

Protection and Conservation of Modern Movement Heritage in Gdynia – Some Examples of Local Government Activities

Robert Hirsch
Gdynia – Gdańsk, Poland

Introduction

Under Polish legislation of 23 July, 2003 on the protection and care of historical monuments, the bodies responsible for protection are the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, on whose behalf specific tasks are performed by the Conservator General and by provincial governors [*voivodes*], on whose behalf specific tasks are performed by the respective Provincial Monument Preservation Officers.¹ Under the same law, a significant proportion of the tasks is the responsibility of the local government and its agencies. The law also allows the governor to delegate some of the powers of the provincial preservation officer to counties and municipalities, which practically means the latter perform the tasks of the heritage protection bodies².

The increased role of local authorities, especially municipalities and counties, in heritage protection is the natural consequence of the devolution that has taken place in recent years. Municipal and county authorities have taken over a significant proportion of heritage protection activities – as required by law, or as they have agreed to do themselves. In this way local government agencies are complementary to national administration, relieving it from some of the workload.

The significance of local government and

the benefits of their involvement in heritage protection are the subject of various publications dealing with the mechanisms of protection of historical objects. This demonstrates that the right course of change has been taken³.

Polish experiences connected with the performance by local authorities of heritage protection tasks under the existing laws are still limited and the knowledge of these activities is unfortunately scattered. There is no overall information to tell us how this important process of change affects the condition of historical objects. Although the activities of local authorities are not coordinated, nor have they been recapitulated nationally, the removal of barriers to their involvement in heritage protection seems to be one of the ways in which the difficult situation of historical objects in Poland can be improved, at the time when the system of heritage protection is being remodelled.

The seven years of experiences in the municipality of Gdynia, where protection and care of historical objects is the responsibility of a dedicated unit – the municipal monument conservation office – can help us to outline the measures at the disposal of local government preservation officers. At the same time, the large stock of Modern Architecture in Gdynia can help us in our efforts to determine in what

1. Art. 89 of the 2003 law on the protection and care of historical monuments (Dz.U. 2003 r. nr 162 poz. 1568)

2. Art. 93 section 4 of the Law identifies the responsibilities of the local government and its agencies thereunder. Art. 96 section 2 defines when and how powers can be transferred.

3. Evidence of this can be found in: Pruszyński Jan, *Dziedzictwo kultury polskiej. Jego straty i ochrona prawna*, vol. II, Kraków 2001, p. 465; Pawłowska Krystyna, Swaryczewska Magdalena, *Ochrona dziedzictwa kulturowego. Zarządzanie i partycypacja społeczna*, Kraków 2002, p. 67.

way the protection of buildings erected in the 20th century differs from the protection of older heritage, with a generally recognised image⁴.

The heritage protection activities of the city preservation officer on behalf of the Gdynia municipality can be thematically divided into a few groups. These selected directions seem to be of great importance for heritage protection, and include:

1. Monuments – research and documentation.
2. Heritage – education and promotion.
3. Revalorisation of historical sites.
4. Funding of the conservation work.
5. Instituting monument protection in the city.
6. Tasks transferred by the provincial preservation officer.

1. Monuments – research and documentation

No effective protection and conservation of historical objects can take place without a good knowledge of what heritage items are in the territory managed by the local authority. The law on the protection and care of historical monuments charges municipalities with specific duties by saying that *the mayor shall keep municipal records of monuments in the form of a set of address cards*.⁵ Monument records are the basis on which care of monuments can be programmed by adequate tiers of administration, but is also necessary in the drafting of planning documents, like the local plan, and in the work of conservators.

In 2000-2002, a regional built environment research centre from Gdańsk (*ROSIOŚK*) prepared municipal records of what was then still referred to as “cultural goods,” commissioned by Gdynia. The records covered 727 buildings and groups of buildings. In subsequent years, specialist documentation was prepared to supplement the records with information on historical objects, which were previously not recorded by preservation offices. The studies covered, among others, buildings and facilities used by the military, the ports, the railway as well as valuable fittings and details in otherwise well-known buildings.⁶ Record entries were

prepared by experts specialising in a given type of structure and were the first attempt to include the heritage previously outside the scope of interest of conservators. In 2007, on the basis of this documentation, a uniform list of 861 historical buildings in Gdynia was compiled for the provincial and municipal records, and is now one of the elements of the programme of municipal care of historical monuments.

When we compare the efforts of various municipalities to build records of historical monuments in their respective areas, it has to be said that such records are prepared up to different standards. Individual records of objects do contain the information required by the law, but recorded in different ways and usually greatly extended, depending on the needs of the entity ordering them. Some municipalities, e.g. Warsaw, run professional electronic databases, which are accessible via the Internet. Others gather the traditional sets of address cards, often containing many thousands of sheets, i.e. too large to be used efficiently. In the absence of standardised requirements, like an approved format of address card for the municipal records of historical monuments, a lot of information is difficult to standardise, and accordingly, to use in a comprehensive manner.

Records documenting historical monuments made and kept by the City Hall of Gdynia, apart from the address cards of the records, include studies of specific monuments prepared in view of their future protection. As the so-called “white card” is a standard record accepted by conservators, the studies of the selected most valuable historical buildings and areas in Gdynia are prepared in this format. These studies, which are very useful in day-to-day activities, make future listing process much easier. It is obvious that this is done in close cooperation of the provincial and municipal preservation officers.

Among conservator studies, a special place is taken by documentation of the research concerning selected historical buildings from the 1918-1939 period. Information on materials

ne obiekty fortyfikacyjne na terenie Gdyni i w jej otoczeniu, ROSIOŚK in Gdańsk, Gdańsk 2001 r.; Fey Grzegorz, Labudda Krzysztof, *Historyczne obiekty związane z koleją na terenie miasta Gdyni*, vol. 1-2, Gdynia 2002, Pomorskie Towarzystwo Miłośników Kolei Żelaznych; Berent Iwona, Szmyt Dorota, *Ewidencja ruchomych dóbr kultury w obiektach sakralnych na terenie miasta Gdyni*, Gdynia 2002; Stępiński Krzysztof, Szatybełko Michał, Stępińska Ewa, *Inwentaryzacja konserwatorska historycznych detali architektonicznych na terenie Gdyni, dzielnice Śródmieścia i Kamienna Góra*, vol. I-III, Gdynia 2003; Orchowska-Smolińska Anna, *Ewidencja historycznych budynków na terenie portu w Gdyni*, vol. I-II, Gdynia 2004.

4. In June 2008, there were 8 protected areas (including two manors with parks) and 52 buildings or groups of buildings in Gdynia, listed in the registers of historical monuments. New listings are being prepared. Of the buildings listed individually, 22 are Modernist buildings (groups of buildings). There are also numerous Modernist buildings in the protected areas.

5. Art. 22 of the 2003 law on the protection and care of historical monuments.

6. Major specialist record-building studies include: *Historycz-*



1. a, b The historical building of former bank pension fund (FE BGK) at 27-31 street 3 Maja in Gdynia after elevation repair of 2002-2005, view from streets 3 Maja and Batorego. Photo by the author

and technologies used in the 1920s and 1930s is just as little known as it is priceless. The most extensive conservator's documentation of a historical building in Gdynia was prepared in 2000, in connection with the planned refacing of the former pension fund (FE BGK) residential building at the crossroads of streets 10 Lutego, 3 Maja and Batorego.⁷ The study, which included laboratory testing of materials, was used to conduct the revalorisation of the elevations (Figs. 1 a & b) in 2002-2005. A study then conducted in connection with the bad condition of the stone cladding of elevations revealed that the part of the building (the corner of 10 Lutego and 3 Maja) that was built first, was faced with panels of limestone from the area of Pińczów in southern Poland, while the two other segments of the building, built a few years later, had elevation of plasterwork so partitioned that it looked exactly like stone cladding.

Apart from the kinds of records mentioned above, others are prepared for the local government preservation office; inventories, analyses, experts' reports and other documentation needed for conservation and restoration work on historical buildings. They largely concern monuments of Modern Architecture and we may say that documentation methods used so far for monuments from earlier centuries are successfully used in studying and recording 20th-century architecture.

7. Dembek Elżbieta, Dembek Tomasz, Macur Andrzej, Mikulski Tomasz, *Ekspertyza konserwatorska dla remontu elewacji budynku w Gdyni przy ul. 3 Maja 27-31 i Batorego 26*, mps, Gdynia 2000.

2. Heritage – education and promotion

Promotion of monuments and education about them is an important tool of long-term protection, as it fosters – through awareness raising – voluntary care and protection. These activities, less significant with renowned, generally recognised monuments, are of crucial importance when targeted at relatively young monuments dating back, like in Gdynia, to the 1920s and 1930s. Modern Architecture, looking nothing like monuments in the common understanding of the word, is considered by many – also Gdynia residents – to be of a lesser artistic or historical value. Unfortunately, this lack of understanding of the value of Modernist monuments is often responsible for their unintended destruction or degradation. This is why a change of attitudes to Modernist heritage is an important element of its protection.

Credit should be given here to researchers and enthusiasts popularising the architecture of Gdynia, in particular to Maria Sołtysik – the author of books and scientific publications on the history of Gdynia and its heritage.⁸ These publications form a research base, also in promoting the monuments of the city.

Realising the importance of promoting the city's heritage, Gdynia City Hall prepares publications about it, organises lectures and study tours as well as training courses for tourist guides and the custodians of the monuments.

8. E.g., Sołtysik M. J., *Gdynia, miasto dwudziestolecia międzywojennego. Urbanistyka i architektura*, Warsaw 1993.



2. Cover pages of some of the brochures popularising historical buildings in Gdynia; prepared by the monument preservation officer and published by Gdynia City Hall in 2004-2008

Since 2004, the municipal monument protection office has been publishing brochures trying to make the physical heritage of Gdynia more familiar (Fig. 2). They are funded entirely by the city and distributed free of charge – to schools, museums and libraries in the first place, but also to associations, societies and tourist information offices, in order that as many people as possible can read them. The brochures are designed to inform the reader in an accessible way about the city's heritage, to develop and strengthen historical interests of the citizens as

3. Central railway station in Gdynia, fragment of north-western elevation. Photo by the author



well as to popularise the monuments with the visitors, encouraging them to see for themselves. Specialists and cooperating organisations, like the Gdańsk Archaeological Museum, Gdynia City Museum and local communities, e.g., the district councils of Gdynia, are responsible for the content.

In 2005, the most extensive guidebook of Gdynia monuments was prepared. The publication explains what makes these young monuments special and unique. The book also presents major historical monuments of the whole city.⁹ Other brochures are published in two series; the first one presents the historical districts of Gdynia and their monuments, while the other is published as "A Short Tour of the Monuments of Gdynia," encouraging the reader to see them for him/herself¹⁰.

Other monument-promoting activities supplement the popular publications. Tours of less known, historical parts of the city, like the port, organised by Gdynia City Hall meet with considerable interest. Other activities are targeted at specialists, like training courses for voluntary custodians of historical monuments, seminars or conferences. The conference *Modernism in Europe - Modernism in Gdynia. Architecture of 1920s and 1930s and Its Protection* was attended by researchers from eight countries and its next edition is planned for September 2009.

An educational film had been prepared for the 2007 conference, "Historical Gdynia,"

9. Sołtysik Maria Jolanta, Hirsch Robert, *Gdynia nowoczesna – Gdynia zabytkowa. Informator o gdynskich zabytkach*, wyd. Urząd Miasta Gdyni, Gdynia 2005.

10. The first series included the guidebooks of the districts of Kamienna Góra (2004), Oksywie (2006) and Chylonia (2007). The second – a brochure about the Modernist centre of Gdynia, the manor estate of Kolibki and the Cold-War cannon battery in Gdynia-Redłowo. The brochures are available in pdf format on www.gdynia.pl/zabytki.

showing the city's monuments. It is now used for educational purposes by schools and cultural institutions in Gdynia, like the Gdynia City Museum. The film in English has also been presented to Gdynia's partners abroad.

The significance of education and information on the historical value of relatively new buildings is well demonstrated by the case of the central railway station in Gdynia, when the listing procedure was under way in mid-2007. The unassuming station buildings erected in 1950-1959 to the design of Waław Tomaszewski, were chosen by conservators and experts as the first site developed in Gdynia after World War II deserving to be listed in the register of monuments. (Fig. 3). The announcement that heritage of the communist era was to be protected caused an uproar in the media. Public and media response to the issue was marked by astonishment, sometimes blended with scorn.¹¹ The prospective protection by the preservation office was contrasted with the run-down interiors and elevations of the building. Interestingly, those opposed to the idea were afraid that this would mean preserving the current state of neglect. The public discussion, however, created an opportunity for the conservators to explain what the general goals and principles of monument protection are and to indicate the objective value of the buildings. Polish Railway people behaved rationally – after initial reserve they began talks with conservators and the authorities of Gdynia and decided to confine repair work in progress to preservation rather than alteration. It should be added here that, despite its age, the railway station continues to prove its functional worth and can be used for many years to come, therefore the issue of protection in this case demonstrates that a solution can be found. The administrative decision upon which the buildings become listed takes effect in the late 2008.

The case of the railway station in Gdynia has demonstrated clearly how important it is to educate and inform the public about the goals and the principles of protecting the most recent buildings and how much remains to be done in this area.

11. One of the tabloids published an article on the listing of the railway station building illustrated with tendentious photos of its dilapidated fragments and very unfavourable comments. This was supplemented with a photo of the provincial preservation officer with a caption saying „He is the one who got it into his head!” Other media were more inclined to show a better understanding of the proposal and published opinions and arguments of both the opponents and the supporters of the proposal.



4. The decrepit stone cladding of former FE BGK building at 27-31, 3 Maja street in Gdynia. Photo by the author

3. Revalorisation of historical sites

Revalorisation of historical monuments of the Modern Movement, apart from the obvious improvement in their condition, is an opportunity to get familiar with interesting details of the architecture of the time. Our knowledge is broad when it comes to architectural forms as well as structural and functional solutions of the 1930s, but definitely less extensive in the area of technological and artistic details.

During restoration work, we may learn some of the details of craftsmanship, underlying composition guidelines, the texture, the colour – now rather faint. In 2002-2008 about a dozen Modernist buildings in Gdynia underwent some form of restoration – roof repair, insulation, refitting, most commonly though, refacing.

The most extensive conservation project of recent years in Gdynia, both in terms of cost and the variety of problems tackled, is the FE BGK house at 27-31, 3 Maja street. The building, the largest in prewar Gdynia in terms of cubature, has been under ongoing renovation since 2000, funded by the owners associated in a housing community and by the municipality of Gdynia. Work had to be started because of the alarming condition of the elevation, from which large pieces of stone cladding would fall to the ground. At first, extensive conservation documentation was prepared.¹² The facing of the building above ground floor level was partly limestone cladding and partly plasterwork imitating such cladding. The coastal climate proved particularly detrimental to the lime panels. There were two kinds of problems; surface corrosion of the panels as well as panel unbinding caused by metal anchor corrosion (Fig. 4).¹³ The wall facing was made of 1.65x0.65 m lime panels,

12. Cf. footnote 6.

13. Cf.: Hirsch Robert, *Ratowanie elewacji*, „Spotkania z Zabytkami,” No. 2/2003, pp. 35-36.



5. Small-tile flooring in the doorway of former FE BGK building at 27-31, 3 Maja street in Gdynia during 2006 reconstruction. Photo by the author

4 cm thick. They had chamfering from the inward side so that they would stick better to the mortar, with which the space between the panel and the wall was filled. The metal flats, initially thought to be anchors, were to secure a gap between the two prior to its filling with mortar. It was those metal elements which, after corroding, were responsible for the damage to the elevations. The total of the elevations from the side of the three adjacent streets, amounting to 3.9 thousand square metres, was restored in four stages between 2002 and 2005. After that,

6. Revolving-frame windows of the staircase at 27-31, 3 Maja street after 2007 renovation. Photo by the author



conservation effort was targeted at the ground floor cladding of tiles, terrazzo and stuccowork. The doorway flooring was also revalorised. It had been made of special-shape, corset-like tiles in several colours. They were very popular in Gdynia before WWII, but are no longer available, so they had to be made to order for the purpose of the revalorisation.

Another conservation challenge in the same building was the restoration of the windows in the staircase. The windows, running in one flight along six stories, were made of 27 revolving metal frames with panes. The frames were fixed by metal flats into sets of four or five, and would be opened by a crank-operated gear. The windows had not been opened for years and the gear was out of order, but they were a frequent modernistic detail (Fig. 6), known among others, from *Bauhaus* school building in Gropiusallee in Dessau, and therefore deserved conservation. This was successfully done, although not without difficulty, especially in finding the right contractor¹⁴.

According to the owners' initial plans, the old windows were to be replaced by modern aluminium ones. The possibility of public funding only for the repair of the original windows made the owners undertake the difficult task of conservation. This is another example of how a historical object and its conservation depends on attitudes, which are best shaped by money.

14. The contractor for window revalorisation was a conservation company *Ekoinbud* from Gdańsk.

7. 1939 public transport depot halls, converted in 2005-2006 to Pomeranian Science and Technology Park. Photo by the author





8. 1949 battery of coastal artillery at Gdynia-Redłowo. One of the cannon renovated by volunteers. Photo by the author

The municipality of Gdynia has also contributed as project sponsor to the preservation of structures dating back to the Modern Movement. A major recent example is the conversion of reinforced-concrete halls of a bus and trolleybus depot to the Pomeranian Science and Technology Park (Fig. 7). This successful project carried out in 2005-2006, meant revalorisation and conversion of the 1939 facility, making the previously inaccessible historical object a science and culture centre – very important for the city.

Revalorisation of historical sites can also be conducted in a less conventional, yet effective way. An example from Gdynia – this time nothing to do with Modern Architecture, but nevertheless worth popularising – is the revalorisation of historical fortifications built in the late 1940s at *Kępa Redłowska* in Gdynia. In 2005-2008, fortification enthusiasts from local associations renovated part of the structures no longer used by the military and left in total disrepair. The renovation covered the reinforced-concrete artillery position that during the Cold War was supposed to defend the port of Gdynia. These activities were conducted in close cooperation with Gdynia City Hall and the Navy. In 2008, the district council of Redłowo and the local community joined in. The involvement of the public and their enthusiasm helped to renovate a historical object which is now the most interesting of the kind in the whole of the Tri-city.

The experience gained in Gdynia during recent revalorisation projects of historical Modernist buildings make certain observations possible. Technologically, conservation of Modernist structures presents no major challenges. Professional conservation firms do not have any special problems in working with



9. Historical plasterwork restoration in the ground floor of 122, *Świętojańska* tenement. Photo by the author

Modernist buildings (Fig. 9); the difficulties encountered are much the same as those in much older historical objects.

The problem is in the widespread lack of understanding of the idea, or in other words, the characteristics of Modern Architecture, both among the owners of buildings and real estate managers as well as local or provincial officials. This is not surprising in view of the fact that even professional architects-designers often lack sufficient knowledge and sensitivity to approach Modernist heritage with due respect. Even if the buildings themselves are not endangered, integral elements of Modern Architecture like stuccos, flooring, tile cladding are thoughtlessly damaged and not everything can be saved by administrative methods.

The conservator's approach to Modernist buildings, even the listed ones, is not something generally understood and is often considered unnecessary. The preservation office has two effective tools that can improve the situation: education and money in the form of co-funding. It supports and supplements administrative efforts of preservation offices in the most effective way.

4. Funding of the conservation work

The proper funding of historical monuments, in particular of their maintenance and repair, is one of the most important elements of genuine protection. The limitations imposed in the public interest by preservation officers usually mean



10. Historical Pręczkowski family tenement at 10-12 Skwer Kościuszki after 2005-2006 renovation. Photo by the author

the owners have to resign some of their rights. Financial compensation from national, provincial or local public funds are capable of confining the arising conflicts and are largely the necessary condition of proper monument protection. We may refer to Jan Pruszyński here and his downright statement from *"Dziedzictwo kultury Polski. Jego straty i ochrona prawna,"* saying that *without a system of economic incentives for the owners and users effective care of historical monuments can hardly be hoped for*¹⁵.

From the point of view of monument protection at municipal or county level, a very important provision has been introduced by the 23 July, 2003 law on the protection and care of historical monuments, namely the possibility of co-funding of work at a historical building by the county or municipal budget. One little section in the law¹⁶ has opened up entirely new funding opportunities.

Gdynia is among those towns and cities that were quick to pass a relevant resolution – on 23 June, 2004. The resolutions in Łódź and Warsaw had been taken a little earlier, and throughout

2004, at least 13 more municipalities followed suit¹⁷.

Following the resolution, the first grants in Gdynia were allotted already in 2004.¹⁸ The amount of money in the budget for grants to historical sites has been growing. The year the resolution was passed it was PLN 108,525, while the respective figure for 2008 stands at nearly a million PLN. The resources available are nine times bigger than four years ago. The amounts spent in successive years were as follows:

2004 PLN 108 525	2 grants to 2 buildings
2005 PLN 220 357	4 grants to 4 buildings
2006 PLN 536 638	10 grants to 10 buildings
2007 PLN 711 091	10 grants to 10 buildings
2008 PLN 986 823	10 grants to 8 buildings ¹⁹

The grants helped to undertake the works that the owners had been postponing, like the costly refacing. In Modernist tenements with stone-panel-finished elevations or stuccos, the costs involved are substantial and it is mostly the grant that incites the owners to undertake

15. Pruszyński Jan, *Dziedzictwo kultury polskiej. Jego straty i ochrona prawna*, vol. II, Cracow 2001, p. 538

16. Art. 81 section 1 reads: *A grant for conservation, restoration or building works at a listed building and the rules governing it may be allotted by resolution of the lawmaking body of the municipality, the county or the region, subject to procedures specified in a separate regulation.*

17. Figures from the LEX legal information system, on the basis of the resolutions published in the provincial gazettes by end of June 2008.

18. In 2000-2003, Gdynia municipality allocated grants for work at historical objects on the basis of a council resolution on the cooperation between the municipalities and NGOs.

19. Dotacje przyznawane były dwa razy w roku, jeden zabytek mógł więc uzyskać 2 dotacje w tym samym roku.



11. Historical Kreński family tenement at 55, Świętojańska after 2006 renovation. Photo by the author

such work. The owners frequently made their priorities clear and pointed out that aesthetic considerations had to give way to refitting or the upgrading of obsolete lifts. Grants, therefore, are an incentive to do the works that shape the image of the city (Fig. 10-14). Municipal money is used to fund not only refacing, but also less spectacular repairs of the foundations, insulation, roofs, staircases etc.

The definitely positive results achieved in the four years under the grant resolution have led the local authorities to make them available to a wider circle of beneficiaries. Gdynia City Council resolution XXI/513/08 of 25 June, 2008 amends the rules of grant allotment. Grants may now be given not only to individual listed buildings, but also to historical buildings within the six listed areas of the city. The new resolution is addressed to the owners and users of buildings in the centre of Gdynia, which became a listed area on 21 September 2007. In this way, restrictions resulting from the preservation order are coupled with funding opportunities.

It is interesting to note, that council resolutions on grants are usually passed unanimously – across party lines.

The example of Gdynia shows a few advantages of the system of local authority grants to historical buildings. The most obvious are the improved condition of historical sites

owing to the funds from new sources as well as increased readiness of owners and users to undertake repair and take a better care of the historical building. But there are some others, too. One is a better, genuine supervision of the work being done. With the financial tools in hand, the municipality, the county or the provincial monument preservation officer – in fact one of the investors – are more likely to have their demands respected than with legal and administrative instruments only.

A further, long-term effect of the funding opportunities related to a historical building is the change in the previously negative attitude to being the owner of such a building. In Gdynia, more owners are now interested in having their property listed, the result being that four buildings were entered into the provincial register of monuments in 2006 (previously it would be 1 building from Gdynia per year). Restoration work, with significant municipal co-funding, has already been conducted in all the four buildings. It has to be added, that many applications for listing have had to be rejected on grounds of insufficient value of the buildings concerned.

Grant programmes have produced positive results not only in Gdynia, but also in other locations where they have been undertaken. After four years under the new law, we can make an evaluation attempt. The timeline



12. A tenement at 122, Świętojańska after 2006-2007 facade restoration. Photo by the author



13. "Opolanka" residential building after 2007 restoration. Photo by the author

showing municipalities and counties²⁰ which have decided to make use of this opportunity and adopted grant programmes of their own indicates that while no municipality managed to put the new regulation into practice in 2003, in 2004 there were only 16 local authorities who did. However, the respective figures went up to 174 in 2005, 299 in 2006, 261 in 2007 and 97 by mid-2008. In other words, there was a massive increase in the number of resolutions in 2005 and 2006, after which it stabilised in 2007, and will go down after 2008 because the number of municipalities and counties in Poland is finite. On the whole, by June 2008, the law-making bodies of 847 counties and municipalities (councils) had adopted resolutions under which local authorities may subsidise the conservation of buildings in their respective territories, even if they do not own them.²¹ How should we view this figure? There are 314 counties in Poland, 65 urban counties and 2,478 municipalities.²² A significant number of municipalities do not have any listed buildings in their territory. In view of the above, the number of municipalities providing grants to historical sites is impressive. This means that for the first time after World War II, a single provision in the legislation has radically improved the funding opportunities for work at listed buildings, by making local authority budgets accessible.

The fact that the new regulation can be used has become known owing to the sharing

of information by the offices concerned and to media coverage²³.

It is difficult to give the exact number of historical buildings at which work has been done owing to such resolutions or to say how much money has been spent. But if we take only the largest cities, the sums spent annually on this form of support for the monuments reach dozens of millions²⁴.

Giving local authorities the power to fund monument protection and care gives positive effects – beneficial at the time when the system of monument care is undergoing major changes. One of the weaknesses of the system, however, is the absence of mandatory rules of funding monuments by the state or the local authorities.²⁵ The present system of grants is of discretionary nature, which causes great differences in the situation of monuments depending on where they are located, or to put it bluntly, on the prosperity of the local authority. Certainly, this solution as well as the course of change taken should be continued and perfected. There are other forms of support for historical monuments, practiced in European countries of greater legislative stability, like independent public organisations or foundations, which may play an important role in the process²⁶.

20. Figures from the LEX legal information system, on the basis of the resolutions published in the provincial gazettes by end of June 2008 and studied by the author. For the purpose of the study, the resolutions are dated according to when they were published, not adopted.

21. Figures from the LEX legal information system, on the basis of the resolutions published in the provincial gazettes by end of June 2008.

22. According to Polish Ministry of the Interior and Administration (MSWiA) figures, quoted at www.mswia.gov.pl.

23. The issue of grants to historical sites was discussed during the National Forum of Municipal Monument Preservation Officers held on 17-19 June 2004 in Gdynia, while a periodical of local authorities „Wspólnota” published a discussion of the rules of local authority funding of the conservation effort at historical buildings as well as sample formats of a relevant council resolution and a grant application, cf. *Wspólnota* No. 18/764 of 6 May 2006, pp. 14-21.

24. In addition to the resources formerly available for conservation work from the central or provincial budgets.

25. Except various property or inheritance tax concessions, which do not seem attractive enough to the owners of historical buildings, especially if these require massive funding.

26. Cf.: Tomaszewski Andrzej, *Ochrona zabytków w państwach Unii Europejskiej*, „Spotkania z Zabytkami”, No. 6/2003, p. 5.

The grants given for work at historical objects not owned by the local authority is one of the ways in which conservation work can be funded. Proper measures, including financial ones, are equally important in the case of municipally owned monuments, in the case of which a long-term conservation programme is possible. This makes them different from those within the grant system, which is a form of tendering, making long-term planning difficult.

In Gdynia, a preliminary list of municipally-owned historical sites has been drafted, where conservation effort is desirable or necessary. The list, compiled in cooperation of the two most appropriate units of the City Hall – the Department of Buildings and the Municipal Office of Monument Protection – includes listed buildings as well as those under other legal forms of protection. In 2007, this resulted in the revalorisation of the fences of the historical manor estate at Kolibki as well as the renovation of window woodwork in a building dating from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. In 2008, the programme approved by the city authorities is under way as well as the draft of the 2009 programme – to be formally passed when the new budget has been adopted.

5. Instituting monument protection in the city

The pool of legally protected historical buildings in Gdynia is gradually increasing. Two basic forms of protection are used: protection provided for by the local spatial plans or listing in the register of monuments.

The powers of municipalities to prepare and approve local plans are an opportunity for entering monument preservation provisions into them. This most commonly used form of legal protection, concerning the greatest number of objects, has many advantages. One of them is that detailed, precise provisions can be formulated – something practically impossible in the preservation order.

In the preparation of materials for the local plan, an active part can be taken by the local monument protection officer, who may be better informed about heritage resources in his/her area than the provincial administrative services trying to cope with excessive workload.

In the planning process in Gdynia, performed by the Local Planning Office, general principles are used to distinguish between protected groups of buildings, which may be



14. Historical villa at 111, Inżynierska after 2007-2008 renovation. Photo by the author

group A or B, depending on their cultural value. Group A are buildings under full protection, concerning both the volume and the details. In group B buildings, it is the general architectural expression and selected historical elements that are protected. This regulation may not be entirely consistent with conservation doctrine, but it has been adopted to prevent the continued practice of waiting for a protected building to disintegrate in order to acquire invaluable land for new development. If a building under full protection (group A) is destroyed, it must be reconstructed with all the details, like a listed building.

What poses a problem is the absence of a junction between protection requirements of the local plan, sometimes very rigorous, and some form of financial compensation. This can partly be addressed by the new grant rules for Gdynia, adopted in June 2008.²⁷ The rules provide for a higher level of funding for the objects protected under local plans, but the grant programme covers only the listed areas.

The other form of legal protection, i.e. listing, is under the existing law done by the provincial monument preservation officer, however local preservation officers may also take some initiative. For a few years in Gdynia, there has been good and close cooperation between the provincial preservation office and the City Hall. The roll of buildings to be listed is agreed together and the City Hall does preparatory work for particular buildings or their groups. Meetings are held with the owners or custodians of the buildings that are likely to be listed before the administrative process actually

27. Gdynia City Council resolution XXI/513/08 of 25.06.2008 on rules and procedures of award and settlement of grants for conservation, restoration and construction works at listed buildings within the administrative borders of Gdynia Municipality

starts, during which the restrictions as well as the benefits involved are clarified. A very important argument, often the one that wins the favour of the owners, is the possibility of obtaining a grant for refurbishment soon after the building has been listed.

Gdynia City Hall, also in concert with the provincial monument preservation officer in Gdańsk, prepares conservation documents including the so-called "white cards," without which the listing cannot take place. These concerted activities leading to the agreed listing of specific buildings started in 2004. After five years in which no building in Gdynia was listed, a tenement at 4, Portowa was listed on the initiative of its owners. Another building was listed the following year and in 2006, four other buildings from Gdynia were entered into the provincial register. All these listings had been initiated, or at least fully approved by the owners. The picture would be incomplete if we did not say that at the same time many applications from the owners of prewar buildings were rejected, as the buildings were not of sufficient historical value.

New cases were initiated in 2007, so more buildings are expected to be listed in 2008.²⁸ Not because monuments are becoming plentiful, but because of the backlog of previous years.

Probably the largest project so far, connected with ensuring legal protection for the historical sites in Gdynia, has been the listing of the city centre area. This area – the sixth in Gdynia – is the largest and most abundant in historical structures. Within the listed area, there are 20 (of the total of 52) buildings or groups of buildings in Gdynia that have been listed individually.

The process of listing of the city centre was preceded by a professional report²⁹ commissioned by Gdynia City Hall, on which further proceedings were based. Many meetings and debates concerned the delimitation of the protected area and a compromise solution³⁰ was eventually

chosen. The whole process took part in close cooperation between the provincial monument preservation office, the local authority of Gdynia and local historical monuments societies (fig. 15) and received extensive media coverage. The preservation order for the central urban area of Gdynia was signed by provincial monument preservation officer Marian Kwapiński, Ph.D., on 21 September 2007 and presented to deputy mayor of Gdynia Marek Stępa at the opening of a Modern Architecture conference six days later.

This has been the most momentous event of all connected with heritage protection in Gdynia – because of its practical implications and symbolic meaning. It is the most characteristic urban area of Gdynia that has been given legal protection – the one that is a memento of the great undertaking of the Republic of Poland between the two great wars – the construction of a new port and city.

6. Tasks transferred by the provincial preservation officer

In 2000, Gdynia municipality signed an agreement with the governor of the province on assuming some of the powers of the provincial monument preservation office in Gdańsk. In December that year, the post was established at the Gdynia City Hall of the city monument preservation officer, who, acting on behalf of the Mayor of Gdynia, performs the duties of the provincial monument preservation officer in Gdańsk.³¹ The transfer of the provincial officer's powers was done under the 1965 law (amended) on the protection of cultural goods. When the 2003 law on the protection and care of historical monuments took effect, a new agreement was signed, but the scope of the transferred responsibilities remained practically unchanged.

On the whole, the powers transferred to the municipality under the agreement are of administrative nature, including decisions about areas protected under local plans. Individually listed objects continue to be the responsibility of the provincial monument preservation officer.

This form of duty-sharing was adopted in 2000 by the then provincial officer Dr Marcin Gawlicki, and was maintained by his two successors. Other local authorities in the

28. At the end of June 2008, the process is under way for the listing of the rice hulling plant at *Nabrzeże Indyjskie* in the port of Gdynia, the central railway station in Gdynia and a few smaller structures.

29. The listing of the central area of Gdynia was initiated by Gdynia City Hall, which commissioned a specialist study: Sołtyś Maria Jolanta, *Zabytkowy zespół urbanistyczny śródmieścia Gdyni. Ekspertyza dotycząca walorów kulturowych zespołu pod kątem wpisu do rejestru zabytków*, opracowanie dla Urzędu Miasta Gdyni, mps, Gdynia 2006. The formation of a cultural park was also considered, but listing was finally chosen as more appropriate for an urbanised area.

30. On 16 May 2007 an open meeting previously announced in national press was held at the Gdynia City Hall, during which an

on-site inspection of the proposed boundaries of the protected area took place.

31. In view of the ever-growing scope of the officer's activities, a new unit – Municipal Office of Monuments Protection – was established within the City Hall on 2 April 2008.



15. The committee for the listing of the city centre of Gdynia during on-site inspection of the boundaries of the protected area – 16 May, 2007. From left to right: city monument preservation officer in Gdynia Robert Hirsch, www.trojmiasto.pl portal reporter Magdalena Szalachowska, Elżbieta Sieniawska of the provincial monument preservation office (WUOZ), deputy mayor of Gdynia Marek Stępa, head of urban planning at Gdynia City Hall Dorota Szyłberg, Gdańsk University of Technology expert Maria J. Soltysik, Sławomir Kitowski of the Gdynia Society, provincial monument preservation officer Marian Kwapiński, Jolanta Barton – his deputy, Anita Jaśkiewicz-Sojak of WUOZ. Photo by Anna Baranowska

Pomeranian province have assumed practically the same responsibilities.

The powers transferred to the municipalities and counties by the respective provincial monument preservation officers vary, depending on what has been agreed locally. In some local authorities, the powers are nearly as broad as those of the provincial officer.

There are now about thirty-eight local government monument preservation officers in Poland, which is a considerable number³².

Local government preservation officers are present in major Polish cities – Warsaw, Cracow, Wrocław, Poznań, Szczecin, Łódź, Gdańsk and Katowice. In many locations there is just a single officer doing the job, but elsewhere there may be a whole department of the city hall, with considerable staff. This naturally depends on the size of the town/city but also on the volume of tasks that the municipality has taken over from the provincial monument preservation officer. Unlike the provincial officers, who are an element of the state administration, local government

preservation officers must to a greater extent rely on experience sharing³³. There is practically no coordination or information gathering that would help to draw the picture of the results of protection at local government level. The solution probably has its drawbacks, but there are unquestionable advantages too, like the accessibility of the preservation officer to those interested and the fact that he/she is near the object that is actually protected.

The role of local governments in monument preservation is still underestimated. This is demonstrated by the fact that little attention is paid to coordination and supervision of the tasks transferred by provincial monument preservation

33 One of the first meetings of local government monument preservation officers entirely devoted to their work was organised by Gdynia City Hall. The National Forum of City Monument Preservation Officers in Gdynia was held on 17-19 June 2004 and was attended by officers from Bydgoszcz, Bytom, Chojnice, Choruów, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Gliwice, Katowice, Cracow, Kwidzyn, Łódź, Olsztyn, Puck, Sopot, Szczecin and Warsaw as well as by monument preservation office staff from Katowice and Toruń. Representatives of the ministry of culture were also present, as well as of the National Centre for Research and Documentation of Monuments (*KOBiDZ*) and the Provincial Monument Preservation Officer for Pomerania. The next meeting, organised by the Warsaw monument preservation officer, was held in Radziejowice a year later.

32. The figure changes together with the number of agreements signed.

offices to the local authorities. The opinion was voiced on behalf of local government preservation officers by Ms Ewa Nekanda-Trepka of Warsaw speaking at the Polish Conservators' Congress on 5-7 October, 2005³⁴. Many local government preservation officers did attend, so we may be happy that their role is not overlooked.

There is much room for improvement, e.g. in terms of some uniformity of the agreements and the monitoring of the effects achieved to date, which could be used when changes in the legislation are made. But this is a tricky ground of politics, which monuments have so far been devoid of.

In Poland, where the system of monument protection is still being shaped, it is important that conclusions be drawn from the little experience we have had of monument protection in market economy. One of the positive developments is the transfer to the local government of some of the tasks from the area of monument protection and care. This formula has already produced positive effects, so we should follow and perfect this course of action as one of greatest importance in monument protection.

34. „Wiadomości Konserwatorskie SKZ”, No. 18/2005, pp. 105-106

Robert Hirsch, PhD architect,
Gdańsk University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture,
Municipal Monument Protection Officer in Gdynia
research interests: history of the architecture of Pomerania, monument conservation
e-mail: holm@poczta.fm