



Mare 2

Interreg



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Unię Europejską

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern / Brandenburg / Polska

International Conference **Contested places of memory of World War II**

Kulice

(International Centre for Interdisciplinary Research at the University of Szczecin in Kulice)

13-15 November 2025

The year 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. This should be a period long enough for analysing and discussing its commemoration and the sites of memory connected to it. The commemoration of the war gained new relevance with the new wars in Europe and beyond and the threats of a new global conflict. The current war in Ukraine has also been a catalyst for remembering past events and memorials connected to World War II. On the one hand, new relevance and the politicisation of sites of memory is a driving force that partly turns them into tourist attractions, but on the other hand, it is also an obstacle, as these monuments are perceived as objects promoting hostile propaganda and face systematic or spontaneous destruction. The public space was and still is filled with World War II memorial sites, but their narratives have been subject to constant change since their beginnings. Thus, these sites of memory constitute living and changing palimpsests of social memory.

The aim of the conference is, in the first part, to revisit the following questions:

- who built and created these sites of memory?
- How were they created, how did the attitude towards them change within societies and politics of memory?
- Are they still necessary today in the face of a new war crisis in Europe?
- What functions did and do they fulfil?

In the second part of the conference, we will focus on new ways of presenting these sites of memory in a changing reality within public, touristic and educational spaces in museums and on tourist trails, so that they constitute important elements of educational reflection as well as tourist products. Given the destruction of many of these sites to date, the core problem will be to reveal the complexity of history and the symbolic layers of these memorial sites as an important element of cultural heritage. Thus, it shall be asked:

- How can these sites of memory be managed as tourist attractions that do not divide but reliably promote knowledge about past events and changing attitudes towards them.

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- What reflections can we draw from them about wars, the past and the present for a better future?

Conference languages will be Polish and English with simultaneous translation.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Day 1 – 13 November 2025 (Thursday)

12:00: Departure from Szczecin

13:15: Arrival in Kulice, refreshments

14:00-14:30: Conference opening: welcome and introduction

- Andrzej Skrendo (Vice-Rector for Research, University of Szczecin) (online)
- Agnieszka Szudarek (Institute of History, University of Szczecin) (online)
- Jörg Hackmann (International Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Szczecin in Kulice) (online)
- Representatives of partners
- Paweł Migdalski (Institute of History, University of Szczecin / International Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Szczecin, in Kulice)

14:30-16:30: panel 1 – Varia 1 General topics 1

- ROBERT PARZER (Deutsch-Polnisches Haus, Berlin, Germany)
The German-Polish House as Part of the Commemoration of the Second World War and the German Occupation
- DAWID GRALIK (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)
Digital Memorial Sites, or How World War II is Commemorated on the Internet and What this Means (in Polish)
- TOMASZ KORBAN (Uniwersytet Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Krakowie, Poland)
The Katyn Memorial in London as an Element of Local and International Relations in the 1970s (in Polish)

Discussion

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16:30-17:00: break

17:00-19:00: panel 2 – Comparative perspectives

- MARGARET COMER (Uniwersytet Warszawski, Poland)
Violence on and off the Battlefield, Present and Past: Depictions and Discourses of WWII Suffering at Memory Sites in Kazakhstan
- HUBERT KUBERSKI (Independent researcher, Warszawa, Poland)
Memorial Sites for the Victims of SS-Sonderkommando Dirlewanger in Europe: Poland, Belarus, Slovakia, Germany (in Polish)
- BRENDAN HUMPHREYS (Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, Finland)
The Innocence of Buildings: Physical Legacies of Ustaša Terror (online)
- OLENA DOBOSH (Independent researcher, Lviv, Ukraine)
University as Place for Memory or Memory Place

Discussion

20:00: dinner

Day 2 – 14 November 2025 (Friday)

8:00: breakfast

9:00–11:00: panel 3 – Borderlands

- THOMAS WEGENER FRIIS (University of Southern Denmark, Denmark)
Parallel Remembrance and Forgetfulness in the Danish-German Borderlands (online)
- PRATIT KR. MALLICK (Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India)
Mnemonic Geographies of Contamination: A Comparative Study of World War II Commemoration, Ecological Crisis, and Cross-Border Agency in the Oder-Neisse Ecotone (online)
- MERAL GEZICI YALÇIN (Bielefeld University, Germany)
Remembering Across the River: World War II Memorial Landscapes in Frankfurt (Oder)–Ślubice (online)

Discussion

11:00-11:30: break

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11:30-14:00: panel 4 – Central and Eastern Europe

- JÖRG HACKMANN (University of Szczecin, Poland)
Ingratitude for the Liberation? On the Fate of Soviet War Memorials in East Central Europe (online)
- OLEKSANDRA STASIUK (I. Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Lviv, Ukraine)
The evolution of practices commemorating World War II in Ukraine
- NATALIYA MYSAK (I. Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Lviv, Ukraine)
World War II Sites of Remembrance in Ukraine and the Russian-Ukrainian War: Challenges, Transformations, Accents
- ANNA STRÓŻ-PAWŁOWSKA (The Pilecki Institute, Warszawa, Poland)
In the interest of the subjectivity of remembrance sites. Monuments in former death camps (in Polish) (online)

Discussion

14:00-15:00: Lunch break

15:00-17:00: panel 5 – General topics 2

- JOANNA BEDNARSKA-RYDZEWSKA (Uniwersytet Łódzki, Łódź, Poland)
Non-existent Places of Remembrance: "Lebensborn" as a Palimpsest of War Memory in Literature and Culture (in Polish)
- JOANNA WOJDON (University of Wrocław, Poland)
World War II Memorial Sites in School Textbooks in the People's Republic of Poland (in Polish) (online)
- MYKOLA NEBORACHKO (Ukrainian Institute of Education Development, Kyiv, Ukraine)
Archives as Sites of Memory: Declassified Soviet Security Files and the Bureaucratic Narratives of Healing after Terror (online)

Discussion

17:00-17:30: break

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17:30-19:00: panel 6 – Lubusz Land

- GRZEGORZ URBANEK (Zbigniew Herbert Voivodeship and Municipal Public Library in Gorzów Wielkopolski, Poland)
The Międzyrzecz Fortified Region – a Space of Remembrance or Oblivion? (in Polish)
- KATARZYNA SZTUBA-FRĄCKOWIAK (Obrzyce Memorial Place Foundation / Gedenkstätte Obrawalde, Międzyrzecz, Poland)
The Memorial Chamber at the Psychiatric Hospital in Międzyrzecz-Obrzyce. Difficult Legacy and Contemporary Challenges (in Polish)

Discussion

20:00: dinner

Day 3 – 15 November 2025 (Saturday)

8:00: breakfast

9:00-11:00: panel 7 – Pomerania and Masuria 1

- ANNA GUT-CZERWONKA (Koszalin University of Technology, Poland)
The Memory of World War II in the Sculptures of Artists from Central Pomerania (in Polish)
- SYLWIA BYKOWSKA (Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences, Gdańsk, Poland)
Memory in the Process of Shaping the Post-war Society of Gdańsk (in Polish)
- WOJCIECH SAMÓŁ (Museum of the Second World War, Gdańsk, Poland)
The Westerplatte Battlefield Today (in Polish)

Discussion

11:00-11:30: break

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11:30-13:30: panel 8 – Pomerania and Masuria 2

- ANDRZEJ HOJA (Centre for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Berlin, Germany / Museum of Gdańsk, Poland)
Military Service of Polish Citizens in the Army of Third Reich as a Non-place of Memory (“non-lieux de mémoire”). An Example of the Reception of the Exhibition ‘Our boys. Residents of Gdańsk Pomerania in the Army of Third Reich’ (in Polish)
- STEFAN MICHAŁ MARCINKIEWICZ (University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland)
Places of Memory at the Transit POW and Concentration Camp in Bogusze/Prostki (in Polish) (online)
- PAWEŁ MIGDAŁSKI (University of Szczecin, Poland)
War Memory Tourism – Creation and Transformation of the Cedynia-Gozdowice-Siekierki National Remembrance Area (in Polish)

Discussion and conclusion of the conference

13:30: lunch break

14:15: departure of participants

15:30: arrival in Szczecin

Academic coordinator: Paweł Migdałski (University of Szczecin)

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