and decided to explore it.

The rest of the activities that were happening by the Pit turned out to be routine. The number of people and their activities slightly differed depending on time and a day, which is shown in the table and on the schemes. So, the most of the counted people were just passing by. In after work hours, they tended to walk rather alone than in groups and some of them were carrying the grocery bags, supposedly, coming back from work. Additionally to a destination walk, I admitted such activities as walking with a dog or a baby, cycling, and rarely jogging and riding a skateboard. All of them, though, had a transit character and did not happen exactly by the memorial.

Figure 24



Table III. Counting of the passersby nearby the Pit memorial

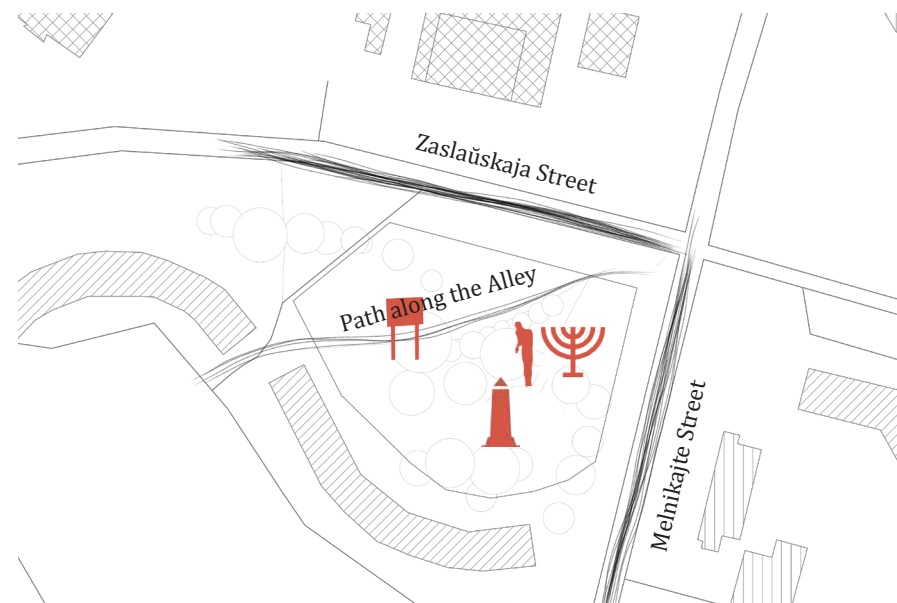
09.30-09.50, Thursday				14.35-14.50, Saturday			
women	men	children	total	women	men	children	total
Zaslauskaja Street				Zaslauskaja Street			
10	11	-	21	9	11	1	21
Melnikajte Street				Melnikajte Street			
7	7	-	14	10	5	3	18
Path along the Alley				Path along the Alley			
7	2	-	9	3	1	-	4
11.50-12.10, Wednesday*				16.30-16.50, Sunday***			
women	men	children	total	women	men	children	total
Zaslauskaja Street				Zaslauskaja Street			
4	7	-	11	15	12	-	27
Melnikajte Street				Melnikajte Street			
-	5	-	5	8	9	-	17
Path along the Alley				Path along the Alley			
-	1	-	1	3	7	3	13
12.40-13.00, Monday**				17.45-18.00, Friday****			
women	men	children	total	women	man	children	total
Zaslauskaja Street				Zaslauskaja Street			
28	16	3	47	34	6	8	48
Melnikajte Street				Melnikajte Street			
10	10	2	22	5	10	-	15
Path along the Alley				Path along the Alley			
3	8	2	13	3	4	-	7

* A couple is exploring the black obelisk reading an inscription. Another group, three women of different ages and two young men, is walking to the memorial being followed by four children. While the main part of the group comes down the stairs to the obelisk two men and a woman stay on the paved area by the sculptural menorah.

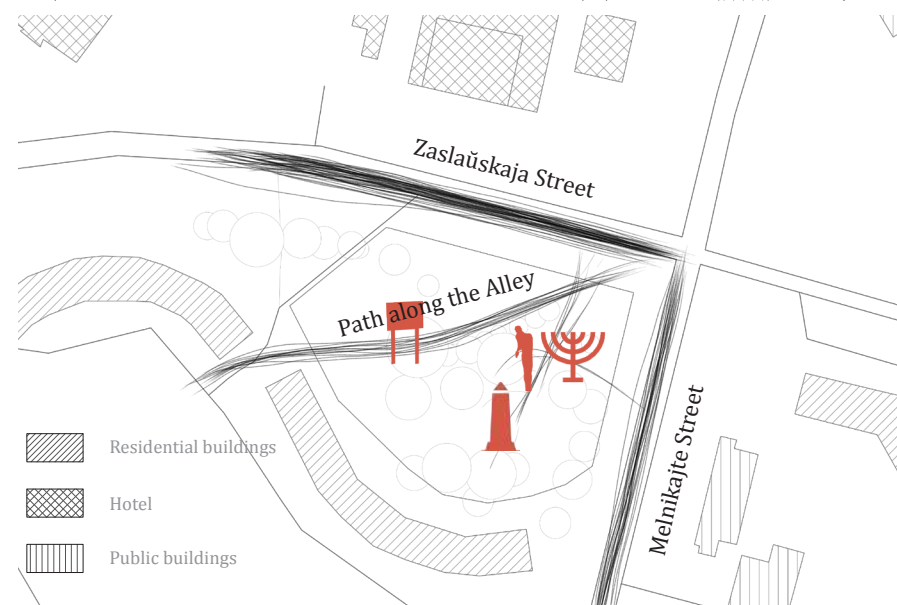
** A man stops by the memorial, walks around smoking. He is holding a car key. Probably, he is just waiting for someone by his parked car and decided. Two girls come to the memorial; they take a look at the memorial but do not come down. Two women with four kids are coming. The one with a stroller stays on the paved area in front of it, the rest of them are going down.

*** A man is reading an inscription on one of the plaques in the alley. He goes down and reads an inscription on the obelisk. He comes back up using small stairs on the right side right from the obelisk. Two women are coming; one of them is going down, another one stays by the stairs. The first one reads an inscription on the obelisk and takes photos.

**** People are mostly walking alone, transit function dominates. Some of them are carrying the grocery bags.



Scheme I. Tracing of the passersby routes nearby the Pit memorial. July 21, 2018. Saturday, 14.35-14.50



Scheme II. Tracing of the passersby routes nearby the Pit memorial. July 23, 2018. Monday, 12.40-13.00

History of the Broken Hearth

Figure 25. An entrance to a Jewish cemetery in Minsk ghetto, 1946. Photo from a book «Выжить – подвиг. Воспоминания и документы о Минском гетто»



Although the first memorial stones to the Holocaust victims appeared in a former Jewish cemetery in the 90s a brief introduction into its earlier history is needed. Known as the “third” Jewish cemetery, it was established in 1868. According to different sources, it was working as a graveyard until being closed in 1946 or 1951 under the veil of a lack of space for new burial places (Воложинский, 2015). Although these days the former Jewish cemetery serves as a city park, during Minsk’s occupation it used to be a graveyard inside the ghetto. More specifically, it was situated on its southeastern periphery, next to *zonderghetto* – a district where Jews deported from Europe lived. Since the first group of European prisoners arrived from Hamburg, they were informally called “*Hamburg Jews*” even though later transport brought people from other German cities as well as from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and the Netherlands (Ботвинник, 2000). This part of Minsk ghetto was surrounded by a fence and even had its own rule that barely contacted with Judenrat. In addition, “*Hamburg Jews*” were treated as high-qualified workers and, hence, had some privileges both in terms of provision and safety, at least in the beginning of the occupation period

(Смоляр, 2002). It is important to remind that this cemetery was used for burying the victims of pogroms that happened in Minsk ghetto. All these circumstances to a high degree determined a current appearance of the today’s memorial park.

It is not known much about this place in the period between 1944 and the 90s, which may be partly caused by anti-Semitic and atheistic politics of the Soviet Union. Mostly the cemetery is mentioned in regard to a special commission that investigated Nazis crimes after Minsk’s liberation in 1944. According to the reports developed by the Extraordinary State Commission for Ascertaining and Investigating Crimes Perpetrated by German-Fascist Invaders and Their Collaborators, 5,670 people were killed here between 1941 and 1943 (Адамушко, Герасимова, Селеменев, 2010). The next stage in the history of this place had started in the 70s when the cemetery was completely demolished (Козак, 2012). The Soviet authorities made a decision about establishing a city park instead of the cemetery, which was quite a common practice in relation to old graveyards (Медведь, 2012). A football field and opened stage replaced tombstones that, probably, were even used for a construction of new structures (Козак, 2012).

As in a case of the Pit, the 90s opened a new page in the commemoration of those who were murdered and buried here. It has started in 1993 with an installation of a memorial stone to Hamburg Jews that were deported to Belarus. According to an inscription on this stone stela made in Belarusian and German, more than 1350 Jews were transferred to Minsk ghetto and only 8 of them survived. This stone was designed by an architect Michail Hauchfeld and became a starting point in remembrance of the foreign Jews perished in Belarus. Today nine memorial stones shape a round square forming the Pantheon of Memory (fig.27). Its round shape symbolizes a circular yellow sign that Jews in Minsk ghetto were obliged to wear on their clothes (Левин, 2011). In

addition to the victims from Hamburg, the stones commemorate Jews deported from Dusseldorf (October, 1998), Bremen (February, 2002), Cologne and Bonn (October, 2008), Berlin (June, 2009), Austrian cities (September, 2009), Frankfurt am Main (March, 2012), Königsberg and East Prussia (June, 2015), and Czech Brno (November, 2015). Noticeably, the erection of these stelas was initiated and supported by numerous actors including municipalities of the abovementioned cities, embassies of Germany and Israel, international organizations, Union of Belarusian Jewish Public Associations and Communities, Minsk Municipality, etc. Additionally, an architect Leonid Levin had been involved in the design of the Pantheon of Memory.



Figure 26. A memorial stone to the Jews deported from Bremen

Figure 27





Figure 28



Figure 29

Another significant part of the memorial park is a number of old Jewish tombstones placed on the grass next to the Pantheon of Memory (fig.29). According to the local witnesses, they keep appearing on the ground around the neighborhood, especially after the rains, continuously changing the landscape (Бордовская, 2015; Воложинский, 2015). The first large series of the stones appeared here in 2007, after being found by workers during the construction of a new pipeline along the southeastern edge of the park (Воложинский, 2015). Nowadays builders still find the stones during the construction works, as it happened in May 2018. So, during the demolition of an old building in the city center, they discovered that its foundation was made of Jewish tombstones with inscriptions in Hebrew. According to the agreement with the Jewish Museum in Minsk, all the findings were transferred to the area by the memorial where the museum staff had to examine them and make a decision regarding their preservation. In the idea of the museum's head Vadzim Akapian, founded stones in the future should be arranged in a lapidarium, a special wall with installed and exposed tombstones. For the realization of this idea, though, today there is no funding (Кохно, 2018).

Finally, the last part of the memorial on a former Jewish cemetery became a sculpture Broken Hearth installed in

2008 (fig.28). Like the newest part of the Pit, it was designed by Leanid Levin, this time in a collaboration with a sculptor Maksim Piatrul (Левин, 2011). As the main metaphor Levin used an image of a destroyed family house represented by a Vienna chair and a cracked round table with bent legs. As Levin mentioned in the interviews, he aimed to create a philosophical, non-literal illustration to the grief avoiding common for the Soviet memorialization military symbols or "violence". *"The memorial is very simple but causes an enormous emotional impact"* (Левин, 2011, 2012). An additional effect was achieved by a careful attention to the landscape, in particular, an old picturesque tree that was an onlooker of the sad events memorized by the sculpture (Голевой, 2008). An inscription on a red square granite podium in Belarusian, Russian, Hebrew, and English says "At this place in 1941-1943 more than 5,000 of Jews were exterminated by fascists and their collaborators. Eternal memory to the innocent victims of Nazism". Additionally, this podium reminds of a house's foundation (Голевой, 2008). As it was highlighted by Levin and his daughter Halina, this part of the memorial was fully funded by the Minsk Municipality (Левин, 2011). An original initiator of the project, though, was Levin himself with a group of Minsk ghetto prisoners.

Social practices, not-such-a-social place



Figure 32. Summer stage in 2007.
Photo by V. Valožynski

Due to a lack of the sources, it is not known much about the past of Jewish cemetery and, in particular, social practices that had happened there. One of the web sources claims that in after war years Soviet authorities were preventing Jews from coming to the cemetery and taking care of their relatives' graves. Few years after the Jewish cemetery was closed, which caused its deterioration. The park that appeared here in the 70s was designed with a football field and a summer stage; therefore, it provided with an infrastructure for leisure to inhabitants of the nearest neighborhoods. Repeating each other, websites state that in 1990 the territory of the cemetery was "*leveled with the ground*", which is controversial since a foundation of the old opened scene can be found on the photos from 2007 (Воложинский, 2007). Anyway, although the information about the former Jewish cemetery is fragmented this research was focused on social practices related to the memorial, hence, those that have taken place from the 90s.

Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 33. Opening of the Broken Hearth, 2008

As it was mentioned, the first memorial stone to Hamburg Jews was installed in the park in 1993. Most probably, at that moment old Soviet facilities were in quite a poor state. At least, they definitely were decaying several years after in the 2000s, which is obvious from the photos made in this period (fig. 32). Additionally, some memoirs confirm a lack of the park's maintenance by claiming that it had always been dark and the grass was not cut (Петрова, 2015). In the 2000s, ancient Jewish tombstones started to appear on the ground surface. According to the memories of a young Belarusian writer Siarhej Kalenda, young people used to seat on these stones for watching the football games on a sports ground. Besides, the teenagers used the park for other activities like gathering, lighting the fires, drinking, and even having sex (Петрова, 2015). Starting from 2007 all the found tombstones have been transferring

to the hill, next to the Pantheon of Memory. Today new stones continue arriving and disappearing: while at the beginning of my field observations I found several dozens of broken gravestones, in one month on their place there were only two (fig. 30-31).

In 2003 Minsk Municipality stated that among other green areas in the city this park should be reconstructed in the period between 2004 and 2008. It is impossible to conclude without a further research whether this decision was caused by the continuous installation of the memorial stones or not. Was it an aspiration to create a more appropriate environment for a place of commemoration or to make a good impression on foreign officials that were opening the stones? For sure, this might be just a planned reconstruction. Regardless, in this period the park radically changed its appearance and status.

Doubtlessly, the erected memorials affected social practices around; though, most probably, they provoked rather occasional activities than a change in the everyday use of the park. In addition to the ceremonies of each stone's installation, other events happen by the Pantheon of Memory. For instance, in 2017 Jewish Religious Community organized a meeting dedicated to the International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January. Considering that the Pit has always gathered people for such occasions, the memorial on the former cemetery may have a good potential for providing with alternative, more intimate space for commemorative events. Besides, this proves that the place can serve not exclusively for international formal delegations but the local groups and their needs.



Figure 34

Regarding routine social practices, seven field observations demonstrated that different parts of the memorial do not affect them significantly. Among the most common activities in the triangular area around the memorial, I distinguished transit walking and various recreational practices that did not involve interaction with the memorial. In the recreational practices I included walking around a park, sitting on park benches alone or in a small group, walking a dog, walking with a stroller or with older children. Additionally, less frequently people were smoking, reading or checking their cellphones on the benches, playing with their kids, cycling. As the schemes show, visitors' activities and a number of people in the park differed depending on time and day, sometimes significantly. So, for instance, around lunchtime, I saw two groups of people who met their acquaintances, greeted them and had a quick chat. Most probably, these people were co-workers who were having a walk during their lunch breaks. It was the only moment when this type of activities was noticed.

Among practices that involved interaction with the memorial, I can distinguish taking a look at the memorial stones of the Pantheon of Memory or reading the inscriptions on them. Surprisingly, all the contacts with the sculpture Broken Hearth were initiated by children. During my observations I

saw twice how they made their parents to come closer to the sculpture for walking on its base, playing around or touching it (fig.34). This was also confirmed by Halina Levina who mentioned children's active attention towards the memorial during the interview. Therefore, among the 130 people who were passing by the memorial 12 interacted with it. 3 of them were children who were followed by 3 adults; only one man read an inscription on the stone stelae and carefully explored them. The rest 5 just quickly looked at the Pantheon of Memory while passing by.

According to several official decisions of the Minsk Municipality, different private institutions were planning to develop a detailed plan for a site where the Jewish cemetery was situated. As my search showed, this happened at least twice in 2005 and 2006. Being concerned about the future of the burials the Jewish community addressed a letter to a responsible firm. It is not known if their protest or other factors played a key role but nothing was built in the area yet. Despite this fact, today a large part of the park is surrounded by a fence and looks like it is currently under the construction. The search on the satellite maps confirmed this. Certainly, these may be works related to underground engineering or landscaping, and public land will not be appropriated by the private actors. Even in this case, though, Jewish graves still may be in a risk of destruction.

Table IV. Counting of the passersby in the memorial park

08.50-09.10, Thursday*				14.00-14.20, Saturday****			
women	men	children	total	women	men	children	total
A				A			
1	2	1	4	2	1	-	3
B				B			
1	-	-	1	1	1	-	2
C				C			
6	3	-	9	2	3	-	5
11.20-11.40, Wednesday**				17.05-17.25, Sunday			
women	men	children	total	women	men	children	total
A				A			
4	10	1	15	3	2	-	5
B				B			
5	2	-	7	-	-	-	-
C				C			
7	10	1	18	2	2	-	4
12.05-12.25, Monday***				18.05-18.20, Friday*****			
women	men	children	total	women	man	children	total
A				A			
8	3	4	15	1	5	3	9
B				B			
4	1	2	7	-	-	-	-
C				C			
7	11	1	19	1	-	-	1

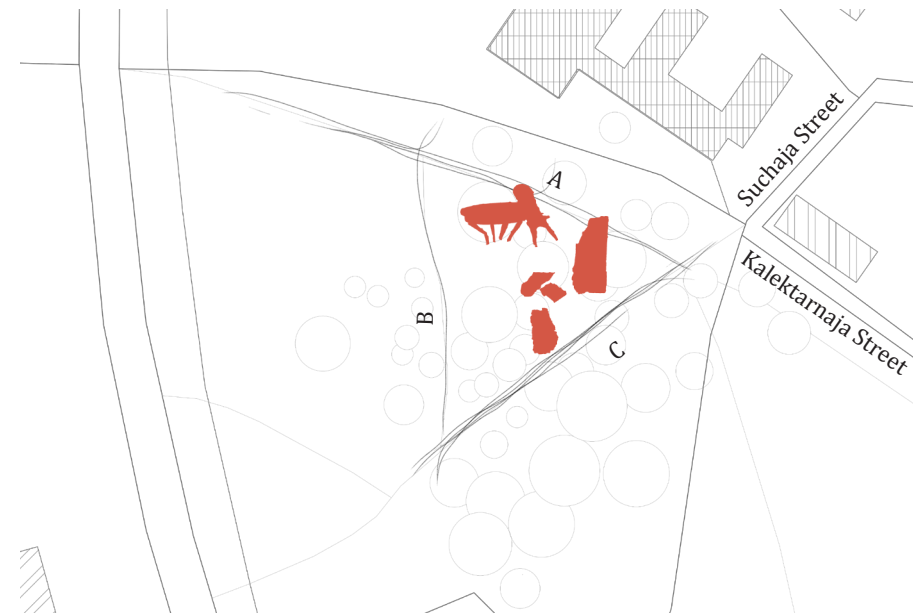
* Two municipal park caretakers are working around the studied site.

** Two women take a look at the stones. A man around 60-years old reads an inscription on the stones and properly explores them.

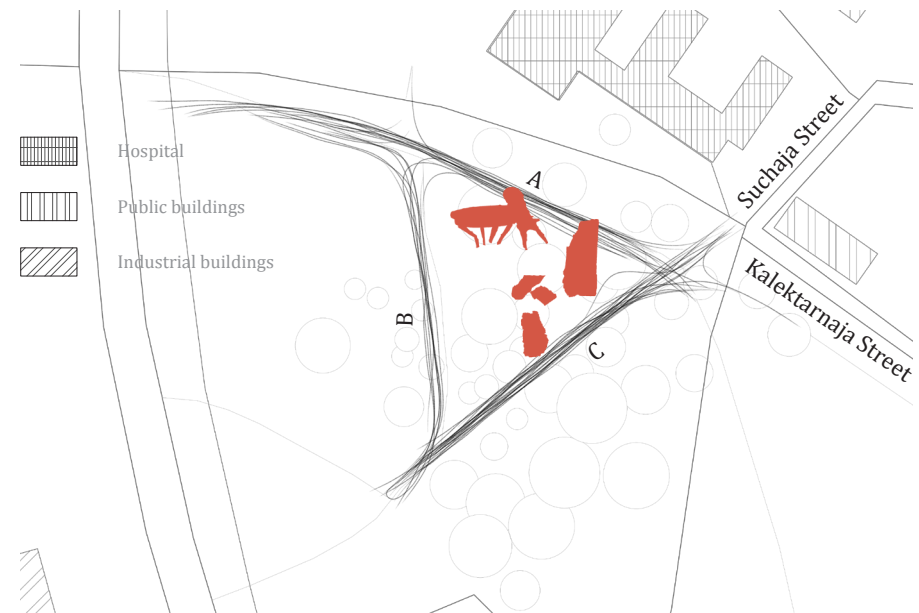
*** Men are sitting on benches by one or in a group of two. A mother helps her little son to urinate under the tree in front of the Broken Hearth. Two groups consist of a mother, a grandmother and two children. Two women are looking at the stones while passing by. People are meeting and greeting each other, probably, while having a lunch break and meeting the colleagues.

**** A homeless man is peeing by the trashcan in front of the Broken Hearth.

***** A family with two kids interacts with the Broken Hearth sculpture. Seems like children initiated this interaction being attracted by a shape of the memorial.



Scheme III. Tracing of the passersby routes in the memorial park. July 21, 2018. Saturday, 14.00-14.20



Scheme III. Tracing of the passersby routes in the memorial park. August 8, 2018, Wednesday, 11.20-11.40

V

Discussion



July 3, 1993. Photo by M. Minković

Discussion

Coming back to my original research questions, I can state that all of them were answered to a certain degree. Due to the time limitations of my thesis project, I was not able to perform a full review of the archival documents. Their detailed analysis could have discovered additional details about the decision-making process regarding the memorials' installation and the process of their design. Such a work, though, would require weeks or even months and could be appropriate for a doctoral thesis. Also, an amount of direct observations was not enough for making informed conclusions about the patterns of the social practices around the memorials. My research, though, can serve as a base for making some starting hypothesis for the further studies in this area. Therefore, even though a narrative about the studied memorials is still not full, this research summarizes the information regarding their history, design and a social role comprehensively, which was not done before. Such a summary can contribute significantly to the further studies on the Holocaust memorials in Belarus.

Discourse

Although generally public's perception of the Great Patriotic War in Belarus is considered as homogeneous (Ластовский, 2009), the memory about the Holocaust is less solid than one could expect. So, both of the studied memorials have experienced the attacks of neo-Nazi organizations. During their actions, vandals covered the memorials with paint and left a note with threats by the Pit. A researcher Leanid Smilavitsky also claims that Jewish cemeteries and synagogues around the country had been regularly attacked by vandals during the 90s (Smilovitsky, 2007). Thus, alternative attitudes towards the Holocaust exist in Belarus.

Additionally, a visible solidity of the war discourse in a case of Belarus may signal rather about its selective character than a social agreement regarding it. As it was mentioned, official discourse does not support an inclusion of certain aspects of the war like, for example, a collaboration of Belarusians with Nazis. In turn, within the Holocaust subject, there are other lacunas. One of them, according to Andrej Katliarčuk, is an extermination of the Roma minority during the Holocaust. Knowledge about this aspect of the Holocaust in Belarus is

fragmented and commemoration of the Roma victims is represented by only three memorials that mention this ethnic group (Kotljarchuk, 2013). Therefore, existing Holocaust memorials narrate only about a part of its history. This narrative can be complemented by new memorials that commemorate other groups of victims or provide with a new perspective on the familiar events.

Power

A question of power, in other words, who has conceived the commemorative spaces, was one of the crucial in this research. As this study demonstrated, the Belarusian government was involved in both the reconstruction of the Pit and an installation of the memorial in the Jewish cemetery. However, not the government but the Jewish community initiated their erection; additionally, a personal role of Leanid Levin is noticeable. So, other places of commemoration to the Holocaust victims installed in the latest years in Minsk were also designed by Levin's studio. The first of them is a monument to the ghetto victims in the city center that appeared in 2009 (Байніцкі, 2017). Another one is a large

memorial complex in the suburbs that was designed on a place of a former concentration camp Trasčianeč and opened in June 2018 (Касперович, 2018). Since almost all the existing Holocaust memorials in Minsk are linked to Levin's personality, it is hard to assume how the Holocaust memorialization will be developing after his death.

Regarding the changes in the design of the studied memorials, the research demonstrated that they have always been connected to the changes in the politics of memory. For instance, an erection of the black obelisk was a typical example of bottom-up memorialization in after-war years that took place in Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia (Young, 1994). In turn, a demolition of the Jewish cemetery and establishing the park on its place was also not a unique practice (Медведь, 2012). Therefore, new objects in the studied memorial sites have not been random but represented a certain tendencies in the politics of memory. Recognizing the uniqueness of each case, though, can allow capturing what makes a certain memorial an influential place of commemoration and another one a silent stone.

**Очень внимательно
перечитала новости об
открытии мемориала в
Тростенце на доступных
сайтах.
Ни слова о евреях. Почему?!**

Figure 35

Design and message

However, drawing any principal conclusions regarding the tendencies in the memorials' design itself is quite problematic, at least due to a small number of the contemporary Holocaust memorials in Belarus. Besides, considering that numerous memorials to the Holocaust victims in Belarus were designed by one author, Leanid Levin, it is rather possible to follow the evolution of his personal style than a contemporary national tradition of

memorialization. Nevertheless, a sculptor Vajnicky attempts to do this by claiming that figurativeness is commonly used in the Holocaust memorials of the recent years. According to him, such a tool can be suitable and expressive for small-scale monuments but does not allow a full use of the larger spaces' potential (Вайніцкі, 2017). On a basis of my research, though, it is impossible to distinguish such a tendency since it included the analysis of only two places of memorialization.

It is worth mentioning that both memorials specify the Jews as a commemorated group, which sharply contrasts the Soviet era when this was impossible. Additionally, the Broken Hearth mentions Nazi collaborators shedding a light on an issue that is usually not articulated by media, scholars or politicians. The Pantheon of Memory is quite unique in this regard, due to a fact that it commemorates European Jews including Belarus into the European memory context after the decades of the Soviet isolation. Though, a fact that Jews are not mentioned in regard to the Second World War in Belarus is still topical. So, an organizer of the guided tours around Jewish places of Belarus Sviatlana Berger reacted on the opening of the memorial in the former concentration camp on her Facebook page. Her post said "I very carefully reread the news about the opening of the memorial in Trasčianeč on the available websites. Not a word about Jews. Why?" (fig.35).

Additionally, the research mentioned what messages Leanid Levin attempted to express through the design of his

memorials. This study can serve as a base for further research with a focus on the public's perception of these messages. So far, though, some preliminary assumptions are possible. Firstly, media review demonstrated that there is certain confusion regarding a function of a sand career on a place of the Pit memorial. So, the sculpture Walking to Death is interpreted by some sources as a representation of historical events during which Jews were descending into the Pit for being shot and buried there (Cohen, 2017). As an introduction to the Pit's history demonstrated, it is not exactly true; the victims were murdered all over the ghetto and only several hundreds of them were buried in the Pit. Was this inaccurate interpretation caused by a shape and a position of the sculpture? Are these walking figures perceived by the public too literally?

Secondly, the direct observations allowed discovering a few unexpected practices that were taking place around the Broken Hearth memorial. As it was pointed out, two groups of children were playing on the memorial's foundation. Additionally, a young mother was helping her little son to urinate under the tree right in front of the sculpture. Besides, an adult who looked like homeless was urinating almost in the same place the other day. Of course, I am not equating these practices but all of them are quite noticeable. Did these people think that their behavior was appropriate for a memorials site or simply were not aware of the sculpture's role? If the latest is right, was an author's metaphor too indirect? Regardless, for answering such

questions further investigation is needed.

This research also discovered that the roles of the studied memorials are quite different. Although a meaning of the memorial for a certain group is subjective, even on a stage of literature and media review the importance of the Pit became obvious. Yama appeared in the movies, on the books' covers, in the memoirs of the ghetto prisoners. While almost every publication about the Holocaust in Minsk referred to the Pit, a search of information regarding the other memorial was much more challenging. The direct observations also confirmed this hypothesis. So, a number of people around the Pit was approximately 2.5 times larger than around the studied area in the former cemetery. Besides, several individual visitors and groups came to the Pit for a purpose, whereas no one came specially to the Pantheon of Memory or the Broken Hearth.

This difference can be caused by numerous reasons including the memorials' location within the city fabric. It is obvious to me, though, the main distinction of the Pit is its symbolical meaning for the Jewish community. The history of the memorial formed the myths that, in turn, have constructed a famous place of memorialization. The place where thousands of Jews died. The place where the community installed the first obelisk to them. The place where the first massive meeting happened. The Pit, for sure, can serve as an example to the Lefebvrian triad; physical and discursive spaces in connection with social practices constructed this significant space known to everyone as Yama.

Implications

This research did not seek to make practical implications regarding memorials design on a basis of two analyzed cases. Nonetheless, its findings allow drawing several conclusions that can be applied specifically to Belarusian context or to other cases. These conclusions problematize a lack of information about the memorials and an access to them as well as a deficit of participatory practices in the design of the memorials.

One of the biggest challenges in this research was a lack of information or a limited access to it. For example, a heritage of Leanid Levin has still not being transferred to the city archives. Therefore, a personal visit to his studio is the only way to see the original projects of the memorials he designed. Unfortunately, such significant materials are not available for the public and, moreover, even for photographing. Making these projects available would contribute significantly to the work of researchers and architects and, hence, the memory of the Holocaust.

Additionally, as the direct observations demonstrated, the Pit memorial site does not provide with a physical access to the groups with special needs. Its natural landscape sharply contrasts with the surrounding urban environment, which

makes the memorial recognizable and expressive. In fact, this feature of the Pit can serve as an example of what Yilmaz calls “detachment” (Yilmaz, 2010). At the same time, though, “detachment” prevents visitors from going down the Pit and exploring it. Additionally, review of the visual materials confirmed that the Pit have been often visited by the elderly, thus, safe and comfortable conditions for different groups are absolutely necessary. Regarding the memorial on the former cemetery, problems of the physical access are not that obvious there. Though, an entrance to the memorial park is not equipped with a ramp making this place of memorialization not fully inclusive as well.

Finally, the study revealed that public participation in the memorial’s funding, approval, design, maintenance, etc. significantly increases its further impact. In a case of the Pit, such an involvement was caused by a lack of resources, anti-Semitic politics, and other mostly negative factors. It seems possible, though, to increase public engagement today for creating more diverse and meaningful places of memorialization. For sure, this requires new policies that would regulate the procedure of the memorial design with an involvement of the state, spatial experts and civil society.

Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank the Swedish Institute that made my study at Urbanism Studies Master’s Program possible by providing me with Visby scholarship. Also, I highly appreciate the help of Ax:son Johnson Foundation that allowed me to develop this research in a bigger volume and have a productive and absolutely necessary trip to Minsk. Additionally, I want to express my gratitude to my academic supervisor professor Tigran Haas for his enthusiastic support and a level of freedom he was giving me as well as professor Karen A. Franck for her valuable advice regarding my work’s structure and development. It is worth mentioning, that without the kind support of the staff of Belarusian archives, libraries and museums this research would be impossible. Especially I would like to distinguish a director of the Museum of Jewish History and Culture in Minsk Vadzim Akapian, an international researcher Leanid Smilavicky whom I was lucky to meet and Halina Levina who significantly enriched my understanding of the studied subject. Finally, I would love to thank my friends and family who have always been supportive and understanding, and my parents for teaching me that education and respect to people’s otherness are great values.

Я бы искренне хотела поблагодарить Шведский Институт, который выделил мне стипендию Visby для обучения на Магистерской программе по урбанистике. Также я высоко ценю помощь фонда Ax:son Johnson, которая позволила мне увеличить объем моего исследования и осуществить продуктивную и совершенно необходимую поездку в Минск. Я также хочу выразить благодарность своему научному руководителю Тиграну Хаасу за его воодушевление, поддержку и уровень свободы, который он мне предоставлял, и профессору Карен Франк за ее ценные советы по структуре и ведению моего исследования. Стоит отметить, что без поддержки и отзывчивости сотрудников белорусских архивов, библиотек и музеев, это исследование было бы невозможно. В особенности я бы хотела выделить директора музея истории и культуры евреев Беларуси Вадима Акопяна, международного исследователя Леонида Смиловицкого, которого мне посчастливилось встретить, и Галину Левину, которая чрезвычайно обогатила мое понимание исследуемой темы. Наконец, я хотела бы поблагодарить своих друзей и семью, которые всегда поддерживали меня, и моих родителей за то, что научили меня понимать ценность образования и уважению к «инаковости».

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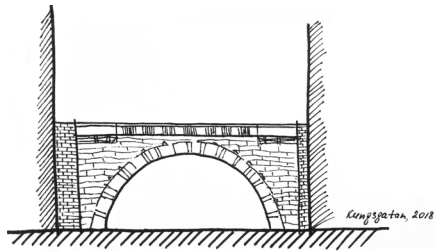
Открыт памятник бременским евреям, <http://bdg.by/news/news.htm%3F35191%2C1> (last access October 7, 2018)

При сносе оказалось, что фундамент минского здания был сложен из еврейских могильных плит, <https://www.the-village.me/village/city/news-city/268147-fundament-iz-mogilnyh-plit> (last access October 5, 2018)

Что сделают с еврейскими могильными плитами, найденными при стройке в Минске, <https://www.the-village.me/village/city/news-city/268195-chto-s-mogilnymi-plitami> (last access October 5, 2018)



Bridge



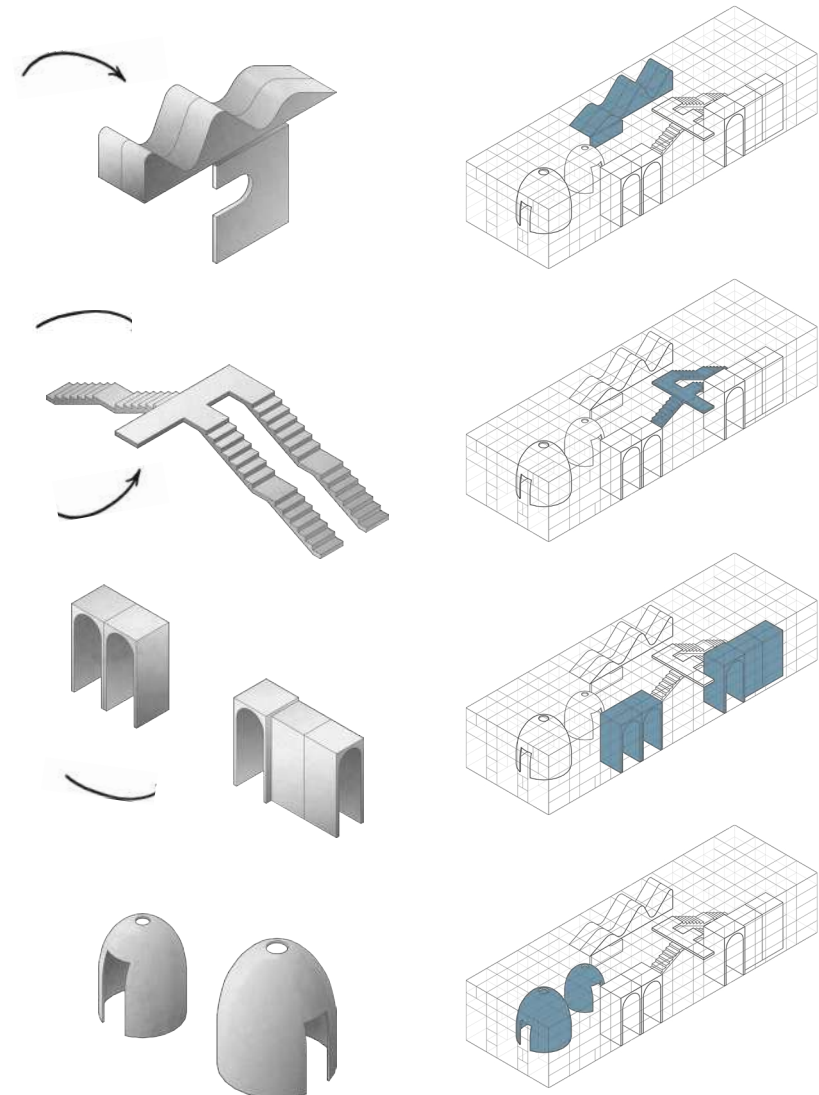
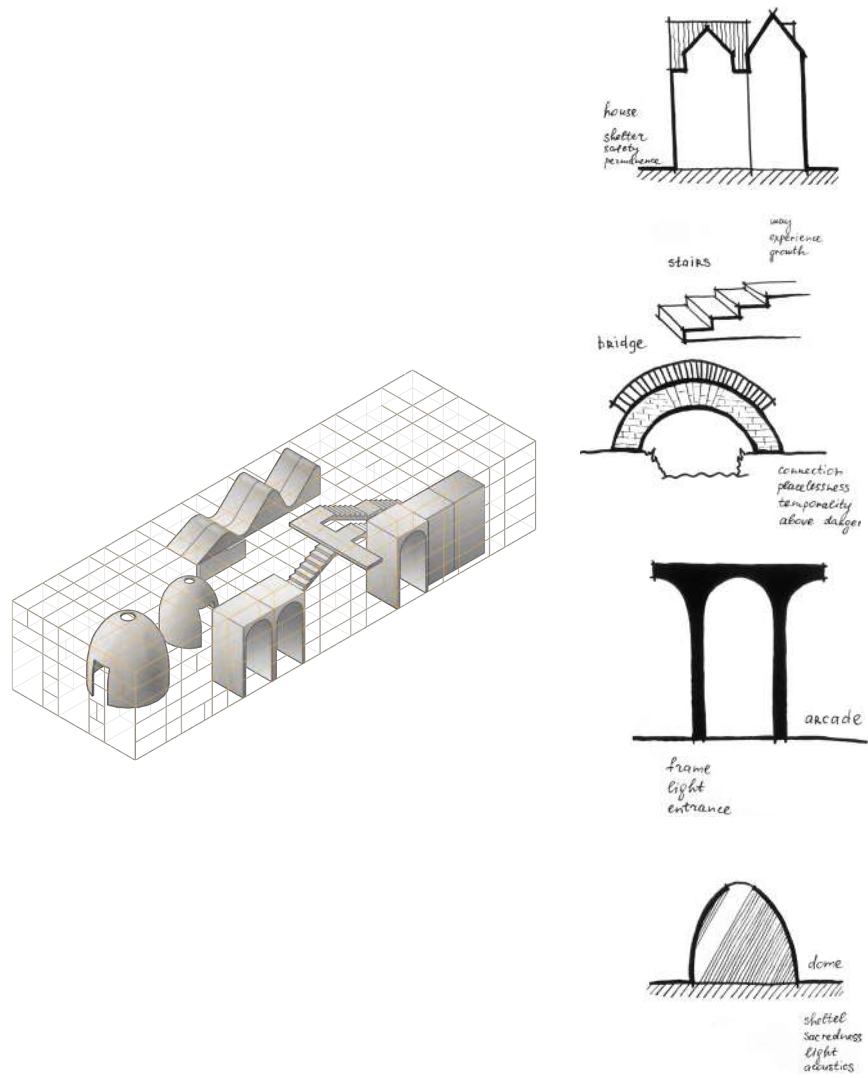
An original idea for my thesis project was designing the Holocaust memorial in Stockholm where I was doing my Master's program. Though, the correspondence with the local Jewish organizations did not demonstrate any current demand in such a project. Since I did not find an actual opportunity to design a place of commemoration in Stockholm I decided to participate in an international competition Creative Conscience with my proposal. The competition provided with both its limitation and more freedom in comparison with a realistic design proposal. Therefore, as a part of my thesis project I developed a proposal for public space intervention called Bridge. This project was shortlisted and published on the website as outstanding.

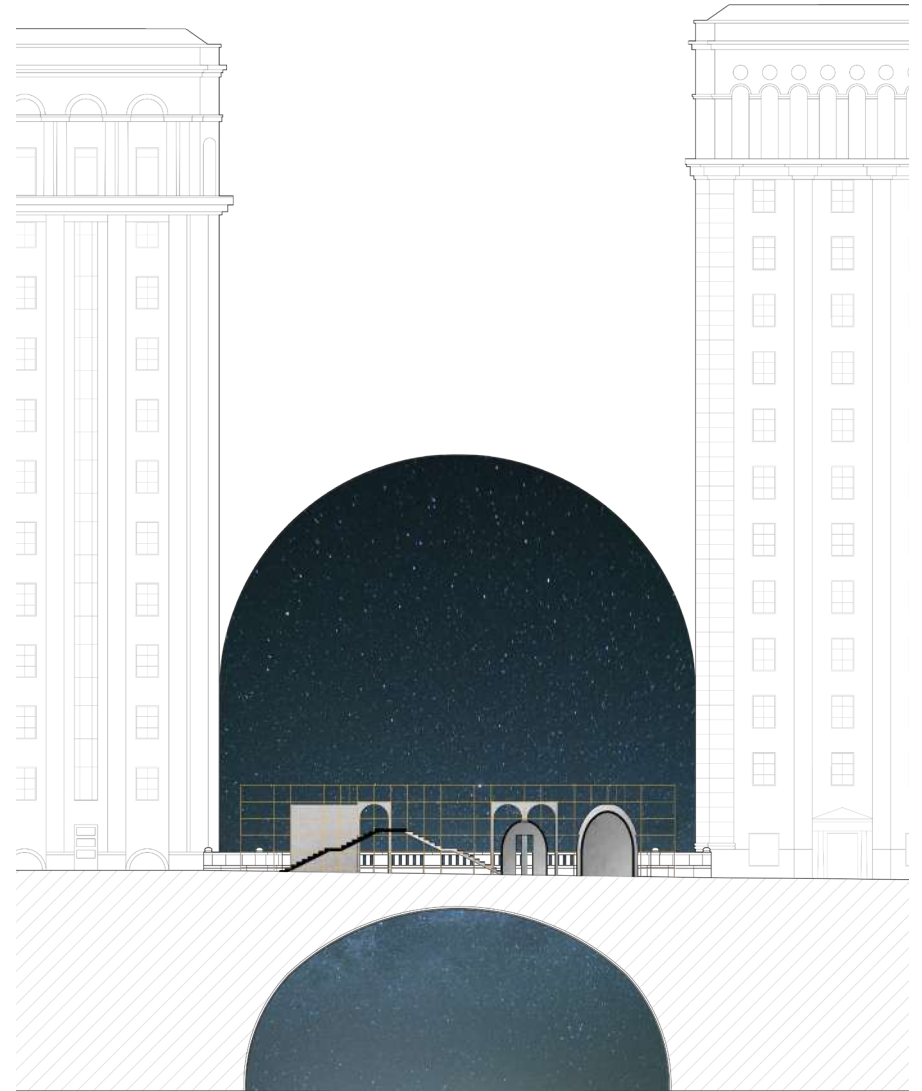
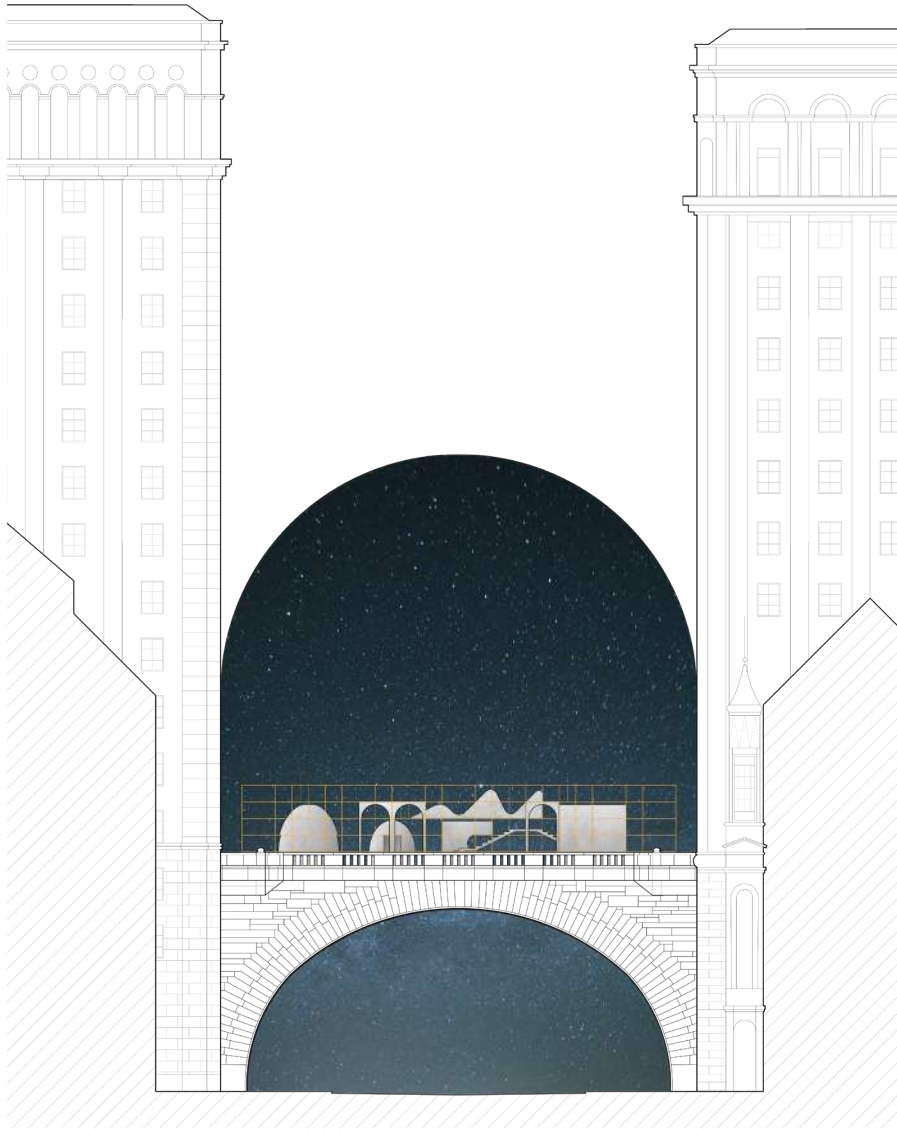
As I mentioned in the introduction, one of my aims in this research was an

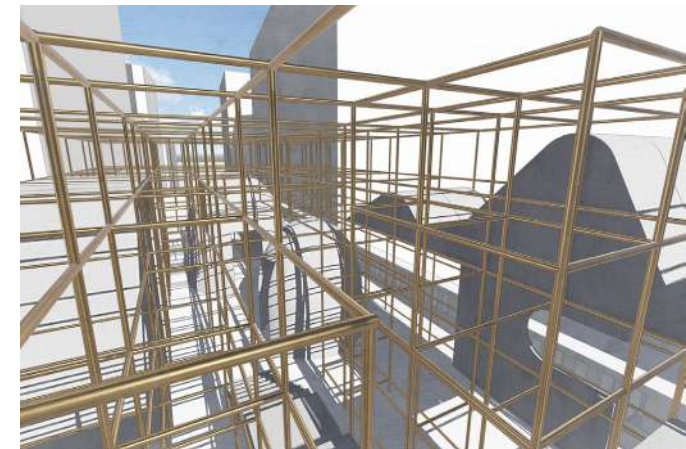
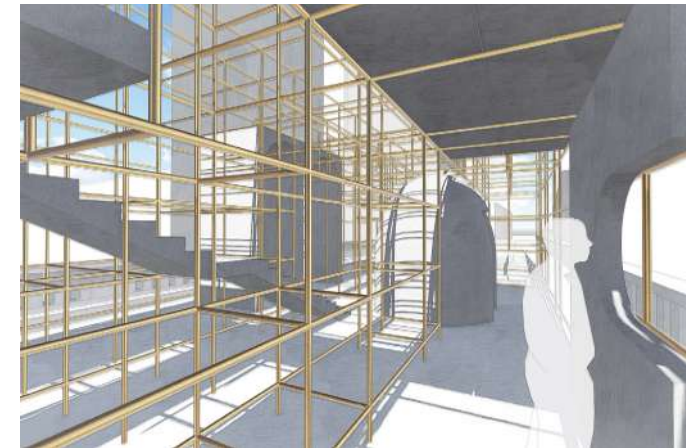
application of the knowledge about the Holocaust and its memorialization to the contemporary challenges of massive migration and displacement, in a word, homelessness. As a KTH professor Mieke Schalk once admitted in our conversation, numerous Holocaust memorials commemorate the Jews who perished but none memorizes the struggles of those who survived. This idea does not mean that commemoration of the dead does not matter; it just suggests the variety of perspectives on a variety of experiences. The Bridge proposes to reflect on an experience of those who seek a new home, which is a dangerous and challenging transition.

Bridge project questioned traditional ways of memorialization by addressing the current issues, combining a place of memory with transit public space, and working on the edge between urban design and public art. A metal frame placed on the bridge between iconic towers in Stockholm city center is filled with archetypal shapes that together form a unique spatial experience for those who want to cross a bridge. A passer through who happens to walk here should enter this transparent but chaotic construction and find his or her own exit through narrow paths, stairs, whimsically connected closed and opened spaces. Confusion, isolation, and disorientation are, probably, common feelings among those who are on their way to a new home. This urban intervention was conceived as a physical metaphor for homelessness. It was designed for drawing public attention to a specific issue, and bridging the emotional and discursive gap between traumatic past and challenging present.









Interview questions

Вопросы, связанные с личностью интервьюируемого/интервьюируемой:
Questions related to the personality of the interviewed person:

1. Представьте, кратко объяснив, какова Ваша роль в сохранении памяти о жертвах Холокоста в Беларуси.
1. Introduce yourself and briefly explain your role in the preservation of memory about the Holocaust in Belarus.

Вопросы, относящиеся к истории и дизайну мемориалов:
Questions related to the history and design of the memorials:

1. Кому принадлежит идея установки мемориала?
1. Whose idea was an installation of the memorial?
2. Кто участвовал в разработке и финансировании мемориала? Как происходило взаимодействие между акторами процесса?
2. Who participated in developing and funding the memorial? How was the collaboration between different actors going?
3. Какова роль частных инициатив, государства, еврейской общины, иностранных организаций и т.п. в создании мемориала?
3. What was the role of private initiatives, the state, the Jewish community, foreign organizations, etc. in creating the memorial?

Вопросы, относящиеся к дизайну и идее мемориалов:
Questions related to the design and idea of the memorial:

1. Почему был выбран именно этот участок для установки мемориала?
1. What was the rationale for choosing this site for the memorial's installation?
2. Какие аспекты Холокоста планировалось отразить в мемориале?
2. What aspects of the Holocaust were planned to reflect in the memorial?
3. В чем вы видите миссию мемориала?
3. How do you see the mission of the memorial?
4. Какие образы были выбраны для мемориала? Почему именно они?
4. What metaphors were chosen for the memorial? Why them?
5. Какими выразительными средствами автор пытался сконструировать выбранные образы? Считаете ли Вы выбранные средства успешными?
5. What were the tools used by the author for expressing the chosen images? Do you think he succeeded?
6. Чем отличается сегодняшний внешний вид мемориала от изначально задуманного? Почему произошли эти изменения?
6. How is today's appearance of the memorial different from the originally conceived? Why did these changes happen?
7. Кому посвящен мемориал? Почему выбрана именно эта группа жертв?
7. Whom does the memorial commemorate? Why was this group of victims chosen?

Вопросы, относящиеся к использованию мемориалов и общественной реакции на них:
Questions related to the use of the memorials and public reaction to them:

1. Какое значение имеют эти мемориалы для Вас и еврейского сообщества Минска? Почему?
1. What is the meaning of the memorial for you and the Jewish community?
2. Как используются мемориалы в настоящее время? Кем инициированы мероприятия, проходящие у мемориалов?
2. How is the memorial used today? Who does initiate the events that take place by the memorial?
3. Есть ли общественная реакция на мемориалы (их дизайн, сам факт присутствия в городском пространстве)? Если есть, то какая?
3. Is there any public reaction on the memorial (its design, the fact of its existence)? If so, what is the reaction?
4. Есть ли планы по установке новых мемориалов жертвам Холокоста в Минске и Беларуси? Кем они инициированы?
4. Are there any plans regarding the installation of the new memorials to the Holocaust victims? Who does initiate them?

Decisions of Minsk Municipality

Учитывая необходимость наращивания площадей зеленых насаждений общего пользования и в целях комплексного благоустройства объектов зеленого хозяйства г. Минска Минский городской исполнительный комитет РЕШИЛ:

1. УП «Минскзеленстрой» (Струков А.И.), УП «УКС Мингорисполкома» (Ладутько Н.А.) обеспечить выполнение работ в соответствии с перечнем объектов зеленого хозяйства общего пользования г. Минска, подлежащих реконструкции и строительству в 2004-2008 гг. (далее - перечень), согласно приложению.
2. Финансовому управлению (Керножицкий А.В.) и комитету строительства и жилищной политики Мингорисполкома формировать ежегодные титульные списки капитального строительства объектов зеленого хозяйства и их финансирование, согласно вышеуказанному перечню.
3. Контроль за исполнением настоящего решения возложить на заместителя председателя горисполкома Белохвостова В.М.

Приложение
к решению Мингорисполкома
от 18.09.2003 г. № 1640

Решение №1334 от 04.08.2005. В соответствии с Законом Республики Беларусь от 5 июля 2004 года «Об архитектурной, градостроительной и строительной деятельности в Республике Беларусь» и во исполнение подпункта 3.2 пункта 3 Указа Президента Республики Беларусь от 23 апреля 2003 г. № 165 «Об утверждении генерального плана г. Минска с прилегающими территориями и некоторых вопросах его реализации» Минский городской исполнительный комитет РЕШИЛ:

1. Разрешить обществу с ограниченной ответственностью «Метадос» за счет собственных средств выступить заказчиком на разработку градостроительного проекта детального планирования в границах ул. К.Цеткин - Кальварийской - Короля - Сухой - продолжение ул. Коллекторной (восточная сторона сквера), (далее - детальный план).
2. Комитету архитектуры и градостроительства Мингорисполкома (Белогорцев Р.И.) в установленном порядке подготовить и выдать архитектурно-планировочное задание на разработку детального плана.
3. Принять к сведению письмо общества с ограниченной ответственностью «Метадос» от 6 июля 2005 г. № 05-106 об обязательствах последнего передать в коммунальную собственность г. Минска проектную документацию (детальный план).
4. Контроль за исполнением настоящего решения возложить на заместителя председателя горисполкома Кушнера В.Я.

Решение № 1390 от 20 июля 2006. В соответствии с Законом Республики Беларусь от 5 июля 2004 года «Об архитектурной, градостроительной и строительной деятельности в Республике Беларусь», во исполнение подпункта 3.2 пункта 3 Указа Президента Республики Беларусь от 23 апреля 2003 г. № 165 «Об утверждении генерального плана г. Минска с прилегающими территориями и некоторых вопросах его реализации» Минский городской исполнительный комитет РЕШИЛ:

1. Разрешить обществу с ограниченной ответственностью «Трайпл» за счет собственных средств выступить в установленном порядке заказчиком на разработку градостроительного проекта детального планирования территории в границах ул. Немиги - ул. Коллекторной - ул. К. Цеткин (далее - детальный план).
2. Комитету архитектуры и градостроительства Мингорисполкома (Никитин В.Д.) в установленном порядке подготовить и выдать архитектурно-планировочное задание на разработку детального плана.
3. Детальный план подлежит согласованию и утверждению в установленном порядке.
4. Принять к сведению письмо ООО «Трайпл» от 19 июня 2006 г. № 224/в об обязательствах передать в установленном порядке на безвозмездной основе в коммунальную собственность г. Минска (комитету архитектуры и градостроительства Мингорисполкома) утвержденный детальный план.
5. Контроль за исполнением настоящего решения возложить на заместителя председателя горисполкома Кушнера В.Я.

