

## Gdynia City Centre as a Historical Monument

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In September 2007, the urban layout of the city centre of Gdynia was entered into the provincial register of monuments. This administrative decision instituted legal protection and preservation of the most important heritage area in Gdynia. The listed area is large, as it covers ninety-one hectares, is densely built up and is inhabited by thousands of people (Fig. 1). From this perspective, it was an event of great importance in the history of monument preservation in Poland. The preservation order caused no rapid change in the space of the city and its buildings, but it has had various long-term consequences. More than three years have passed since the city centre was listed, so an attempt to sum up the consequences of the regulation seems justified.

### Background to the listing

In early 2007, the provincial register of monuments contained seven large areas from within the boundaries of Gdynia. These had taken shape before the construction of the port and the city began and became part of Gdynia as a result of its expansion. They include the manor houses of Mały Kack (listed in 1946) and Kolibki (1982), the settlement of Mały Kack (1981), the spa of Orłowo (1982), the holiday resort of Kamienna Góra (1985) and the former villages of Oksywie (1987) and Wielki Kack (1987). The relatively young city centre in Gdynia had to wait before its historical value was recognised.

Extending legal protection to Modern Architecture in Gdynia was a process. The first building in Gdynia to be listed was the former ZUPU building (housing Polish Ocean Lines after World War II) at 24, 10 Lutego. The preservation order was issued in 1972, to prevent the plans to build an extra storey.<sup>1</sup> The next building to be listed was the "Opolanka" house at Kamienna Góra (1979). Further listings of modernist buildings of the city centre took place in the 1980s.

Probably the first document to protect the city centre area was the local plan for the area, approved in 1994. It covered three historical districts of Gdynia; Śródmieście, Działki Leśne and Kamienna Góra.<sup>2</sup> The plan was supplemented with preservation guidelines prepared by Maria J. Sołtysik, in which recommendations were formulated for activities in the preservation areas defined in the plan,

as well as buildings were identified for individual protection, grouped according to the value they represented.<sup>3</sup> The legal problem was the fact that the guidelines were not attached to the council resolution adopting the local plan, so their validity was frequently challenged.

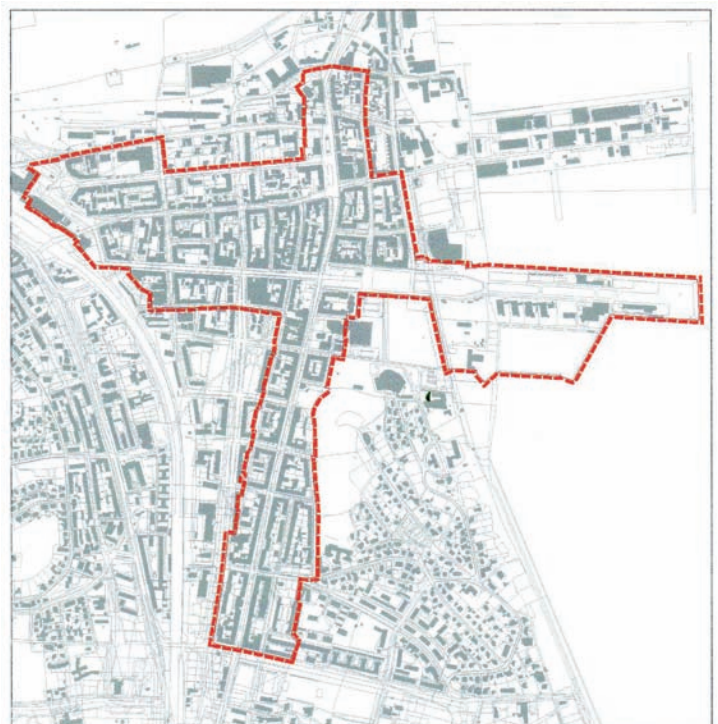
The local plan expired at the end of 2002 and as no new plan was approved, the buildings of the central area, except the listed buildings, were no longer protected. The situation, in which the most vital area for Gdynia's identity was left without any protection whatsoever, required that definite measures be taken. The conviction that preservation was necessary was shared by conservators, city authorities and numerous enthusiasts of historical monuments in Gdynia.

### City centre listing procedure

After the 23 July 2003 legislation on monument protection and care, the issue of city centre protection was addressed at the Gdynia city board meeting. Gdynia

3. M.J. Sołtysik, *Zalecenia konserwatorskie do miejscowego planu szczegółowego śródmieścia Gdyni*, typescript Gdynia 1994.

1. The urban layout of the city centre in Gdynia listed in 2007 - plan



1. This is covered by Gawlicki Marcin, Błyskosz Tomasz, *Strategy for protecting Poland's historic modernist architecture – outline of the problem* [in:] *Modernism in Europe – modernism in Gdynia. The architecture of the period between the world wars and its protection*. Edited by M.J. Sołtysik, R. Hirsch, Gdynia 2009, p. 173.

2. Detailed local spatial development plan for Gdynia's city centre adopted in Resolution of Gdynia City Council No. V/90/94 of 30 November 1994 (Pomorskie Region Journal of Laws No. 33 from 5 December 1994).



2. Aerial view of the historical city centre. Photo by Maciej Bejm



3. Molo Południowe (The Southern Pier) dating from the 1930s – a major element in the historical city centre area. Photo by R. Hirsch

monument preservation officer presented various forms of monument protection envisaged in the new law. Having considered the available options, the authorities decided that listing in the provincial heritage register was the most appropriate and decided to approach the provincial monument preservation officer in Gdańsk about the issue. Decisions were also made about task distribution between the authorities concerned. Gdynia City Hall commissioned an expert's study, necessary to initiate the procedure.

The listing procedure took about two years only. This would not have been possible without cooperation of the local authority in Gdynia, the office of the provincial monument preservation officer and without public acceptance.<sup>4</sup>

The whole undertaking may be regarded to have been initiated by the broadly understood local community, while the applicant was the local authority of Gdynia. The motion for the institution of the listing procedure was sent by the mayor of Gdynia to the governor of the province in November 2006, together with the professional report, which the applicant had commissioned.

The proceeding on the entering of the city centre of Gdynia into the register of monuments was officially initiated by the provincial monument preservation officer in Gdańsk in April 2007. Then, all the stages provided for by the law followed, like public consultations attended by experts and residents, or the collective, on-site verification of the area to be protected. Parties to the proceeding were informed about successive administrative activities in the form of notices published in national newspapers.<sup>5</sup>

The preservation order for the central urban area of Gdynia was presented by Provincial Monument Preservation Officer Marian Kwapiński, Ph.D., to Deputy Mayor of Gdynia Marek Stępa on 27 September 2007, during the opening ceremony of the international conference *Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia*. The order said that "entry A-1815 into the provincial register of monuments comprised the following historical object: historical urban layout of the city centre of Gdynia, composed by the street network, plot delimitation and the buildings, defined by three settlement phases:<sup>6</sup>

- rural, covering the area of the former farming and fishing hamlet, legible along the streets of Portowa, Starowiejska – including the squares Plac Kaszubski and Plac Konstytucji – and part of Wójta Radtkego;
- summer resort – preserved within Skwer Kościuszki and street 10 Lutego;
- urban – with its elegant waterfront along Skwer Kościuszki and Jana Pawła II on the extension of 10 Lutego

4. M.J. Sołtysik, *Ekspertyza dotycząca walorów kulturowych zabytkowego zespołu urbanistycznego śródmieścia Gdyni*, typescript Urząd Miasta Gdyni 2006.

5. The announcement was published in the Rzeczpospolita daily on 17 April 2007.

6. The spatial development of Gdynia's city centre was thoroughly researched and described in several publications, it was best covered in the publication of M.J. Sołtysik, *Gdynia miasto dwudziestolecia międzywojennego. Urbanistyka i architektura*, Warszawa 1993.

axis, and residential and shopping part, comprising the streets of Świętojańska, Starowiejska, Portowa, 10 Lutego, Skwer Kościuszki and Plac Kaszubski."

It should be stressed that administrative decisions taken today are based on much more thorough documentation in terms of content and legality than the decisions taken at the time when the urban areas of Gdynia mentioned above were listed. Decisions taken in the 1970s and 1980s were very brief, while graphic attachments lacked in precision and made no reference to the geodesic land division. Decisions made today are much more complex documents, showing precise plans of the areas concerned and describing them with due reference to plot distribution.

The chief goals achieved through the listing of the city centre include:

1. Institution of lasting preservation, making various administrative steps possible;
2. Definite recognition and confirmation of Gdynia city centre as an area of historical value of more than local significance;
3. Public awareness raising of the importance of Gdynia city centre for Polish heritage; in other words, the educational or promotional significance of its listing;
4. Inclusion of the city centre in the municipal policy of monument preservation funding.

#### Profile of the listed area

The urban area entered into the register of monuments covers ca. 91 hectares, i.e., more than 0.9 square kilometre.<sup>7</sup> It is intensively built up, as it comprises about 450 different buildings, most of which are tenements, five to six stories high (Fig. 2-4). There are twenty-four individually listed buildings and groups of buildings, documenting major historical stages and style changes within the area. Four groups can be identified from this perspective; five buildings dating from the days when Gdynia was a village and a summer resort, six historicist buildings erected when Gdynia transformed into a city, twelve Modern Architecture buildings from the period of city construction and expansion and one built after World War II. This short list demonstrates that while the individually listed buildings represent all the phases in Gdynia's development, most of the buildings recognised as historical monuments of regional importance date from the time of city construction and expansion.

#### Public and media reaction to the listing

There was wide coverage of the listing of the city centre in the media. The event was featured in local newspapers and magazines and on web portals. This had its educational value, as the information reached many people, notably residents of the city centre. Comments, especially on the Internet, were varied, as usual. Most typically, however,

7. According to the author. To compare, the historic Main City of Gdańsk is about 36 hectares.



TABLE 1. Rules of awarding grants to fund work at historical buildings in Gdynia

	Building category	Location	General scope of work eligible for funding	Maximum funding ratio
Group 1	Individually listed buildings	Within city boundaries	Any work to maintain, preserve or reconstruct the substance of the building	75 per cent
Group 2	Group A buildings, individually protected under local plans	In listed areas in Gdynia	Work at elevations and roofs of buildings (if visible, gable roof), repair of original, exterior joinery	50 per cent
Group 3	Other buildings erected (completed) by 1989			30 per cent

anonymous surfers would dismiss the idea of the city centre, or more broadly, Modern Architecture, being a historical monument, due to the stereotypes they cherish and because the buildings are "too young."

A questionnaire on the web portal [www.trojmiasto.pl](http://www.trojmiasto.pl), coinciding with the coverage of the listing in September 2007, produced interesting results. The question asked was "What makes you like Gdynia most?" and there were four reply options to choose from. The majority of respondents (39%) chose: "Its maritime legend, coastal breeze and dreams about travelling." The second most frequent choice (35%) was "Other things." But the third most popular (18%) was "Its pre-World War II architecture." Nearly seven hundred people took part in the anonymous survey, so the number of respondents choosing pre-war architecture can be considered surprisingly high, especially as only one reply option had to be chosen.

Residents and users of the city centre are not usually aware that this is valuable heritage, although many appreciate its historical value, which they do not identify with heritage. The treatment of Gdynia centre, or more generally, Modernist buildings in this way is surprising for people who do not live in the city centre or in Gdynia at all, as they put together the Modernist urban area with best-known Polish historical monuments – several hundred years old.

### Consequences of the listing

The listing of the city centre area had a few important consequences. On the one hand, lasting, legal preservation was instituted, giving some control of spatial transformations. It is lasting protection in that the binding administrative decision issued by the provincial monument preservation

4. *Plac Kaszubski within the historical urban area of central Gdynia after revalorisation. Photo by R. Hirsch*



officer is a stable legal regulation, which – practically speaking – is not affected by possible changes in legislation or bylaws.

On the other hand, the listing has offered space for conservation work based on solid, legal foundations. The city centre of Gdynia may be considered to be a testing ground, where optimum rules of monument preservation can be developed and implemented. The purpose of the work now being done is to work out transparent conservation rules for the area under legal protection, and to ensure compensation for the owners of the buildings; the public money provided will relieve them of some of the burden of owning a protected house.

The work done by Gdynia City Hall, following the listing of the city centre, goes in three directions. Firstly, a co-financing scheme has been introduced for the repair of buildings in the city centre. At the same time, measures have been taken so that the area soon be covered by local plans. The third line is popularisation and promotion of architecture, Modern Architecture in particular.

### Funding of conservation work in the historical area

Subsidising by local authorities of conservation work at listed buildings is envisaged in the monument protection and care legislation. Since the law came into force in 2003, the municipality of Gdynia has been giving grants for work at historical buildings. Between 2003 and 2008, seventeen buildings, i.e., 25 per cent of all listed monuments in Gdynia, underwent conservation work co-funded with the grants.

After the listing of the urban layout of Gdynia city centre, the previously gathered experiences helped to increase the number of possible recipients. The listing helped the conservation services to develop and the city council to approve the rules of co-funding of conservation work within the historical sites in Gdynia.<sup>8</sup>

In defining these rules, the following main presumptions were observed:

1. The amount of the funding can vary, depending on the historical value of the buildings concerned;
2. The scope of the work so funded can vary, depending on the historical value of the buildings concerned;
3. The funding is linked to the preservation decisions made about the buildings concerned in the local plans.

Rules, upon which grants to historical buildings in Gdynia are awarded, are outlined in Table 1.

Gdynia City Council resolution, introducing the new rules, was adopted on 25 June 2008. The city monument preservation office, working with the Gdynia City Hall press office, prepared a special guidebook for prospective grant recipients. The publication contained basic information about the grants, like the rules, maps of the areas covered by the programme, a step-by-step instruction how to prepare the required documentation as well as examples of successfully completed conservation works funded from the municipal budget.

8. The rules are based on Article 81 of the Historic Sites Protection and Care Act, which allows local authorities to provide grants for conservation works.

TABLE 2. City budget grants assigned to buildings in Gdynia city centre

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Individually listed buildings	1	1	3	1	3	6	6	4	3	5
Buildings within the historical city centre	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	10

The rules defined in the 25 June 2008<sup>9</sup> regulation were already used to allocate grants in 2009 and 2010. Now, two years later, an attempt to make certain observations, especially about the historical city centre, seems justified.<sup>10</sup>

In 2009, grants were allocated for work at nine protected buildings (Fig. 5). Three of them are individually listed buildings, while the other six are protected as situated in the listed area of Gdynia city centre. This may be considered a success in the first year under the new resolution.

The numbers grew the following year. Grants were given for work at fifteen buildings in the city centre – five individually listed and ten protected as situated in the historical area. Public grants supported conservation efforts at buildings of such great importance for Modern Architecture as the historical Polish Sailor's House (now the Faculty of Navigation of the Gdynia Maritime University – Fig. 6) or the Court of Justice in Plac Konstytucji (Fig. 8). Municipal grants can, naturally, be used not only by Modernist buildings, but by all the buildings within the historical area, including those stylistically closer to Historicism.

After two years of its operation, the programme can be considered a success; applications were made for buildings which are not listed individually, but are situated in areas with a historical monument status. The grant amounts that are offered prove attractive to beneficiaries, which could not have been taken for granted when the rules were formulated. The growing number of applications as well as building owners' stories suggest that the programme is also an incentive for the owners to pay higher repair fund contributions, or take a loan in order to secure their contribution and become eligible for grant funding.

Public co-funding of works at buildings in a historical area not only improves their condition, but is also of major educational value. Both residents and people passing by the restored buildings become aware of their historical nature; a relevant informative board is put up on the house under repair. It should be added that many owners do repair works on their houses in the city centre without public co-funding, looking on their own after the condition of the building

9. Resolution No. XXI/513/08 of Gdynia City Council of 25 June 2008 concerning the rules and procedures for awarding and reporting on grants for conservation, restoration and construction works involving listed buildings in the Municipality of Gdynia.

10. The guide is available in electronic format on Gdynia's website [www.gdynia.pl/zabytki](http://www.gdynia.pl/zabytki)

5. Hundsdorff tenement at 7, Starowiejska, after façade restoration. Photo by R. Hirsch



and its aesthetic qualities.

Of great significance is not only the fact that work at protected buildings has been done, but also how it was done – especially when it was co-funded by the municipality. In the outline design, prepared at the preparatory stage, it is usually assumed that original elements will be preserved and, if possible, the historical elevation or other parts of the building under repair will be restored. Where required, a programme of conservation work is prepared. The works are supervised by an inspector-conservator and the contractor must have previous experience of similar projects. For this reason, stuccoes enriched with lustrous mica, characteristic of Gdynia, and terrazzo stuccoes – washed and polished – are used in more and more buildings.

#### Detailed protection requirements for a historical area

Conservation of an individual building or of a larger area under a preservation order is an important and lasting element of protection. A preservation order, however, contains no detailed regulations, which might be easily comprehensible for the inhabitants, the users and other stakeholders. More precise conservation provisions can be included in the bylaws, e.g., local plans. If this opportunity is taken, it may be a desirable supplementation of preservation order provisions, by regulating, for instance, investment and spatial issues and narrowing the room for interpretation by both investors and administration. The discussion of fundamental issues of spatial development and conservation is thus transferred to the stage of proceedings prior to the approval of the local plan.

After the city centre of Gdynia was listed, the municipal authorities decided to intensify planning work for the whole area. Two local plans are now in force within Gdynia's central area, of which the November 2009 plan is of particular importance, as it covers more than a half of the historical area.<sup>11</sup> Formalities were also started towards subsequent

11. The local spatial development plan for Gdynia's city centre, area of Skwer Kościuszki and the streets Jana z Kolna and 10 Lutego, approved by Resolution No. XXXVII/839/09 of Gdynia City Council of 25 November 2009. (Pomorskie Region Journal of Laws of 27 January 2010, No. 12, item 220).

6. Façade conservation of the historical Dom Żeglarza Polskiego (Polish Sailor's House), now the Faculty of Navigation of the Gdynia Maritime University, 2010. Photo by R. Hirsch







7. Tenement at 43, Wójta Radtkego after façade conservation. Photo by R. Hirsch



8. Façade conservation of the historical Court of Justice, 2010. Photo by R. Hirsch

zoning, to cover the remainder of the historical city centre, and the planning works are well advanced.

Plans prepared for the city centre contain regulations which are very important from the point of view of preservation. Apart from provisions of urban planning and conservation nature designed to protect the scale and the kind of development, the plans also contain preservation provisions applying to individual buildings and other elements of the area. Detailed provisions are also contained on visual advertising and signboard display within the historical area.

In the protection of individual buildings under local plans, both planning and conservation experiences gained from earlier plans were used, e.g., the historical urban area of Kamienna Góra. For the purpose of monument preservation, distinction between 3 groups of buildings has been introduced. Group A are buildings of great historical value, under full protection. This group is composed of listed buildings and other buildings of comparable value. Group B is formed by buildings which may be transformed, provided the general outlook of the building is not distorted. Group C contains buildings of some historical value, which for other considerations, like their poor state of repair or a planning collision, may – after being duly documented – be demolished. It should be added that few buildings are in group C. To illustrate the proportions between the three groups, it should be said that the local plan approved on 25 November 2009 for part of Śródmieście in Gdynia, comprising Skwer Kościuszki, and streets Jana z Kolna and 10 Lutego, contains thirty-one group A buildings, fifty-five group B buildings, but only four group C buildings.

This value-based breakdown was established in the process of cooperation between Gdynia local planning office and the city monument preservation office. It has also been approved by the provincial monument preservation officer, with whom subsequent local plans had to be agreed.

The two types of regulation described above – the funding of repair work and protection under local plans – are mutually connected. They are an attempt to put into practice an important monument preservation concept, whereby limitations resulting from the protection of the building are tied to appropriate public aid benefits. In other words, the greater the degree of protection and the stricter the resulting limitations, the higher the co-funding (see Table 1). This seems to be a genuine success under the existing and far-from-perfect legislation, even though it is not the optimum solution when looked at from the standpoint of monument preservation theory.<sup>12</sup>

12. The most recent assessment of the condition of Poland's heritage conservation is given in *State of Heritage Report* prepared for the Congress of Polish Culture in 2009, edited by Jacek Purchla.

### Participation of the public in popularising Gdynia architecture

Public acceptance for activities related to monument preservation is a vital success factor. In particular, when administrative procedures fail, public involvement is of great importance. Three years after the central area of Gdynia was listed, public attitude to this heritage site is changing. One might risk saying that it was the formal recognition of its historical value that caused awareness changes. What can often be observed is not only acceptance, but also growing public involvement in various activities in the city centre, which demonstrate the growing understanding for the preservation of Modern Architecture buildings. This can be seen in the attitude of the owners of many historical buildings in the city centre.

An example of this is the activities of "Bankowiec" residents association, for a number of years conducting conservation and restoration works at 27-31, 3 Maja – the historical FE BGK building. These included revalorisation of elevations, rotary windows, staircase flooring and cladding. These activities – going far beyond user's ordinary care – culminated in the photo inventory of historical fixtures and fittings in the whole building (taps, washbasins, floors). The association has also arranged a small museum in its office, where historical documents are kept and authentic fittings are displayed (Fig. 9). The museum can be visited by anybody interested.

The growing knowledge of historical monuments in Gdynia resulted in late 2008 in the emergence of "Zabytkowa Gdynia" association (Historical Gdynia). Its members are the

9. A museum organised at 27/31, 3 Maja historical building by its inhabitants. Photo by R. Hirsch

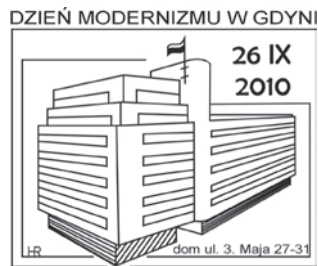




10. One of seventeen tourist parties sightseeing in the city centre of Gdynia on Modern Movement Day on 26 September 2010. Photo by Anna Orchowska-Smolińska

owners of historical buildings and specialists in monument preservation as well as in investment and legal issues. Members of the association take part, e.g., as experts, in municipally co-funded conservation works and also give assistance to owners of buildings.

The changing attitudes to Modern Architecture can also be seen through the success of guided tours of the city centre. On the initiative of the city monument preservation office, a group of tourist guides took a special training in guiding tours of Gdynia and the Modern Movement. Over a dozen of them, who completed the whole training cycle, were awarded a special certificate by the mayor of Gdynia. This supplements the certificates required by the national laws.



11. Gdynia Modern Movement Day 2010 – a memorial seal designed by M. Hirsch

An important event, in which the Gdynia guides took part, was the Gdynia Modern Movement Day, organised by the Gdynia City Hall and held on 26 September 2010 (Fig. 10-11). On that day, the historical sites in Gdynia city centre were visited by some 350 people. Divided into small parties, they had an opportunity to see interesting interiors, made accessible by their owners, like the District Court, the building which houses the mini-museum at 27-31, 3 Maja, or the tenement at 28, Abrahama. Gdynia City Museum and Municipal Tourist Information were also involved in organising the event. In view of the large attendance, the event will also be held next year.

### Conclusion

Protection of the city centre area in Gdynia was reinforced when the area was listed. This, however, must not be treated as the end of conservation efforts. The preservation order has opened new possibilities and efforts will be continued simultaneously in various directions.

There are, however, also initiatives from outside, which – in a way – are a response to the activities in Gdynia. In early 2010, a group of several dozen researchers sent a letter to the mayor of Gdynia, asking him to take formal action towards the recognition of Gdynia city centre as Polish History Monument.<sup>13</sup> In their letter, the authors – mostly participants of conferences organised by Gdynia – expressed approval for the locally undertaken activities and gave their recommendation for the city centre of Gdynia. As the result, in May 2015, the President of Poland decreed Gdynia's city centre as the Polish Historic Monument. Since that, Gdynia's site has been the monument of national significance.

13. The letter was elaborated by prof. Jakub Lewicki of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw in agreement with Gdynia's Conservation Officer. Prof. J. Lewicki also organised a letter signing event.