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The Urban Planning and Architecture of the Period of Third Reich in Poland

An Introduction and Preliminary Findings

The urban planning and architecture of the period of the Third Reich in what is now Poland began to attract scholarly research in the 1990s and has recently flourished. On 24th June 2017, we held a conference in Poznań on the issue. The symposium paved the way for the exchange of insights and experiences among researchers from different universities. The idea to create a meeting place for ideas emerged during seminars organized by the then newly-established Modern Architecture and Urban Planning Research Lab [Pracownia Badań nad Architekturą i Urbanistyką Nowoczesną] at the Art History Department of the University of Wrocław. With our research projects, the Department has been able to develop one of its major study profiles. We were also assisted by the Zamek Culture Centre in Poznań, which engages in a dialogue with its historic premises. We were offered an opportunity to gather in what once used to be the Führer's office, which had been added to the interior of the Imperial Castle in Poznań during its reconstruction under Nazi-German occupation. Ever since then, the building has remained intact in its architectural form. The conference attracted interest from a public much broader than just academic circles, which only demonstrated a growing need for debate on the architectural legacy of the Third Reich. This issue of *kunsttexte.de* brings articles that are based on the papers delivered at the conference organized in June 2017 in Poznań. Their Polish version will be circulated by *Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje* in Poznań.

The scholars who attended the Poznań conference later reconvened at other symposia devoted to the issue. In December 2018, the International Culture Centre in Kraków held a conference on "The Dissonant Heritage of the Third Reich in Poland."¹ In October 2019, a conference will be held in Berlin by the local Centre for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the German Historical Institute in Warsaw. In December 2019, a separate symposium

will be organized by the Institute of Art History in Bern, Switzerland.² As demonstrated, the idea which first emerged in Poznań has resonated in broader research circles, the exchange of insights and ideas flourishing internationally.

The title of this edition "Urban Planning and Architecture of the Period of the Third Reich in Poland" was formulated in such a way that it captures a variety of phenomena. We set out to describe multifarious spatial planning initiatives undertaken by the Germans in Polish territories, while focusing not only on the monumental undertakings to rebuild Polish cities or public buildings, which the term "Nazi urban planning and architecture" immediately brings to mind, but also spatial planning in general. This created a framework to explore a variety of phenomena, including not only spatial planning itself, but also residential architecture, transport infrastructure, and the process of appropriating local building traditions. In other words, the term we used in the title is intended to encapsulate building and architectural designs in general, while capturing a whole array of related narratives that created a new image of the occupied or annexed Polish territories. We particularly sought to describe German activity in the context of the former German experience during the colonization and expansion to the East, which particularly flourished as part of the Nazi occupation policies. It is worth noting that we used the terms *architecture of the period of Third Reich* and *Nazi architecture* interchangeably, although their meaning is defined differently by different researchers. The issue of terminology was also addressed in this volume (by Hanna Grzeszczuk-Brendel and Wojciech Szymański). Such terminological difficulties can be attributed to the fact that during the German occupation, a large number of Polish architects remained active as professionals, e.g. they continued to work clandestinely or were hired by Nazi authorities.



Fig. 1. Polish territories under German occupation during World War II, conception of the map: K. Jara, A. Paradowska, graphic design: K. Wachowiak

The focus of the authors presented in this volume is on the selected aspects of what is now Poland (as indicated in the title). This territory covers (Fig. 1): the area of interwar Poland that was annexed to the Third Reich in 1939, including the former Poznań Voivodeship and parts of the Voivodeships of Pomerania,

Warsaw, and Łódź, all of which were incorporated into the Reichsgau³ Wartheland;⁴ almost the whole of Kraków, Kielce, and Lublin Voivodeships, which were made to form the General Government (German: *Generalgouvernement*), an occupied territory designed as an economic reservoir for the Third Reich;⁵ the Voi-

vodeship of Pomerania and a small stretch of the Voivodeship of Warsaw, which, together with the Free City of Danzig and the western part of the Reichsgau Ostpreussen (Regierungsbezirk Westpreußen), formed the Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen; most of the interwar German administrative units located at the eastern border of the Third Reich: the Gau Ostpreussen, Gau Niederschlesien, and Gau Oberschlesien,⁶ which in 1939 were extended with the stretches of the voivodeships originally belonging to interwar Poland, i.e., the Voivodeships of Pomerania, Warsaw, Białystok, Silesia, Lesser Poland, and Kielce. The only regions which is now Poland and used to be Germany and is not covered in the volume is that of Western Pomerania, i.e., the majority of what once used to be the Gau Pommern and a small part of former Gau Mark Brandenburg.

These divisions evolved over time, which does have a bearing on chronological distinctions. The chronology we applied to the original territories of the Third Reich is that of 1933–1945, while the territory of interwar Poland under Nazi-German occupation was examined from 1939 to 1945.

This territorial and temporal framework allows the gap in contemporary research on the urban planning and architecture of the Third Reich to be filled, which currently offers few detailed findings on today's Poland and the former eastern administrative units of Nazi Germany (Fig. 2). It also serves as a starting point for further investigations into the territories that were not covered in this volume. Apart from Western Pomerania, once part of the Gau Pommern, a similar elaboration would be welcome on the Reichsgau Westpreussen, its northern stretch now part of the Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia. Similar studies could be offered on those interwar Polish territories that were occupied in 1941 and are now either partially or entirely in Poland or on the other side of its eastern border.⁷

When adopting a historical and administrative perspective, one may finally notice a key issue for the understanding of the German spatial planning machinery, i.e., the fact that the areas of interwar Poland that were either annexed or occupied by the Third Reich were in a different situation than other European countries invaded by Germany, be it France or Bohe-

mia. The latter escaped much of the massive and ruthless activity targeted against the local population, including the displacement of people, extermination, pillage, and the use of prisoners and former POWs as forced labour.

Those who investigate German spatial planning initiatives also have to address each of the administrative units created in occupied Poland on its own. German authorities had different goals in different administrative subdivisions: those which comprised only stretches of captured Polish territories, those which were composed exclusively of Polish territories (Warthegau), or those with a status of an occupied territory (the General Government). A preliminary overview of literature and archive records clearly demonstrates that German spatial planning activities were at their most comprehensive in those areas that had previously been under German rule, in one historical period or the other. German planners harnessed previous experiences, especially from the time when Poland had been under German, Austrian, and Russian rule. Ideas such as *Drang nach Osten* and *Mittleuropa*,⁸ which were a part and parcel of German culture and academic life, and the *Ostforschung* line of research served as a prominent foundation for decision-making processes. Historical determinants were one of the major issues discussed by German planners.⁹ Planning proposals were made based on the available information concerning a captured territory, their goal being to legitimize the newly-arrived German power. In other areas, planning activities were made mainly in larger cities or selected regions.

The focus on Polish territories opens up an opportunity to alter the existing perceptions of the history of the urban planning and architecture of the Third Reich. Our plan is to shift the focus from the centers of power to the captured and colonized territories, which were yet to fit in with the old Reich. A case in point is the colonization of the annexed territories (Warthegau), which demonstrates the extent to which residential architecture and social engineering were intertwined with each other. Housing estates were built according to the standards for the whole of the Third Reich, which only added to their significance when developed in Polish territories. Not only did they provide a housing framework for Nazi-prescribed

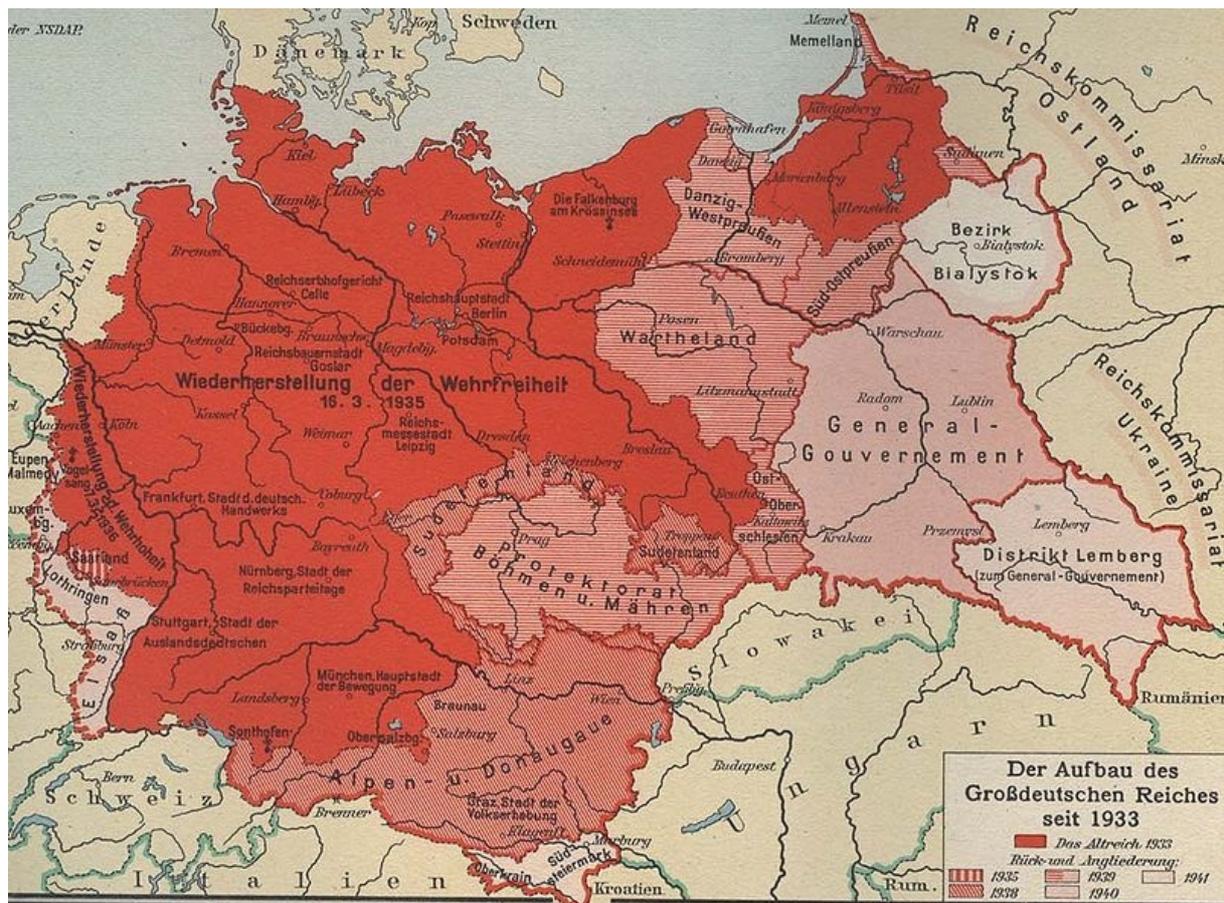


Fig. 2: „Building the Great German Reich from 1933”, propaganda map from ca. 1941

family life, but also served as exclusively German residential enclaves. As such, they may be treated as an immediate effect of the radical displacement and segregation policies following racist ideology. Therefore, only by investigating Polish territories one may fully reveal Nazi residential architecture as a broadly-applied political instrument.

The articles are presented according to geography and issues addressed; they are also preceded with a foreword by Niels Gutschow, a pioneering researcher in the architecture of Polish occupied territories. The monograph begins with two papers on the Reichsgau Wartheland, by Aleksandra Paradowska and Hanna Grzeszczuk-Brendel respectively. The former's primary focus is on the Germanizing tradition in Polish territories and the way it was reflected in spatial plans and designs developed during World War II. The latter describes residential architecture in Poznań and the way it revealed various aspects of Nazi ideology and me-

chanisms of social control. Historical experiences, too, had a great bearing on spatial planning in Silesia. The architectural vision of the region was determined by its location at the eastern frontier of the Third Reich, which is examined in detail by Karolina Jara. The General Government is yet another area to be discussed in the volume. Żanna Komar offers a study on the architecture of Kraków, with a specific focus on Hubert Ritter's designs; however, she also elucidates the institutional determinants of particular designs and their execution. Wojciech Szymański furnishes a novel perspective on the selected German realizations in Kraków. Additionally, he elaborates a new interpretation of vernacularism in architecture: the one that accounts for cultural and ethnographic contexts in German propaganda. The last two articles are documentary studies. Jagoda Załęska-Kaczko describes in detail both planned and completed undertakings in Gdańsk [Danzig], which was incorporated into Germa-

ny in 1939 as part of a newly-established Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen. The last article in the volume is that of Jan Salm's, who shares insights on the study of architecture in the period of the Third Reich in the Gau Ostpreussen while offering a number of postulations for future research on Eastern Prussia and beyond.

With its content, this issue is intended to turn a new leaf in the study of the architecture of the Third Reich in Polish territories. We seek to cover both basic research and the questions of methodology. At the same time, our monograph belongs within a series of translation and research initiatives. One such initiative is the Polish edition of *Ordnungswahn. Architekten planen im eingedeutschten Osten 1939–1945* by Niels Gutschow, which is scheduled to be published next year by the German Historical Institute in Warsaw (edited by A. Paradowska and A. Wienert). Paradowska is also preparing a monograph on the Reichsgau Wartheland, while Jara and Załęska-Kaczko are working on their PhD dissertations on Silesia and Gdańsk respectively. These dissertations will offer further investigations into the architecture of the Third Reich and open up new perspectives on the issue. They should be followed by a corpus of basic information on particular construction projects that were either designed or completed in Polish territories to resemble native Germany.¹⁰ Only then could one be able to examine in detail the machinery of urban planning and architectural designs under Nazi rule and offer a more comprehensive picture of this phenomenon. At this point in time, a number of issues are yet to be thoroughly explained. Decision-making and funding processes that were managed by various German institutions and their leaders are particularly difficult to explain. The conflicting competencies of these institutions became markedly visible after 1939.

The articles in this volume address publications that have been offered on the issue over the last thirty years. For Polish readers, *Sztuka III Rzeszy* by Piotr Krakowski (published in 1994) is a seminal overview of the art of the Third Reich. The book, which failed to address the Polish territory, was nonetheless able to attract interest in the topic in Poland.¹¹ Concurrently, German scholars developed research on architecture in both occupied and annexed Polish territories,

which was chiefly down to the ground-breaking publications by Niels Gutschow on Warsaw and “the German East.”¹² Emphatically, Gutschow is the first researcher to have addressed the topic, which had only briefly been mentioned in broader overviews of architecture at the time.

Speaking of the history of architecture in general, the architecture of the Third Reich requires a particular approach, which has been emphasized in a number of ways by relevant researchers. One such suggestion was shared by Gutschow himself, whose *Ordnungswahn*, or “the obsession with order,” has already entered common usage. The term perfectly captures the wartime strivings of German architects, who may be treated as “the extensions of Nazi power.”¹³ If one follows this suggestion, one must necessarily examine a variety of historical and cultural determinants, while underscoring the fact that German planning was inextricably linked to the exploitation of conquered territories.¹⁴ The term encapsulates a number of elements that defined ruthless Nazi policies: extermination, displacement, forced labour, pillage, and economic exploitation. Tadeusz Barucki, a distinguished Polish scholar of the older generation, has investigated these issues for a number of years. In his synthetic monograph, he focuses on massive human (also among architects) and material loss (the effect of military operations).¹⁵ Barucki's outlook reveals a number of determinants and complex phenomena, including those resulting from the Soviet occupation of Poland. He also complements this picture with an account of Polish spatial planning and design activities during World War II, which had previously been examined only with regard to few Polish cities.¹⁶

The accounts of large cities prevail in publications on Nazi architecture, which also reflect the spatial planning priority of the Nazi regime. Various planning aspects were described with regard to the urban space of today's Poland, often with a reference to the biographies of the architects responsible for the effort. This includes the cities of Gdańsk,¹⁷ Gdynia,¹⁸ Szczecin,¹⁹ Łódź,²⁰ Poznań,²¹ Wrocław,²² Warszawa,²³ Kraków,²⁴ and Toruń.²⁵ The books on Łódź and Wrocław offer the most synthetic insights out of the whole list. A further way to offer more targeted studies would be to explore the functioning of the cities in the

context of the whole regions, which found suitable reflections in their spatial planning and architecture.²⁶ A number of articles in this volume seek to provide such studies.

Auschwitz, where the spatial planning of the town and the concentration camp was carried out in equal measure, is unique for our research. This town has become a symbol of the Holocaust. Hence abundant publications on the subject.²⁷ Other camps have also attracted scrutiny, which nonetheless resulted in fewer publications.²⁸ The history of concentration camps and forced labour naturally involves the planning of industrial facilities and railway infrastructure.²⁹ This only shows how different and ostensibly neutral planning activities were inextricably linked with one another. Strategic and military facilities attract much scrutiny, especially in books intended for the general public.³⁰

Literature on the subject, especially the latest publications, has markedly raised the awareness of the processes occurring in the annexed or occupied territories, which previously were rather ignored. As a result, these areas are now increasingly discussed in overview publications on the history of architecture and spatial planning.³¹ It is our hope that future studies on the architecture of the Third Reich in what is today's Germany will also refer to findings on the German spatial planning effort in Poland, this publication providing necessary support in this respect. The planning effort is like a lens that brings together all of the aspects of German policies during the Nazi regime.

The volume would never be published without the support of numerous individuals and institutions. First and foremost, we would like to give a word of thanks to our reviewers: Professor Agnieszka Zabłocka-Kos and Professor Hubert Orłowski. We would also like to express our gratitude to Professor Niels Gutschow, who provided a foreword to our volume and has offered support ever since we started our explorations. He invariably provokes us to formulate new research questions. The conference would not have happened if it had not been for the kind support of the ZAMEK Culture Centre in Poznań, in particular its Director Anna Hryniewiecka and Maria Fenrych from the Department of Interdisciplinary Projects. We are also much obliged to the University of Wrocław and the

University of Fine Arts in Poznań for funding both Polish and English editions of our publication. We would also like to thank Dr Katja Bernhardt, who was generous enough to invite us to publish the volume at kunsttexte.de, and Bartosz Sowiński, our extremely reliable translator.

Endnotes

1. Find out more at the following website: <http://mck.krakow.pl/konferencje/klopotiwe-dziedzictwo-trzeciej-rzeszy-w-polsce> (last retrieved: 1st August 2019).
2. The Berlin conference will be held under the title: Planning the New East. Architecture and Urban Planning under Nazi-German Occupation in Central and Eastern Europe <http://www.cbh.pan.pl/wydarzenia/planowanie-nowego-wschodu-architektura-i-urbanistyka-pod-okupacj%C4%85-niemieck%C4%85>, <http://www.cbh.pan.pl/de/planung-des-neuen-ostens-architektur-und-st%C3%A4dtebau-unter-deutscher-besatzung> (last retrieved: 1/09/2019); the Bern conference in turn: Digital Humanities und die ‚Messbarkeit‘ des NS-Regimes, <https://www.hsoz-kult.de/event/id/termine-39912> (last retrieved: 1/09/2019).
3. The name Reichsgau denoted an administrative unit which covered the same boundaries as a Nazi Party subdivision (Gau), under a Reichsstatthalter (Imperial Governor), who usually also acted as a Gauleiter (Nazi Party Leader). Eventually, only those territories that were annexed by Nazi Germany after 1937 would be designated as Gaue. Amongst the areas which are now Poland, those included Wartheland (initially, the Gau Posen) and Danzig-Westpreußen (initially, the Gau Westpreußen).
4. The names Warthegau and Wartheland were used interchangeably, researchers customarily designating the area with these two historical forms. Similarly, the General Government was also referred to with its German name Generalgouvernement.
5. With the exception of Distrikt Galizien, which was incorporated into the General Government in 1941.
6. Until 1941, both the Gau Niederschlesien and Gau Oberschlesien were simply designated as the Gau Schlesien.
7. These include:
 - former Tarnopol (today's Ternopil) and Stanisławów (today's Ivano-Frankivsk) Voivodeships and the eastern stretch of the Lwów (today's Lviv) Voivodeship, which were combined into Distrikt Galizien, later incorporated into the General Government in 1941 (all these area are now in Ukraine);
 - the interwar Białystok Voivodeship and a stretch of the Polesie (or Polesia) Voivodeship, namely Bezirk Białystok, which was part of the Gau Westpreussen (today's Belarus and Lithuania);
 - Wołyń (today's Volhynia) and Polesie (or Polesia) Voivodeships (then part of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine)
 - Wilno (today's Vilnius) and Nowogródek (today's Navahrudak) Voivodeships (then part of the Reichskommissariat Ostland).
8. We are referring to the concept of Mitteleuropa (Central Europe), which developed as part of the völkisch movement during the German Empire, to describe German plans for expansion during World War I. The term is also used in other contexts, see: Cook / Stevenson 2004, *Leksykon historii Europy XX wieku*, p. 407.
9. More on the topic, cf. articles by Jara and Paradowska in this volume.
10. The major publication on the topic is: Weihsmann 1998, *Bauen unterm Hakenkreuz*.
11. Krakowski 1994, *Sztuka Trzeciej Rzeszy*.
12. Gutschow 2001, *Ordnungswahn*; Durth / Gutschow 1993, *Träume in Trümmern*; Gutschow/Klein 1995, *Zagłada i utopia*; Gutschow/Klain 1994, *Vernichtung und Utopie*.
13. Gutschow 2001, *Ordnungswahn*; Cf. essays in: Nerdinger 2014, *Architektur und Verbrechen*.

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14. The output of concentration and labour camps and the monumental undertakings of the Third Reich were connected and described in detail by Jaskot 2000, *The Architecture of Oppression*.
15. Barucki 2017, *Architektura wojny*.
16. The topic was also covered by Barucki 2014, *Architektura wojny*; Durth / Gutschow 1993, *Träume in Trümmern*; Popiołek 2017, *Warschau. Ein Wiederaufbau*; Paradowska 2017, "Niedoszlzy Himmlerstadt."
17. Bernhardt 2015, *Stil-Raum-Ordnung*; Pusback 2006, *Stadt als Heimat*; Perz 2009, *Paul-Beneke-Jugendherberge*.
18. Omilanowska 2012, Herbert Böhm.
19. Bernhardt 2003, Hans Bernhard Reichows Gedanken.
20. Bolanowski 2013, *Architektura okupowanej Łodzi*.
21. Grzeszczuk-Brendel 2012, *Miasto do mieszkania*; Grzeszczuk-Brendel 2005, *Architektura i urbanistyka Poznania* – see a broader list of her papers, published mainly by the journal *Kronika Miasta Poznania*; Kodym-Kozaczko 2017, *Urbanistyka Poznania w XX wieku (fragments)*.
22. Dobesz 2016, *Wrocławska architektura*, and his other publications; Jara 2016, *Wrocławski waterfront*.
23. Gutschow/Klain 1994, *Vernichtung und Utopie*; Popiołek 2017, *Warschau. Ein Wiederaufbau*. German spatial plans for Warsaw in a broader context were described by Nemeč 2018, *Planowanie i przebudowa*.
24. Purchla 2005, Hubert Ritter. To find out more about more publications on Kraków, see Żanna Komar's article in this volume.
25. Birecki 2011, *Sztuka w Toruniu*, p. 34–75.
26. Smaller towns and villages have begun to attract scholarly interest recently. Cf. Jara 2016, *Wrocławski waterfront*; Górzyński 2013, *Przestrzeń postkolonialna?*; Lesiakowski 2015, *Hitlerowskie plany przebudowy Sieradza*; Paradowska 2016, „Polskie drogi”; Paradowska 2016, „Wyjątkowe zadania”.
27. Steinbacher 2012, *Auschwitz*; Steinbacher 2005, *Auschwitz*; Dwork / Pelt 2011, *Auschwitz. Historia miasta i obozu*; Dwork / Pelt 2011, *Auschwitz*; Gutschow 2001, *Ordnungswahn*, p. 77–143; Durth / Gutschow 1993, *Träume in Trümmern*, p. 99–112.
28. Wienert 2018, *Das Lager vorstellen* – cf. a list of references on concentration and labour camps.
29. Pyszczółkowski 2012, *DAG Bromberg*; Urbaniak 2010, *Zabytkowa stacja kolejowa Gniezno*.
30. Cf. publications on the Wolf's Lair (German: *Wolfsschanze*), the Project Riese, or the Fortified Front Oder-Warthe-Bogen (German: *Festungsfront Oder-Warthe-Bogen*)
31. Anna Teut's book is the only older publication focused on the topic: Teut 1967, *Architektur im Dritten Reich*, p. 342–365. The documents she examined also include those concerning the colonization of the East. As of late, Polish territories under Nazi-German occupation have been discussed in the following publications: Cohen 2011, *Architecture in Uniform*, p. 290–295; 354–362; Kegler 2015, *Deutsche Raumplanung*, p. 159–166; 180–308.

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Illustrations

- 1: Poland during Second World War, conception of the map: Karolina Jara, Aleksandra Paradowska, graphic design: Krzysztof Wachowiak.
- 2: Private Archive of Aleksandra Paradowska.

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Aleksandra Paradowska, PhD, works as an Assistant Professor at the Chair of Art History and Philosophy, Faculty of Art Education and Curatorial Studies, of the University of Fine Arts in Poznań; she also collaborates with the Research Lab for Modern Architecture Studies and Urban Planning Studios (the Institute of Art History of the University of Wrocław). She has written a number of publications on the history of architecture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including books such as “Przeciw chorobie. Architektura szpitalna Wielkopolski w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym” [Against illness. The Hospital Architecture of Greater Poland in the Interwar Years 1918–1939] (Poznań 2014) and “Na Starym Grunwaldzie. Domy i ich mieszkańcy” [Stary Grunwald Residential Estate. Houses and their Dwellers] (Poznań, 2012, in collaboration with Piotr Korduba). From 2014-2017, Paradowska carried out the research project “Nazi Architecture in the Reichsgau Wartheland 1939-1945” as part of the FUGA 3 grant, awarded by the National Science Centre, Poland, under the supervision of Professor Agnieszka Zabłocka-Kos. She has been awarded the following scholarships, DAAD (2010), START by the Foundation for Polish Science (2014), as well as a scholarship for leading young researchers in Poland by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2017).

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