

BORDERLAND MUSEUMS IN POLAND.

NARRATIVES OF HERITAGE, IDENTITY, AND MEMORY

LUPS-CESCI
Research Group on
Cross-Border Cooperation




NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT
AND INNOVATION OFFICE
HUNGARY

PROJECT
FINANCED FROM
THE NRDI FUND

The Objective of the Research

The overall aim of this research is to understand how cultural institutions—particularly museums—engage with the complexities of borderland heritage and cultural diversity.

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Research Questions

The main research question is:

How is the concept of the borderland represented and functioning in the narratives of borderland museums?

Specific research questions are:

1. Which aspects of borderland heritage are emphasized or omitted in museum narratives?
2. What narrative strategies do museums use to construct the image of the borderland?
3. How are national and ethnic cultural heritages represented in museum narratives?
4. How do museums interpret difficult and conflict-laden moments in the region's history?

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Theoretical Framework

- **Critical Museum Studies**
 - **Critical Heritage Studies**
- Museums are **not ideologically neutral**
 - They are **institutions of power**
 - Closely linked to **historical policy**
 - Actively shape **collective memory**

ICOM MUSEUM DEFINITION, 2022

A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the **service of society** that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. **Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability.** They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the **participation of communities**, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.

Methodology

- Qualitative Approach
- Narrative analysis of exhibitions
- Institutional Analysis
- Semi-Structured Interviews

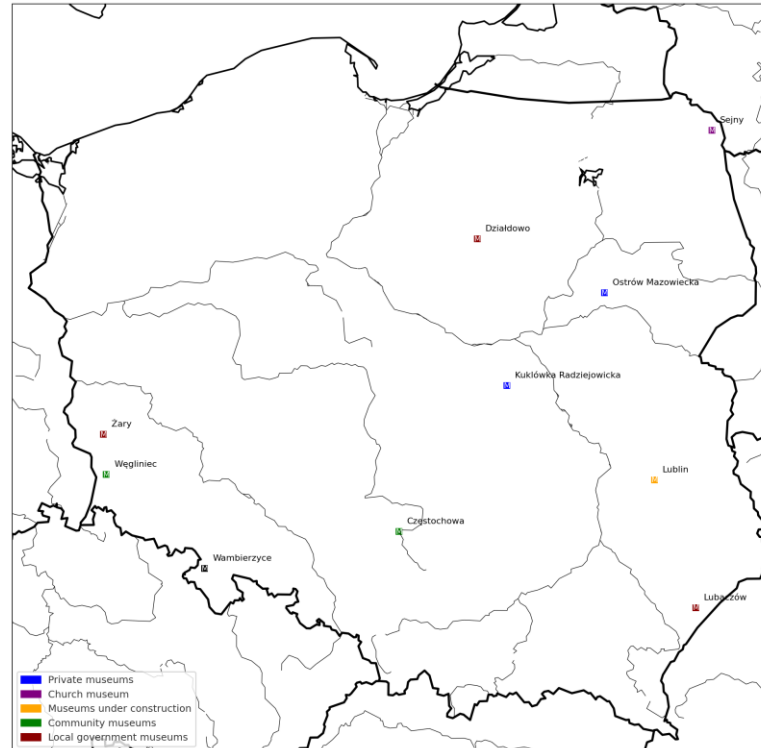
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Borderland Museums in Poland



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Analysed Museums

- The Museum of the Borderland in Działdowo
- Kresy (Eastern Borderland) Muzeum in Lubaczów
- Museum of the Silesian-Lusatian Borderland in Żary

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A Defensive Borderland Narrative

BORDERLAND MUSEUM IN DZIAŁDOWO




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Narrative of Inclusive Homogeneity

Kresy (Eastern Borderland)
Muzeum in Lubaczów




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The Narrative of the Invisible Borderland

Museum of the Silesian-Lusatian Borderland in Żary:




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General Conclusion

- The museum, as a memory institution, does not simply document the borderland, but actively constructs its image.
- The concept of the borderland functions more as an ideological framework than a lived historical reality.
- Museums promote a unified national narrative, with limited space for pluralism and minority perspectives.
- Further research is needed to examine how local communities engage with these institutions and whether they accept, negotiate, or resist the official narratives.

THANK YOU!

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