

EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

Katarzyna Dziewulska*

Biannual Conference of the Association of European Open Air Museums (AEOM) Opole, Gniezno, Biskupin, 26-30 August 2019

On 26-30 August 2019, for the first time in Poland, the Association of European Open Air Museums' (AEOM) biannual international Conference took place. This conference is held cyclically every two years and each time it takes place in a different country associated with AEOM members. The conference was collaboratively organized by the AEOM, the Association of Polish Open Air Museums, the Museum of the First Piasts in Lednica, and Opole Village Museum. The following entities were also partners in this event: the Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park in Chorzów, the Silesian Museum in Katowice, the Milling Museum in Osieczna and the Archeological Museum in Biskupin, as well as the UNESCO Chair of Cultural Property Law, the University of Opole, Poland. The Marshal of the Opole Region, the Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, and the Minister of Culture and National Heritage were the conference patrons. This event was the subject of great interest from the members of the AEOM, with over 100 participants. The conference drew members from Poland, Sweden, Slovakia, Germany, Belgium, Romania, the Czech Republic, France, Great Britain, Norway, Estonia, the United States, Hungary, Switzerland, Denmark, and even from Australia. The main goal of this conference was

* **Katarzyna Dziewulska** is Assistant at the Department of Private Law at the Institute of Legal Sciences of the University of Opole (Poland).

to demonstrate how open air museums represent different cultural identities in their countries, as well as the past, including technical solutions for reconstruction and archaeological interpretation. Furthermore, it was a great opportunity for members of the AEOM to deliberate on important issues about the meaning, purpose, and future of their Association. Participants also took the opportunity to elect the new AEOM president at their general meeting held during the conference.

The event lasted for five days, with various conference sessions held on the second, third, and fourth days. These three days, which together were the core of the event, were divided into two parts – conference sessions comprised of presentations, and visits to local and regional Polish open-air museums. Before the official opening that took place at the Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park in Chorzów, participants of the conference had the opportunity to visit the Silesian Museum in Katowice, as well as to learn important facts about Polish history. Guests were welcomed by Jarosław Gałęza – the director of the Opole Village Museum and Henrik Zipsane – the former President of the AEOM.

The second day of the event took place in the Exhibition and Conference Center in Opole, where substantive deliberations on open-air museums and their role in interpreting the past in a modern, multicultural society began. The first presenter was Claire Girauld-Labelte from ENCATC, who presented a paper on “Citizen Involvement in Heritage: From the Faro Convention to the Strategy 21”. Afterwards, Henrik Zipsane from Jamtli Museum presented a case study titled “Intercultural Dialogue Around the Clock at Jamtli”. The next speaker was Teus Eenkhoorn from the Dutch Open Air Museum in Arnhem, who spoke about the Molukker Barak from a historical perspective. The next paper was authored by Prof. Jan Świąch from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, and his considerations concerned “Ethnic Diversity – Outdoor Exhibitions in Polish Museums, a Reflection of Multiculturalism”. The next presenter was Zsolt Sari from the Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre in Hungary who shared his insights on “Multiple Voices and Contact Zone: Whose is the Hungarian Open Air Museum?”. The next participants who presented their papers and shared outcomes of their deliberations were Martin Brandt Djupdraet and Anna Wowk Vestergaard from the Old Town – Open Air Museum in Aarhus. Their talk was entitled “Life in a Modern Denmark – Multicultural Stories in Den Gamle By”. Hilde Schoefs from the Open Air Museum in Bokrijk then presented her contribution entitled “The Pig from Bokrijk – Including Multiple Perspectives in our Museum”. After the session comprised of these conference papers, all participants travelled to Gniezno, stopping on the way to visit the Milling Museum in Osieczna.

The third day took place in the Institute of European Culture in Gniezno. The topic of the presentations that day was “Open-air Museums and Archaeological Collections”. The day began with a talk entitled “Archaeological Collections in Open-air Museums and the Future of Open-air Museums” which was presented

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by Anke Hufschmidt from the Hagen Open Air Museum. After that, Prof. Andrzej Wyrwa from the University of Poznań, the director of the Museum of the First Piasts in Lednica, presented on “Archaeological, Ethnographic and Natural Heritage, and its Integral Presentation in Open-air Museums – A Few Reflections”. The next contribution was a presentation by Steve Burrows from the Saint Fagans National Museum of History, Wales. This was a case study called “37 Years of Archaeology at St Fagans National Museum of History”. The next case study was about The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, USA and was presented by Peter Inker from EXARC. Following these contributions poster presentations were held on new and/or innovative projects in museums by various members of AEOM. Participants also had the opportunity to take part in small group workshops on the future of open-air museums. There were three groups and four topics: entrepreneurship, new business models, traditions versus super diversity, and marketing/tourism. These workshops were recorded and archived as a record of the proceedings. After these program points, the attendees visited the Museum Wielkopolska Ethnographic Park in Dziekanowice, where they could see objects related to the lives and occupations of Wielkopolska villagers.

On Thursday, 29 August 2019, the fourth day of the AEOM conference began in The Archeological Museum in Biskupin beginning with an introduction to the establishment of this open-air museum. The director Henryk Dąbrowski explained the beginnings of the museum and highlighted the people who contributed to its creation. After visiting the Biskupin Museum participants travelled back to the Institute of European Culture in Gniezno where the General Meeting of AEOM was held. During this part of conference a new president of the AEOM was elected. The former president, Henrik Zipsane, was replaced by Hilde Schoefs from Belgium. These elections were held in the form of an open vote. Moreover, members of AEOM took advantage of this opportunity to be together and also made preliminary arrangements for future conferences. Then, by open vote, they selected locations for three subsequent conferences, which will take place in Sweden, Romania, and Hungary. At the end of this session the AEOM Board Meeting took place, following which the meeting was closed.

The AEOM Biannual Conference 2019 was an extremely important event which served to spread awareness about the importance to society of cultural heritage and the significance of its protection, as well as the role and contributions of open-air museums. Members had many opportunities to share how they are approaching past and current challenges and opportunities and to share best practices with one another. The conference therefore provided an important opportunity for these knowledge exchanges to occur among participants who are the experts in their field. The positive effects of this AEOM conference are not only theoretical but also practical, because these five days have strengthened the relationships between AEOM members, which contributes to the development of a network of cooperation in the sphere of museology, and the protection of culture and heritage.