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Negotiating Identity in the Soviet Museum: Assembling National and Regional Spaces in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Drawing on two-years postdoctoral research, this paper deals with the process of assembling of national and regional spaces in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian national museums. The national museums in these countries were established during the 19th and early 20th centuries. When in 1918 the three countries achieved sovereign statehoods they were confronted with both utmost important and difficult task: to assemble their territories as meaningful “national spaces”. This mission was not abolished after the Soviet occupation in 1940.

How did the communist government change, subvert but also further develop the meanings of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian spaces? What was the role of Soviet museums in inscribing these national spaces in broader regional constellations, such as Baltic, Northern, East/West European during Sovietization and the Cold War? Using the ideas of Foucault and Latour the analysis explores the relations between historiographical narratives, media discourses and material displays in the museums.