

The new approach to commemorating open-air war sites on the example of the Museum of Westerplatte and the 1939 war in Gdańsk, Poland

Monika Trojanowska

Monika Trojanowska
University of Gdańsk
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Spatial Studies
Gdańsk, Poland
e-mail: monika.trojanowska@ug.edu.pl
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8168-0746>

Muzeologia a kultúrne dedičstvo, 2023, 11:3:37-51
doi: 10.46284/mkd.2023.11.3.3

The new approach to commemorating open-air war sites on the example of the Museum of Westerplatte and the 1939 war in Gdańsk, Poland

This paper focuses on current issues in the development of open-air memorial sites. The concept of open-air museums is evolving in the twenty-first century to encompass sustainable protection of war monuments in their historical context. The cultural landscapes require minimal intervention. However, to ensure the viability of the museums and accessibility to visitors, new additions – in terms of architecture and urban design – are inevitable. The challenge is to guarantee the quality and coherence of any additions and to preserve historic landscapes. It is also crucial to ensure public acceptance of revitalization efforts. Open architectural competition might be a reliable means of delivering viable results, as demonstrated by the recent construction of a new military cemetery and restoration of the battlefield in Westerplatte in Gdańsk, Poland.

Keywords: open-air museums, battlefields, architecture, Westerplatte, Poland

Introduction

Commemorating open-air war sites is a challenge. There are numerous issues encompassing accessibility, preservation of original tissue, architectural and urban planning, educational services and social acceptance, among others. Open-air museums, regardless of their specialty, must have some key attributes. They should present historical buildings within their authentic environment, for example, surrounded by fields or forest. If possible, they should retain the original spatial relations between the buildings and within their environment.¹ Moreover, they should present the buildings' interiors, thus demonstrating how they could have been used. Preservation of original spatial relations emphasises the authenticity of the place and enhances the visitor experience.² Cultural landscapes require only minimal intervention to exhibit the background of historic events. However, in the case of Second World War battlefields, in order to ensure the integrity of perception, one might inevitably have to resort to integral

¹ RYCHNOVÁ, Lucie et al. Open-air Museums – the Future of the Presentation of Spiritual and Architectural Heritage, *Muzeologia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2022, vol. 10, Is. 1, pp. 5-18, DOI: 10.46284/mkd.2022.10.1.

² ŻOŁNIERCZUK, Maciej. Conditions for planning the space around the museum in the open-air. Uwarunkowania planowania przestrzeni wokół muzeum na świeżym powietrzu. In: BARAŃSKA K., MURZYN-KUPISZ M., ŚWIĘCHA J. (eds.). *Muzea na wolnym powietrzu. Antycypacje. Muzeum Kultury Ludowej w Kolbuszowej*, 2020.

restoration and (partial) reconstruction.³ It is advisable to use the concept of veracity based on comprehensive documentation, but with a clear intention not to present the reconstructed monument as authentic, accordingly to the Nara Document on Authenticity.⁴

There are two major concepts for the development of open-air museums currently in use. The first concept relies on preservation and presentation of monuments in their original context at the historic site. The second approach allows for extraction from the original site and reconstruction in a new place which reflects the original context as much as possible.⁵ The first concept is used when it comes to battlefields. The authenticity of the environment is the greatest advantage, although the site's seasonal nature, spatial isolation from inhabited areas and lack of basic services may be inconvenient. To turn the battlefield site into an open-air museum, certain functions must be provided, for example, tourist services, restrooms, parking space, public transport stops, gathering areas, conference rooms, museum shops, cafeterias, etc. Moreover, the proper functioning of any museum requires offices, spaces for scientific research, technical rooms, and so on.⁶ These functions generate certain architectural and urban planning demands which may damage the original environment of the historic site. The presence of new buildings can diminish the harmony of the site, therefore they should be located some distance from any protected areas.

The main questions centre around how to ensure the quality and coherence of new additions, preserve the historic landscape, and elicit public acceptance of any revitalization efforts. Even though cultural and natural assets, as well as their collective memory, are entrusted to the nation state and its museums, decisions concerning the preservation of cultural heritage are oftentimes not made by national governments but in the volatile forum of public opinion.⁷ According to the Resolution on the Responsibility of Museums towards Landscapes adopted by the ICOM General Assembly in 2016, museums should extend their mission to protect cultural heritage in close relationship with communities.^{8,9} Museums are like landscapes: they are made up of complex relations between people, spaces, artefacts, physical evidence and symbols.¹⁰ Thus, social acceptance and the collective memory are given top priority in the development of sites of cultural heritage. Today, as the traditional canon of knowledge about the past is losing its implicit value, people interpret reality as a series of correlated experiences

³ BRYCH, Mariia. General approaches to spatial formation of open-air museums exhibition. In: *Przestrzeń i Forma: kwartalnik naukowo-dydaktyczny*, no. 43, 2020, pp. 113–122.

⁴ Nara Document on Authenticity, UNESCO, 1994, <https://www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf>, access 22.04.2023

⁵ RYCHNOVÁ, Lucie et al. Open-air Museums...

⁶ BRYCH, Mariia. Peculiarities of memorial open-air museums space formation. In: *Przestrzeń i Forma: kwartalnik naukowo-dydaktyczny*, no. 37, 2019, pp. 137–146.

⁷ MAJEWSKI, Piotr. Planning a museum in its surroundings, i.e., museum in context-introductory reflexions. In: *Museums and Identities. Planning an Extended Museum*. Volume 20 of the MUZEOLOGIA publishing series issued by the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów, Warsaw, 2019.

⁸ Resolution No.1: The Responsibilities of Museums Towards Landscape. 31st General Assembly of ICOM. Milan, Italy, 2016. https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOMs-Resolutions_2016_Eng.pdf, (accessed 29 August 2023).

⁹ FOLGA-JANUSZEWSKA, Dorota. *Muzeum: Fenomeny i problemy*, TAIWPN Universitas, Kraków, 2015.

¹⁰ GARLANDINI, Alberto. New Museums for New Social Challenges. "Extended museums" facing UNESCO's 2015 recommendations on museums and ICOM's 2016 resolution on the responsibility of museums towards landscapes. In: FOLGA-JANUSZEWSKA D. (ed.) *Extended Museum in its milieu*. Volume 18 of the MUZEOLOGIA publishing series issued by Universitas, National Committee ICOM Poland and the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów, 2017.

rather than ephemeral incidents.¹¹ In order to appropriate the cultural landscape, people need to experience it as meaningful.¹² Military sites convey a relationship with historic identity. The landscape of a battlefield is experienced through meaningful bonds to historic events, and as the actual location of events that hold an important place in the collective memory. The visual aspects are as important as the ambience and feelings that they convey. Visitors who have learned about a historical event during their formal education have a chance to experience it by visiting the place in which it happened. Any alterations, expansions and additions to historic sites are thus subject to collective judgement.

For these reasons, open architectural competitions, attracting multiple teams and delivering numerous options, might be a reasonable solution.

Architectural and urban design competitions

The International Union of Architects states that “Architectural competitions are a quality-based and solution-oriented selection procedure for architectural services, the best way to achieve quality in the built environment”.¹³

Modern architectural competitions, first used over 150 years ago, can be regarded as a trustworthy practice.¹⁴ The competition is an instrument of architectural politics representing both a social order and professional practice. The key is confidence in the rational judgement of the competition’s jury and participants’ capacity to generate good solutions. There are various types of competition used for different contracts: open competitions, limited competitions and invited competitions.¹⁵

An open competition is an international competition that can be entered by any registered architect. The organizers seek the broadest possible range of ideas and want international exposure for the project.¹⁶ An open competition may occur in one or two stages. One-stage architectural competitions are open to all registered architects. Two-stage architectural competition narrow the number of invited architects after a preliminary first stage. A limited competition narrows the number of registered architects. In most cases the organizer restricts entry to professionals from a common geographic, cultural, historical or economic background.¹⁷ An invited competition limits the number of registered architects to specific group chosen by the organizer, usually three to five entrants. The organizer covers the cost of their work.¹⁸

Modern architectural competitions are organized to create spectacular architectural forms that attract interest and visitors.¹⁹ However, in the case of the open-air military museums, social aspects and the acceptance of results that have been delivered via an egalitarian competition seem to be the most important benefits.

¹¹ MAJEWSKI, Piotr. Planning a museum...

¹² NORBERG-SCHULZ, Christian. *Genius loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli, 1979.

¹³ See IUIA, INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ARCHITECTS, INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS COMMISSION, Guidelines UIA competition guide for design competitions in architecture and related fields interpreting and implementing the UNESCO “Standard Regulations for International Competitions in Architecture and Town-Planning”, 2020.

¹⁴ ANDERSSON Jonas, BLOXHAM Gerd, RÖNN Magnus. *Architectural Competitions: As Institution and Process*, Royal Institute of Technology, Kungl. Tekniska högskolan, Rio kulturkooperativ, Stockholm, 2016.

¹⁵ See: <https://raic.org/raic/competition-methods> (accessed May 1, 2023).

¹⁶ See: <https://raic.org/raic/competition-methods> (accessed May 1, 2023).

¹⁷ IUIA, INTERNATIONAL UNION...

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ ANDERSSON, Jonas; BLOXHAM, Gherd; RÖNN, Magnus. *Architectural Competitions...*

Authenticity or the veracity of reconstruction?

Authenticity is a recurring notion in the contemporary conservation of cultural heritage. It is a philosophical issue related to the search for meaning and the concept of truth.²⁰ The question might be what is more relevant: to preserve the authentic relics of the battlefield or to promote intangible understanding of the battle, allowing for reconstruction and reenactment? What is more important: the authenticity of relics that can be objectively determined by experts according to set standards or the veracity of the constructed interpretation of observable things? It all depends on the attitude towards cultural heritage. If it is regarded as a process defined by intangibility, reproducibility is acceptable.

Battlefields represent sites of memory; they are associative cultural landscapes described by UNESCO as places with powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations that are more important than material cultural evidence.²¹ Thus the priority for an open-air battlefield museum is to discover, restore and reproduce the monuments, because the most important aspect is the immaterial memory of historic events.

The Westerplatte in Gdańsk, Poland

The peninsula of Westerplatte is one of the most recognizable Second World War sites. It is the place where the conflict began on 1 September 1939. Before that day, the peninsula had withstood a series of environmental, urban and military transformations over the 300 years since its formation.²² It is a sandbar at the mouth of the Vistula River, created by the forces of nature in the seventeenth century. From the very beginning its sandy beaches attracted numerous visitors and the peninsula was transformed into a beach resort that functioned until the end of the First World War. At the same time, the peninsula's strategic location led to a military presence. The remains of entrenchments from the second half of the eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth centuries are still visible.

After the First World War, Gdańsk was declared the Free City of Gdansk. In 1924, the League of Nations assigned the peninsula to Poland, allowing for the construction of a military transit depot. The military area was closed to the public. In the face of the growing power of German Nazis in the Free City of Gdańsk, the Polish military authorities decided to build guardhouses and barracks on the Westerplatte Peninsula. The system rested on three lines of defence. The outer line included entrenched outposts and supporting positions. The second line consisted of five guardhouses (numbered I to V) which formed a ring in the centre of the depot. These guardhouses had reinforced concrete shelters in their basements. The final defence comprised the new barracks inside that ring (Guardhouse VI).²³

On August 25th, 1939 the German training battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* entered the port of Gdansk, supposedly for a courtesy visit. Before sunrise on Friday 1 September 1939, the

²⁰ NAKONIECZNA, Elżbieta & SZCZEPAŃSKI, Jakub. Authenticity of cultural heritage vis-à-vis heritage reproducibility and intangibility: from conservation philosophy to practice. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2023, pp. 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2023.2177642>.

²¹ UNESCO World Heritage Convention, Cultural Landscapes, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/> (accessed 23 April 2023).

²² SAMÓL, Wojciech et al. Where the Second World War in Europe broke out: the landscape history of Westerplatte, Gdańsk/Danzig. In: *Land* 2023, 12(3), 596; <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12030596>.

²³ See EXHIBITION ON WESTERPLATTE, <https://muzeum1939.pl/en/exhibition-westerplatte/845.html>, see also website administered by the National Institute of Cultural Heritage <https://zabytek.pl/en/obiekty/gdansk-pole-bitwy-na-westerplatte-111> (accessed 22 April, 2023).

Polish military depot was attacked by the open fire from the battleship, which was moored in the harbour canal. Numerous attacks from all sides of the peninsula followed. However, the most devastating was the attack by Stukas diving bombers which completely destroyed the Guardhouse V, killing its entire crew. Nevertheless, the garrison at Westerplatte, largely outnumbered by the German Nazi forces, heroically defended the peninsula for seven days. Even though the battle for Westerplatte did not influence the fate of the war in 1939, the heroic defence of the peninsula was of great importance for the Polish nation.²⁴

Westerplatte after the Second World War

The defenders of the Westerplatte tried to preserve the identity of that place after the war and returned each year to commemorate their fallen companions. In September 1946, the first cemetery was established by Captain Franciszek Dąbrowski. The burial place became the first monument on the battlefield.²⁵

The communist government turned the defence of the Westerplatte peninsula into a propaganda tool. Although it was a symbol, many relics associated with the military transit depot were neglected and destroyed during the earthworks and construction works for the new harbour canal.

The first competition for the architectural, urban, and artistic development of the Westerplatte area was organized in the 1960s. The project was awarded to the team of Franciszek Duszenko (sculpture), Adam Haup (architecture), and Henryk Kitowski (architecture).²⁶ As a result of this competition, in 1966, a 25 m monument, *The Defenders of the Coast*, was erected on the peninsula (Figures 1 and 2).



Fig. 1 and 2: Photograph of 25 m monument, *The Defenders of the Coast*, resulting from the first competition for the architectural, urban and artistic development of the Westerplatte area organized in the 1960s. Franciszek Duszenko (sculpture), Adam Haup and Henryk Kitowski (architecture). Photographs by the author, 2023.

Its irregular shape was intended to evoke a jagged bayonet stuck in the ground. It is located on a mound constructed from earth excavated during the widening of the port canal. The largescale monument, visible from all sides, dominates the surroundings, thus making any other

²⁴ See KUCZMA F., SZEJKO K., TUREK W., *Westerplatte – symbol, historia i pamięć*. In: NAWROCKI K. et al. (eds.) *World Battlefield Museums Forum/ Światowe Forum Muzeów Pól Bitewnych*, Wydawnictwo Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, Gdańsk, 2019.

²⁵ BRYCH, Mariia. Peculiarities of memorial...

²⁶ See In memoriam, Pamięci architektów polskich: https://www.archimemory.pl/pokaz/adam_haupt,664, accessed 2023.04.25. The design team also included Zbigniew Erszkowski, Czesław Gajda, Józef Galica, Stanisław Radwański, Piotr Solecki and Zbigniew Zabrocki.

functions redundant. Its large scale and the unity of architectural and sculptural design gives the monument impact.²⁷ However, historic errors committed during the design of the monument have attracted criticism more recently.

In the same year, 1966, Guardhouse I had to be moved a few dozen metres deeper into the peninsula, as its original location was affected by the widening of the canal.²⁸ Thanks to this technically complex operation, the Guardhouse was saved from destruction. In 1980, Guardhouse I become part of the Museum of Gdańsk.²⁹

The Westerplatte battlefield was declared a monument of history by regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland on 22 August 2003.³⁰ In 2008, the Museum of Westerplatte in Gdańsk was officially created.³¹ The first plans for an open-air museum were created by Igor Strzok, who was responsible for the preservation and restoration of historic monuments in the Pomorskie voivodship. His proposal included the reconstruction of fortifications and a few buildings in their exact location, and assigning them new functions such as ticket offices, exposition spaces, and so on.

On 1 September 2009, the outdoor exhibition *Westerplatte: A spa – a bastion – a symbol* was unveiled (Figures 3 and 4).³² In 2011, an educational path guiding visitors along some of the most important relics was opened to the public.^{33,34} The scope of the outdoor exhibition was limited by its nature and did not furnish all possible answers to visitors. Although it was regarded as a useful guide for tourists,³⁵ there were some critical voices expressing how much important information was missing.³⁶

²⁷ GĘBCZYŃSKA-JANOWICZ, Agnieszka. *Polskie założenia pomnikowe – rola architektury w tworzeniu miejsc pamięci od połowy XX wieku*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Neriton, Warszawa, 2010.

²⁸ See the photographic documentation of how Guardhouse I was transferred to its current location: <http://www.tomek.strony.u.g.edu.pl/wartownia/> (accessed 22 April, 2023)

²⁹ See the folder of the exhibition WESTERPLATTE IN SEARCH OF AUTHENTICITY organized by the Museum of Gdańsk in 2018 – the proposals for “A Study of the options of developing the battlefield of Westerplatte to restore its historic values and develop the museum functions”, Muzeum Gdańska, See also EXHIBITION ON WESTERPLATTE, <https://muzeum1939.pl/en/exhibition-westerplatte/845.html>, (accessed 22 April 2023)

³⁰ Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 22 sierpnia 2003 r. w sprawie uznania za pomnik historii “Pole Bitwy na Westerplatte”, położone w Gdańsku, w województwie pomorskim, See website administered by the National Institute of Cultural Heritage <https://zabytek.pl/pl/obiekty/gdansk-pole-bitwy-na-westerplatte-111>, documents and map <https://zabytek.pl/pl/obiekty/gdansk-pole-bitwy-na-westerplatte-111/dokumenty/PL.1.9.ZIPOZ.NID.N.22.DK.6106/3> (accessed 22 April 2023).

³¹ Zarządzeniem nr 29 Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego z 1.09.2008, See Dura M. (2012) Westerplatte jeszcze się broni. Gdańska Strefa, www.armia24.pl, <https://www.gdanskstrefa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Armia-Westerplatte.pdf> (accessed 22 April 2023).

³² See EXHIBITION ON WESTERPLATTE, *Westerplatte: A spa – a bastion – a symbol*, <https://muzeum1939.pl/en/exhibition-westerplatte/845.html> (accessed 22 April 2023).

³³ The concept of the educational path was created by Jan Szkudliński. See: Szkudliński J. Jak powstała ścieżka edukacyjna na Westerplatte, Portal Miasta Gdańska, 2019, <https://www.gdansk.pl/historia-gdanska/historie-gdanskie/jak-powstala-sciezka-edukacyjna-na-westerplatte,a,159558> (accessed 23 April 2023).

³⁴ The outdoor exhibition was designed by design team: Anna Grabowska, Zbigniew Dalecki, Mateusz Misztal & Dorota Terlecka and the educational path by: Mateusz Misztal, Dorota Terlecka, See the webpage of biuro kreacja: <https://biuro-kreacja.pl/project/wystawa-oraz-sciezka-edukacyjna-westerplatte/> (accessed 23 April 2023).

³⁵ Męczykowski Ł. Spacerem po Westerplatte, Pierwszy polski portal historyczny, 2012, <https://histmag.org/Spacerem-po-Westerplatte-6764/> (accessed 23 April, 2023).

³⁶ Dura M. Westerplatte jeszcze się broni. Gdańska Strefa, 2012, www.armia24.pl, <https://www.gdanskstrefa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Armia-Westerplatte.pdf> (accessed 23 April, 2023)



Fig. 3 and 4: Photographs of the outdoor exhibition *Westerplatte: A spa – a bastion – a symbol*. In the background, the harbour canal, port infrastructure and historic buildings of the New Port in Gdańsk which witnessed the battle can be seen.



Fig. 5: The educational path table next to the ruins of new caserns. In the background are temporary stands selling souvenirs.

In 2018, Museum of Gdańsk invited three architectural offices from Gdańsk to prepare “a study of the options for developing the battlefield of Westerplatte to restore its historic values and develop the museum’s functions”.³⁷ The projects were presented during the exhibition

³⁷ Three architectural offices from Gdańsk were invited to present a proposal: 1. Proconcept. Pracownia Architektoniczna. Marcin Kaniewski z zespołem; 2. Restudio sp. z o.o. Rafal Jacaszek z zespołem; and 3. Wojciech Targowski – Fort Targowski sp. z o.o., Wojciech Targowski z zespołem. See the folder of the exhibition *Westerplatte in Search of Authenticity*, organized by the Museum of Gdańsk in 2018, presenting the proposals for “A Study of the options of developing the battlefield of Westerplatte to restore its historic values and develop the museum functions”, Muzeum Gdańska,

Westerplatte in search of authenticity, organized by the Museum of Gdańsk in the same year. All three projects proposed a new parking space, a public transport stop, and a pavilion with tourist services – all away from the remains of the battlefield area. Various means of artistic and architectural expression were proposed to recreate the atmosphere of the historic place using lights, reflective and printed glass, and a partial reconstruction of historic buildings.

In the meantime, from 2016, the first regular archaeological research was undertaken. So far, (at the time of writing in 2023) more than 60,000 artefacts have been recovered. There are plans to put them on display in a new exhibition space. The most significant of all discoveries was the remains of nine Polish defenders, found in 2019.³⁸ Thus a new cemetery was needed as a place of remembrance, near their original burial place.

On 19 July 2019, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland passed the Act on Investments in construction of the Museum of Westerplatte and the War of 1939 – a branch of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk (Journal of Laws of 2021, item 1280), and established the Museum of the Second World War as the investor responsible for the implementation of this task. “The mission of the Museum of Westerplatte and the War of 1939 is to preserve the authenticity of the battlefield, to keep alive the memory of the Poles’ defiance during World War II, and to preserve the site where the most tragic conflict in history began”.³⁹

The new investment was planned in three stages.⁴⁰ The first stage (2022) encompassed the modernization of the former power plant, reconstruction of the military cemetery, and revitalization of the relics of the Guardhouse V and the officers’ villa. The second stage (2024) included partial reconstruction of the “Fort” outpost, selected ammunition warehouses, the train station building and the red bordering wall. The third stage (2026) will include construction of a new museum building; conservation repairs to the barracks and Guardhouse III; and the revitalization of relics from the non-commissioned officers’ wardroom, the administration building, and the old barracks. It was decided to organize architectural competitions in order to secure best results.

Modern architectural and urban design competitions for Westerplatte

In 2020, the Museum of the Second World War announced an international competition for the development of the “Concept of the Military Cemetery of the Polish Army Soldiers in Westerplatte”. It was a one-stage, open, implementation-oriented architectural and urban design competition.⁴¹

³⁸ Dziewanowski, Adam; Kuczma Filip; Samól, Wojciech. Badania archeologiczne pola bitwy na Westerplatte. Wyniki prac prowadzonych w latach 2016-2017 In: Młik H., Węglińska W. (ed.): *Materiałne pozostałości konfliktów i zbrodni XX wieku w świetle najnowszych badań archeologicznych*, 2019, Gdańsk, Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, 2019, pp.235-275. Wójtowicz-Podhorski, Mariusz. Podsumowanie V etapu prac archeologicznych na Westerplatte, Odkrywca, 2019, <https://odkrywca.pl/podsumowanie-v-etapu-prac-archeologicznych-na-westerplatte-2019/> (accessed 23 April 2023). See webpage of the Museum of the Second World War: IX etap badań archeologicznych, available online: <https://muzeum1939.pl/ix-etap-badan-archeologicznych/aktualnosci/5712.html/> (accessed 23 April 2023).

³⁹ See webpage of the Museum of the Second World War: Competition for the conceptual design of the Museum of Westerplatte and War of 1939, See <https://muzeum1939.pl/en/competition-conceptual-design-museum-westerplatte-and-war-1939/5888.html> (accessed 23 April 2023).

⁴⁰ See webpage administered by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism: Budowa Muzeum Westerplatte i Wojny 1939 – założenia programowe: <https://www.gov.pl/web/sport/budowa-muzeum-westerplatte-i-wojny-1939--zalozenia-programowe> (accessed 23 April 2023).

⁴¹ See: <https://muzeum1939.pl/en/competition-westerplatte-cemetery-concept/about-competition> (accessed 1 May 2023).

Twenty seven projects were submitted to the competition. Three awards, two mentions and five honorary mentions were given.⁴² The competition was won by architects from NM architekci Tomasz Marciniewicz, Zuzanna Szpocińska, Jerzy Grochulski and Karolina Kayzer.⁴³ The winning project was distinguished by its minimalistic design and the use of classic symbols and was judged by the jury to be the most appropriate way to commemorate the fallen defenders of Westerplatte.

The winning design was based on the universal archetype of a symmetrical design. The central route leads to the Virtuti Militari Cross, encircled by a path of commemorative stalls with remembrance plaques.⁴⁴ The architectural and urban design of the cemetery allows the cultural landscape and the natural environment to speak by placing manmade constructions in the background. The design also includes the reconstruction of part of the historic communication route from 1939 and reconstruction of the fragmented ruins of the Officers' Villa and Guardhouse V. The bomb crater, located in the northeastern corner of Guardhouse V, a symbol of the tragic air attack on 2 September 1939, has been restored to make it legible and marked with decorative grass. Official ceremonies and funerals were organized at the new cemetery in November 2022.

⁴² Second award: Piotr Pasierbiński, Kraków i Duc Ngo, Tokio, Third award: Andrzej Solyga, Marek Kuciński, Paweł Mysera. Honorary mentions: Marcin Galas Autografstudio; Restudio Jacaszek Architekci Sp. z o.o.; Zakład Usług Technicznych Tycjan Kołodziejczyk; Paweł Nowicki, Karolina Borkowska, Ewa Kosińska-Beck; Dżus G.K. Architekci s. c.; Jacek Szczęsny Archi-Cad; Karol Żurawski, Dawid Roszkowski, Natalia Budnik. See: Sztuka Architektury, Cmentarz Żołnierzy Wojska Polskiego na Westerplatte – wyniki konkursu architektonicznego: <https://sztuka-architektury.pl/article/14289/cmentarz-zolnierzy-wojska-polskiego-na-westerplatte-wyniki-konkursu-architektonicznego> (accessed 23 April 2023)

⁴³ As the head of the jury, Bolesław Stelmach wrote that “The competition was very difficult. On the one hand, it was necessary to design an intimate cemetery for heroes of the dramatic events at Westerplatte and, on the other hand, to find a form timeless, universal commemoration that respects fragile, authentic testimonies history: landscape, terrain, ruins, bomb craters. Submitted works must be rated as good or very good.” See: Sztuka Architektury, Cmentarz Żołnierzy Wojska Polskiego na Westerplatte – wyniki konkursu architektonicznego, <https://sztuka-architektury.pl/article/14289/cmentarz-zolnierzy-wojska-polskiego-na-westerplatte-wyniki-konkursu-architektonicznego> (accessed 23 April 2023)

⁴⁴ There are 18 commemorative plaques in the cemetery. They commemorate 15 Polish soldiers who died in the battle; Mayor Henryk Sucharski, who died in Italy in 1946; and two additional symbolic plaques to commemorate two defenders whose remains were found in 2019 and still await the identification.



Fig. 6 and 7: The new cemetery of the Polish Army Soldiers in Westerplatte – the result of an international competition for the development of the “Concept of the Military Cemetery of the Polish Army Soldiers in Westerplatte” won by NM architects Tomasz Marciniewicz, Zuzanna Szpocińska, Jerzy Grochulski and Karolina Kayzer.



Fig. 8: The excavated foundations of the officer's villa. In the background the new cemetery can be seen. **Fig. 9:** Public information stand displaying a map of the peninsula.



Fig. 10: Excavated relics from Guardhouse V destroyed during battle. **Fig. 11:** Reconstructed ramp and earth ramparts sheltering the foundations of Ammunition Warehouse I and Outpost “Wal”.

In January 2023, a new competition was announced: “Architectural and urban competition for the conceptual design of the Museum of Westerplatte and the War of 1939 – branch of

the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk”⁴⁵. It was a two-stage limited architectural and urban design competition. It was narrowed to practitioners with experience in delivering similar projects. After the initial verification process, six architectural firms were invited to take part in the next stage of the competition. The scope of the competition included the design of a new exhibition building, as well as the reconstruction, restoration, and display of original historic buildings and relics. It was envisaged to encompass 7,500 m² of new usable floor area, including 3,000 m² for a new exhibition area.

The decision to organize an architectural competition was based on the importance of the revival of the 1939 Westerplatte Battlefield, which “deserves wider social recognition and is a highly anticipated initiative”.⁴⁶ The open-air museum would take advantage of historic surroundings, including authenticated relics of the past. Its main objective is to restore the historical features of the military transit depot, provide better insight into the historic battlefield and foster a better understanding of the first days of the events in September 1939. The investment will be co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland.

The Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk also has plans to rebuild the existing parking lot next to the beach, in order to optimize the number of parking spaces and move tourist vehicles away from the battlefield. The scope of this project would include the construction of a tourist service building with basic amenities such as ticket and information offices and restrooms. A question remains over how ensure the open-air battlefield museum is accessible to people with special needs.

Conclusions

In open-air battlefield museums, all sorts of memorial components – architectural objects, landscapes, archaeological sites, materials and, where possible, intangible cultural heritage – may be presented as exhibits. The goal is to preserve the site’s historic, symbolic and memorial value.^{47,48} Thus the material accuracy of reproduction of events may vary.⁴⁹ Fortifications, cemeteries, and archaeological excavations become the main elements of the open-air museum’s expositions, along with spaces for battle reenactment and educational activities. Mariia Brych proposed enhancing associativity of battlefield cultural landscape through the historical reconstruction of military operations.⁵⁰

In the post-war period there was a paradigm shift in understanding cultural heritage. Currently, it is treated as a factor of social and economic development, not only to be protected

⁴⁵ See: <https://muzeum1939.pl/en/competition-conceptual-design-museum-westerplatte-and-war-1939/5888.html>, (accessed 23 April 2023)

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ “The general objective of the long-term program entitled ‘Construction of the Museum of Westerplatte and the War of 1939 – Branch Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk’, ... is a unique preservation of historical, spatial, tangible and intangible symbolic values testifying to the heroism and the sacrifice of a Polish soldier.” Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, Program wieloletni pn. “Budowa Muzeum Westerplatte I Wojny 1939 – Oddział Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku” na lata 2022-2027, <https://www.zpp.pl/storage/library/2022-11/be-6f7e0f7db2b0fffe1daf77facddc32.pdf> (accessed 23 April 2023).

⁴⁸ BRYCH, Mariia. Peculiarities of memorial...

⁴⁹ GAWEL, Artur (ed.) . *Open air museums in Poland*. Białystok: Association of Polish Open Air Museums. 2019. ISBN: 9788395486814, pp.147-148; Le Linge Memorial Museum, <https://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/en/le-linge-memorial-museum> (accessed 15 April 2023). Memorial de Verdun. Champ de bataille, <https://memorial-verdun.fr/espace-pedagogique/le-musee-de-plein-air>, (accessed 15 April 2023).

⁵⁰ BRYCH, Mariia. Peculiarities of memorial...

but also to be used in creative ways. As a result, many military museums have evolved into modern educational centres with a pacifist message condemning war.⁵¹ The open-air museums of battlefields can create a common ground for the process of healing of memories on the way to peace.⁵² History is presented using the universal language of meaning and narration.⁵³ The new concept of museotherapy represents the role of the museum as an intermediary in enhancing social consciousness and mentality.⁵⁴ Cultural heritage is a shared value that can strengthen social cohesion and help build a vision for the future.⁵⁵

On the peninsula of Westerplatte in Gdańsk is an inscription, “NO MORE WAR”, that summarizes the mission and the main objective of contemporary open-air museums of battlefields – to preserve tangible relics and intangible memory for future generations. This is perceived as the duty of new generations towards their predecessors. It is important to commemorate events in ways that are symbolic and intangible by nature. From this perspective, it seems that authentication is not only allowed in the preservation and legibility of relics but also in all means of reproduction – in restoration, reconstruction, restitution, rebuilding, replication, copying, interpretation, reenactment, visualization, and so on – insofar as it does not destroy authenticity. Every trace of the passage of the battlefield through time should be visible. Therefore, it is also important to preserve all the relics from other periods of history, before and after the battle, as evidence of the development of the place. The major importance of the Westerplatte battlefield lies in the original cultural landscape of the military transit depot.

In the case of the Peninsula of Westerplatte, architectural competitions were used to find the best possible projects to commemorate the history, back in the 1960s and again in 2020 and 2023. It seems that architectural and urban design competitions are the most reliable means of delivering viable results, acceptable by the public.

References

- ANDERSSON Jonas, BLOXHAM Gerd, RÖNN Magnus (2016). *Architectural Competitions: As Institution and Process*. Royal Institute of Technology, Kungl. Tekniska högskolan, Rio kulturkooperativ, Stockholm, ISBN 9177290488.
- BRYCH, Mariia (2019). Peculiarities of memorial open-air museums space formation. In: *Przestrzeń i Forma: kwartalnik naukowo-dydaktyczny*, no. 37, pp. 137–146.
- BRYCH, Mariia (2020). General approaches to spatial formation of open-air museums exhibition. In: *Przestrzeń i Forma: kwartalnik naukowo-dydaktyczny*, no. 43, pp. 113–122.

⁵¹ CHYLIŃSKA, Dagmara; MUSIAKA, Łukasz. Military museums in Poland – between the past and the future. *Muzeologia a kulturowe dziedzictwo*, 2020, vol. 8, Is. 3, pp. 5-39 doi: 10.46284/mkd.2020.8.3.1.

⁵² TROJANOWSKA, Monika. Parki i ogrody terapeutyczne. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, 2017, pp.131.

⁵³ MAJEWSKI, Piotr. *Narracja, inaczej – kilka słów o historii, muzeach oraz tych, którzy je odwiedzają*. In: KOWAL P., WOLSKA-PABIAN K. (ed.), *Muzeum i zmiana. Losy muzeów narracyjnych*. Tom 16 serii wydawniczej „Muzeologia” realizowanej przez Wydawnictwo Universitas i Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego and Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, Warszawa–Kraków 2019.

⁵⁴ KOTOWSKI, Robert. Museotherapy – how does it work? In: KOTOWSKI R., ZYBERT E.B. (eds.). *Museotherapy. How does it work?* The National Museum in Kielce, Kielce 2020, pp. 9-22.

⁵⁵ DWORZECKI, Jacek et al. Protection of national heritage in the light of the applicable law and the actions provided in this area by police in Poland. *Muzeologia a kulturowe dziedzictwo*, 2020, vol. 8, Is. 4, pp. 177-198 doi: 10.46284/mkd.2020.8.4.11. DUNCAN, James S. – LEY, David. *Place/culture/representation*. London – New York: Routledge, 1993.

- CHYLINSKA, D., MUSIAKA, Ł. (2020). Military museums in Poland – between the past and the future. *Muzeologia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2020, 8:3:5-39 doi: 10.46284/mkd.2020.8.3.1.
- COSGROVE, Denis – Daniels, Stephen (1988). *The Iconography of landscape. Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 13: 9780521389150.
- DUNCAN, James S. – LEY, David (1993). *Place/culture/representation*. London – New York: Routledge, 1993. ISBN-13: 978-0415094511.
- DURA, M. (2012) Westerplatte jeszcze się broni. Gdańska Strefa, www.armia24.pl, <https://www.gdanskstrefa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Armia-Westerplatte.pdf>, accessed 25 April 2023.
- DWORZECKI J. et al. (2020) Protection of national heritage in the light of the applicable law and the actions provided in this area by police in Poland. *Muzeologia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2020, 8:4:177-198 doi: 10.46284/mkd.2020.8.4.11.
- DZIEWANOWSKI A., KUCZMA F., SAMÓL W., (2019) *Badania archeologiczne pola bitwy na Westerplatte. Wyniki prac prowadzonych w latach 2016-2017*. In: Mik H., Węglińska W. (Eds.): *Materiałne pozostałości konfliktów i zbrodni XX wieku w świetle najnowszych badań archeologicznych*, 2019, Gdańsk, Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, pp.235-275, ISBN 978-83-65975-17-7.
- FOLGA-JANUSZEWSKA, D. (2015) *Muzeum: Fenomeny i problemy*, TAIWPN Universitas, Kraków, ISBN 978-83-242-2690-0.
- GARLANDINI, A. (2017) New Museums for New Social Challenges. “Extended museums” facing UNESCO’s 2015 recommendations on museums and ICOM’s 2016 resolution on the responsibility of museums towards landscapes. In: FOLGA-JANUSZEWSKA D. (Ed.): *Extended Museum in its milieu*. Volume 18 of the MUZEOLOGIA publishing series issued by Universitas, National Committee ICOM Poland and the Museum of King Jan III’s Palace at Wilanów, pp. 21-30, ISBN 978-83-242-3413-4.
- GAWĘŁ, A. (ed.) (2019). *Open air museums in Poland*. Białystok: Association of Polish Open Air Museums. ISBN 978-8395486814, pp.147-148.
- GĘBCZYŃSKA-JANOWICZ, A. (2010) *Polskie założenia pomnikowe – rola architektury w tworzeniu miejsc pamięci od połowy XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Neriton, Warszawa, ISBN 978-83-7543-177-3.
- IUIA, INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ARCHITECTS (2020), INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS COMMISSION, *Guidelines UIA competition guide for design competitions in architecture and related fields interpreting and implementing the UNESCO “Standard Regulations for International Competitions in Architecture and Town-Planning”*.
- KOTOWSKI R., (2020) *Museotherapy – how does it work?* In: KOTOWSKI R., ZYBERT E.B. (Eds.) (2020) *Museotherapy. How does it work?* The National Museum in Kielce, Kielce 2020, pp. 9-22, ISBN 978-83-62068-70-8.
- KUCZMA F., SZEJKO K., TUREK W., *Westerplatte – symbol, historia i pamięć*. In: NAWROCKI K. et al. (ed.) (2019), *World Battlefield Museums Forum/ Światowe Forum Muzeów Pól Bitwowych*, Wydawnictwo Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, Gdańsk, ISBN 978-83-65957-20-7.

- MAJEWSKI, P. (2019). Planning a museum in its surroundings, i.e. museum in context-introductory reflexions. In: *Museums and Identities. Planning an Extended Museum*. Volume 20 of the MUZEOLOGIA publishing series issued by the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów, Warsaw, 2019, pp. 45-48, ISBN 978-83-66104-22-8.
- MAJEWSKI, P. (2019) *Narracja, inaczej – kilka słów o historii, muzeach oraz tych, którzy je odwiedzają*. In: KOWAL P., WOLSKA-PABIAN K. (Ed.), *Muzeum i zmiana. Losy muzeów narracyjnych*. Tom 16 serii wydawniczej MUZEOLOGIA realizowanej przez Wydawnictwo Universitas i Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego and Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, Warszawa–Kraków 2019, pp. 45-48, ISBN 978-83-66104-22-8.
- NAKONIECZNA, E., & SZCZEPAŃSKI, J. (2023). Authenticity of cultural heritage vis-à-vis heritage reproducibility and intangibility: from conservation philosophy to practice. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2023.2177642>.
- Nara Document on Authenticity, UNESCO, 1994, <https://www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf> (accessed 22 April 2023).
- NAWROCKI K. et al. (Eds.) (2019), *World Battlefield Museums Forum/ Światowe Forum Muzeów Pól Bitewnych*, Wydawnictwo Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, Gdańsk, Wydawnictwo Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, Gdańsk, ss. 192, ISBN 978-83-65957-20-7.
- NORBERG-SCHULZ, Christian (1979). *Genius loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli. ISBN 978-0847802876.
- RYCHNOVÁ L. et al. (2022) Open-air Museums – the Future of the Presentation of Spiritual and Architectural Heritage. *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2022, 10:1:5-18, DOI: 10.46284/mkd.2022.10.1.
- SAMÓL W. et al. (2023) Where the Second World War in Europe broke out: The landscape history of Westerplatte, Gdańsk/Danzig. *Land* 2023, 12(3), 596; <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12030596>.
- SZKUDLIŃSKI J. (2019) Jak powstała ścieżka edukacyjna na Westerplatte, Portal Miasta Gdańska, <https://www.gdansk.pl/historia-gdanska/historie-gdanskie/jak-powstala-ścieżka-edukacyjna-na-westerplatte,a,159558>, accessed 23 April 2023.
- TROJANOWSKA M. (2017) *Parki i ogrody terapeutyczne*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, ISBN 978-8301192006.
- WÓJTOWICZ-PODHORSKI M. (2019) Podsumowanie V etapu prac archeologicznych na Westerplatte (2019), *Odkrywca*, <https://odkrywca.pl/podsumowanie-v-etapu-prac-archeologicznych-na-westerplatte-2019/> (accessed 23 April 2023).
- WESTERPLATTE IN SEARCH OF AUTHENTICITY, exhibition organized by the Museum of Gdańsk in 2018 – the proposals for “A Study of the options of developing the battlefield of Westerplatte to restore its historic values and develop the museum functions”, Muzeum Gdańska.
- ZEUNER Ch. (1992) Les Musées de plein air: célébration et perspectives, *Museum*, XLIV, 3, pp. 147-148, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000092961_fre.

- ŻOŁNIERCZUK M. (2020) Conditions for planning the space around the museum in the open-air. Uwarunkowania planowania przestrzeni wokół muzeum na świeżym powietrzu. In: BARAŃSKA K., MURZYN -KUPISZ M., ŚWIECHA J. (Eds.) *Muzea na wolnym powietrzu. Antycypacje. Muzeum Kultury Ludowej w Kolbuszowej*, pp. 135-152, ISBN 978-83-955965-2-0.
- Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 22 sierpnia 2003 r. w sprawie uznania za pomnik historii "Pole Bitwy na Westerplatte", położone w Gdańsku, w województwie pomorskim.
- Zarządzenie nr 29 Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego z 1.09.2008 o powołaniu "Muzeum Westerplatte w Gdańsku".
- Competition for the conceptual design of the Museum of Westerplatte and War of 1939, See <https://muzeum1939.pl/en/competition-conceptual-design-museum-westerplatte-and-war-1939/5888.html> (accessed 23 April 2023).
- EXHIBITION ON WESTERPLATTE, *Westerplatte: A spa – a bastion – a symbol*, <https://muzeum1939.pl/en/exhibition-westerplatte/845.html> (accessed 23 April 2023).
- Le Linge Memorial Museum, (accessed 15 April 2023), <https://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/en/le-linge-memorial-museum>.
- Memorial de Verdun. Champ de bataille, (accessed 15 April 2023), <https://memorial-verdun.fr/espace-pedagogique/le-musee-de-plein-air>.
- Ministry of Sport and Tourism: Budowa Muzeum Westerplatte i Wojny 1939 – założenia programowe: <https://www.gov.pl/web/sport/budowa-muzeum-westerplatte-i-wojny-1939--zalozenia-programowe>, (accessed 23 April, 2023).
- Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku, Program wieloletni pn. "Budowa Muzeum Westerplatte I Wojny 1939 – Oddział Muzeum II Wojny Światowej w Gdańsku" na lata 2022-2027, <https://www.zpp.pl/storage/library/2022-11/be6f7e0f7db2b0ffe1daf77facddc32.pdf>, (accessed 23 April, 2023).
- Nowy cmentarz na Westerplatte, (accessed April 15th, 2023), <https://muzeum1939.pl/historiawesterplatte-nowy-cmentarz-na-westerplatte/aktualnosc/5115.html>.
- Sztuka Architektury, Cmentarz Żołnierzy Wojska Polskiego na Westerplatte – wyniki konkursu architektonicznego, <https://sztuka-architektury.pl/article/14289/cmentarz-zolnierzy-wojska-polskiego-na-westerplatte-wyniki-konkursu-architektonicznego>, (accessed 23 April 2023).
- Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, Competition Methods, <https://raic.org/raic/competition-methods>, (accessed 1 May 2023).
- IX etap badań archeologicznych, <https://muzeum1939.pl/ix-etap-badan-archeologicznych/aktualnosc/5712.html/>, (accessed 1 May 2023).
- 31st General Assembly of ICOM. Milan, Italy, 2016. Resolution No.1: The Responsibilities of Museums Towards Landscape, https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOMs-Resolutions_2016_Eng.pdf (accessed 29 August 2023)