
MODERNIST URBAN LAYOUT OF GDYNIA DOWNTOWN AS A MONUMENT OF HISTORY

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ABSTRACT: In 2015, the urban layout of the city center of Gdynia was recognized by the President of the Republic of Poland as a Monument of History. A few years earlier, in 2007, the complex was entered into the register of monuments. The city center was designed and built in the 1920s and 1930s. Of outstanding value is the unique in the European scale complex of modernist buildings with various functions. It is all the time a vibrant central district of the city, in which various transformations are inevitable. The introduction of conservation protection has meant that the development and modernization of this part of the city must be carried out in harmony with the preservation of the cultural heritage. Polish law does not provide for special procedures for the protection and management of the areas of Monuments of History. However, in order to plan the sustainable development and protection of the values of this special area, it is planned to use the UNESCO recommendation on the historical urban landscape.

KEY WORDS: Modernism, architecture, monuments, cultural heritage, Gdynia

Introduction

The Number of Monuments of History in Poland has recently exceeded 100 items and will probably continue to grow. Monuments included in this group are undoubtedly a very important part of cultural heritage, and at the moment of their recognition as Monuments of History were formally included in the group of the highest rank, at least nominally.

The Group of Monuments of History is very diverse in many respects. These monuments differ from each other in terms of surface area, spatial conditions, structural aspects, style, ownership, time of creation, chronological layers, intensity and problems of contemporary use and even the level of social acceptance and probably others. In some cases, even within a single Monument of History, there is a great diversity of its individual components, especially if a single Monument includes a few separate areas. This is the case, for example, in Łódź, where the multicultural

landscape of an industrial city was declared a Monument to History¹. This results in different conservation problems, and it seems impossible to formulate very precise, uniform principles of protection, care, and management. However, it is necessary to formulate at least general, uniform requirements, which will be the basis for practical protection, appropriate to the national rank of monuments. At present, the recognition of the Monument of History does not result in any significant consequences other than the prestigious and promotional effects. The only measurable benefit is the possibility of obtaining additional points when evaluating the application when applying for co-financing from the funds administered by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. These points increase the chances, but it is still necessary to compete with other monuments entered in the register. In addition, according to the Act on the Protection and Care of Historical Monuments, Historical Monuments may be submitted as candidates for the UNESCO World Heritage List².

Limitations, privileges and obligations for Monuments of History do not differ significantly from the regulations concerning the thousands of monuments entered in the voivodeship registers. Questions concerning the necessity of introducing appropriate legal regulations related to the Monuments of History have been raised for a long time by specialists dealing with the protection of heritage in Poland. Already in the *Report on the functioning of the system of cultural heritage protection in Poland after 1989*, it was pointed out that the recognition of history as a monument does not result in almost any consequences enshrined in the domestic law, and as the authors stated "The area considered as a historical monument for state conservation services should, however, be the area of special conservation monitoring, entries in the register of monuments and investment restrictions"³. Despite the passage of time and inclusion of subsequent monuments to the list of historic monuments, no systemic changes have taken place.

The city center of Gdynia as a Monument of History

Among the 105 monuments considered so far as Monuments of History are more than a dozen of the city ensembles i.e: Chełm, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Kazimierz Dolny, Kraków, Lublin, Paczków, Poznań, Przemyśl, Sandomierz, Stary Sącz, Toruń, Warsaw, Wrocław and Zamość. One of the special Monuments of History is the urban layout of the Downtown Gdynia, which was awarded this title in 2015⁴. It has been distinguished by the recent time of its creation in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as by the architectural specificity of the city with its dominant modernist buildings.

¹ Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of 16 February 2015 (Journal of Laws 2015, item 315).

² Pursuant to Article 15(4) of the Act on the Protection and Care of Historical Monuments: "The minister in charge of culture and national heritage protection may submit a request to the World Heritage Committee to include a historical monument in the "World Heritage List" in order to protect this monument under the Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted in Paris on 16 November 1972. (Journal of Laws of 1976, items 190 and 191)".

³ A. Böhm, P. Dobosz, P. Jaskanis, J. Purchla, B. Szmygin (2008), *Report on the functioning of the cultural heritage protection system in Poland after 1989*, ed. J. Purchla, Kraków, p. 69.

⁴ Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland of 23 February 2015. (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland of 16 March 2015, item 356).

The city center of Gdynia is a spatial complex with a significant area of about 88 hectares, with very intensive buildings. There are about 450 buildings here, most of which have 5 to 6 storeys. The area is inhabited by many thousands of inhabitants, and because it is the downtown district of a large city, a significant number of people also come every day for temporary stays, e.g. to work or for tourist purposes. In the area of the History Monument there are 25 monuments listed individually in the register and it is in this respect the area in Gdynia, where the largest number of them occur.

The inclusion of the city center of Gdynia on the list of Historical Monuments was a project initiated by the local community in Gdynia. Like the registration of the city center in the register of historical monuments carried out several years earlier and completed in 2007, which also took place as a result of the activities of the local government and the community of Gdynia.

The supra-local significance of the city center of Gdynia, which goes far beyond the rank of an entry in the register of monuments, was initially emphasized only by experts, e.g. Maria Jolanta Sołtysik⁵, a researcher of architecture in Gdynia. Gradually, however, it gained more and more resonance. When, after the city center was entered in the register of monuments, it became real to apply for the status of a Monument of History, the City Hall of Gdynia began intensive formal and organizational activities. They were to lead to the fulfilment of the conditions developed by the National Heritage Institute and accepted by the Council for Monuments Protection at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage for the submitted applications. One of the most serious requirements, impossible to meet in a short period of time, was the obligation to include the notified area in the local spatial development plans. With an area of many hectares and thousands of inhabitants, this was a serious challenge⁶. By the decision of the city authorities, several local development plans were drawn up, covering practically the entire historic complex of the city center. When preparing LSDP, the municipality applied the categories of conservation protection of historical buildings, which had already been tested in spatial planning in Gdynia⁷. These procedures, despite the high priority given to them, lasted for several years. At the same time, documentation was prepared for the application of the urban layout of the city center of Gdynia to be considered a Monument of History, which was completed in 2012⁸ and formally submitted in the same year. The inclusion of the city center of Gdynia on the list of Monuments of History as the 60th monument in Poland was an opportunity to promote and popularise the protection of the city center, and this opportunity was taken. On 21 April 2015, a public ceremony was held in Gdynia, during which the President of the Republic of Poland, Bronisław

⁵ M. J. Sołtysik (2006), *Śródmieście Gdyni jako Pomnik Historii*, "Rocznik Gdyński" nr 18, p. 16-30.

⁶ Planning procedures and implementation of projects in terms of applying for recognition as a PH, initiated and supervised by the Vice-President of Gdynia, dr inż.arch. Marek Stępa.

⁷ More on this subject in the article: R. Hirsch (2012), *Praktyczne zastosowanie cenowania zabytków, czyli kategorie ochrony konserwatorskiej budynków w miejscowych planów zagospodarowania przestrzennego*, [in:] *Wartościowanie w ochronie i konserwacji zabytków*, ed. B. Szmygin, Warszawa-Lublin: wyd. PKN ICOMOS, Biuro Stołecznego Konserwatora Zabytków, Politechnika Lubelska, Fundacja Pol. Lub., pp. 67-74.

⁸ R. Hirsch, J. Lewicki, M. J. Sołtysik (2012), *Urban layout of the city center of Gdynia. Documentation of the monument's application for recognition as a Monument of History*, ed. R. Hirsch, Gdynia.

Komorowski, handed over the regulation to the Mayor

Gdynia - Wojciech Szczurek. A commemorative plaque was also unveiled on the building of the City Hall of Gdynia, which shows the area considered to be a Monument of History and has a significant educational value (Fig. 1). Hundreds of people took part in the event. Special guidebooks on the new Monument of History were also published. An urban ensemble within the limits analogous to the borders of the entry in the register of monuments was declared a Monument of History (Fig. 2). It is therefore an area where three different forms of protection are in force: entry into the register of monuments, monument of history and local spatial development plan.



Fig. 1 Information board on the Gdynia City Hall building on Świętojańska Street, commemorating the status of the Monument to History, project: Marek Kaliński

Since the time of entry into the register of monuments (2007) and the recognition as a Monument of History (2015) was not too far away, it could be clearly stated that entry into the register of monuments of the city center introduced a very specific legal protection. At the moment of the entry, the statutory regulations concerning monuments in this group of protection came into force. However, the recognition for the Monument of History gained more publicity in the city, but did not have any significance for the issue of legal protection.

Recognition as a Monument of History did not bring practically any changes in Gdynia, but it is advisable to consider what changes would be desirable in several aspects, such as administrative, financial, management, and public participation issues.

Currently, the administrative competences, i.e. the activities of the monuments' protection authorities, which give opinions and decisions on various projects in the city center, are issued on the basis of the decision of 2007 to enter the city center into the register of monuments. In the case of new investments, the regulations in force in the local spatial development plans, which were developed and adopted before the city center was declared a Historical Monument, are of significant importance. The division of administrative competences in force in Gdynia since 2000, established on the basis of an agreement on the transfer of part of the competences of the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments in Gdańsk to the Municipality of Gdynia⁹, remains unchanged. The division is based on the fact that the activities in the area of the historic city center are agreed upon by the City Conservator of Monuments in Gdynia, while the agreements concerning monuments in this area (currently 25), entered separately in the register, are made by the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments in Gdańsk. In practice, this sometimes results in a lack of consistency in the resolution of cases and makes the flow and collection of information more difficult.

In the case of a monument of the highest rank, it would be advisable to specify the requirement that a single authority be responsible for all agreements. Due to the exceptional rank of monuments recognized as Monuments of History, it would also be advisable to establish a special advisory body, such as a Council for the Protection of Monuments, which should consist of specialists and representatives of the residents. This would be one of the ways of realizing social participation, which is indispensable especially in the case of large residential complexes. The Social Committee for the Renovation of Krakow Monuments, which includes people of various professions, also representing the local community, may serve as a model.

Issues of financing and protection of Historical Monuments

A special financing system must be an important element in the protection of the Monument of History. For over a dozen years now, Gdynia has been operating a program for subsidizing work on the city's monuments, which is based solely on the budget of the local government. On the basis of a resolution of the Gdynia City Council, the owners of all monuments entered in the register, located within the city limits, may apply for subsidies. All buildings (built before 1989) located in historic areas, including the downtown area - the Monument to History¹⁰, are also eligible for co-financing. The grant regulations do not give special preference to objects from the Monument of History, but there is a plan to separate the budget for the buildings located within its boundaries.

⁹ The Agreement of 12 June 2012 on the management of matters within the scope of competence of the Pomorskie Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments in Gdańsk by the Municipality of Gdynia is currently in force (Dz.Urz.Woj.Pom. of 12 June 2012, item 2034), but the first agreement which introduced such division was concluded in 2000.

¹⁰ Resolution of the Gdynia City Council No. XXXIX/861/10 of 27 January 2010 on: adoption of rules and procedures for granting and settling subsidies for conservation, restoration and construction works on monuments entered in the register, located in the administrative area of the Municipality of Gdynia.

At present, it is not possible to obtain a special grant from the state budget for the Monuments of History, outside the normal grant procedure for all monuments in which during the assessment of applications, the Monuments of History receive only additional points. It is justified and extremely necessary to introduce a system of separate financing of Monuments of History from the state budget. Since this group has been nominally distinguished as monuments of national value, they should not remain in the group of joint financing with the group of thousands of monuments entered in the register at the voivodship level. A model and source of experience might be derived from the functioning of the financing of the National Fund for the Revalorisation of Krakow Monuments through the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, which is at the disposal of Social Committee for Conservation of Cracow Monuments (SKOZK) and which has brought measurable conservation effects over the course of several decades¹¹.

Different stakeholders should be involved in the functioning of the historical city and the processes of planning, implementation and control, especially the inhabitants and users of the area. Currently, social activity in the city center of Gdynia, which is a Monument of History, is performed ad hoc and usually concerns emergency issues or isolated plans. There is no comprehensive view of the whole ensemble and its surroundings, that would take into account cultural values and the issues of the city's functioning. Public consultations concern selected, narrow issues or take place in the planning procedure related to the Local Spatial Development Plan (LSDP).

In Gdynia, at the stage of applying for the status of a Monument of History, LSDP was prepared for the submitted area. Local plans, assuming they are of good quality, are undoubtedly useful for large spatial complexes, especially urban ones. In the case of Gdynia, they contain many important regulations concerning the urban layout: e.g. permissible functions, parameters and character of new buildings. The exemplary provisions are as follows: *"It is required to establish the height of buildings designed in compact frontages to the level of the cornice, attic of existing buildings (...); protection of a homogeneous architectural form of buildings forming a complex of buildings; for the designed buildings, allowed in accordance with the arrangements included in the land maps, the requirement to adapt the forms and architectural expressions to the tradition of modernist architecture of Gdynia and the use of basic facade colours in shades of white, grey and beige; it is recommended to use traditional ceramic and stone materials (limestone, sandstone) in the facades"*¹².

Local spatial development plans also contain provisions protecting individual buildings (Fig. 3) and important elements of development, e.g. historical street surfaces. However, development plans are typical urban planning tools and are not sufficient in the case of historic areas of high cultural values. There is no room for many regulations, important from the point of view of heritage protection and sustainable functioning of the city.

¹¹ Act of 18 April 1985 on the National Fund for the Revaluation of Krakow Monuments (Journal of Laws of 1985, No. 21, item 90).

¹² Resolution No. XXXVII/839/09 of the Council of the City of Gdynia of 25 November 2009 on the adoption of the local spatial development plan for the part of the Downtown district in Gdynia, the area of Kościuszko Square, Jana z Kolna and 10 Lutego Streets, §5 (1) (2) (b) and (c).

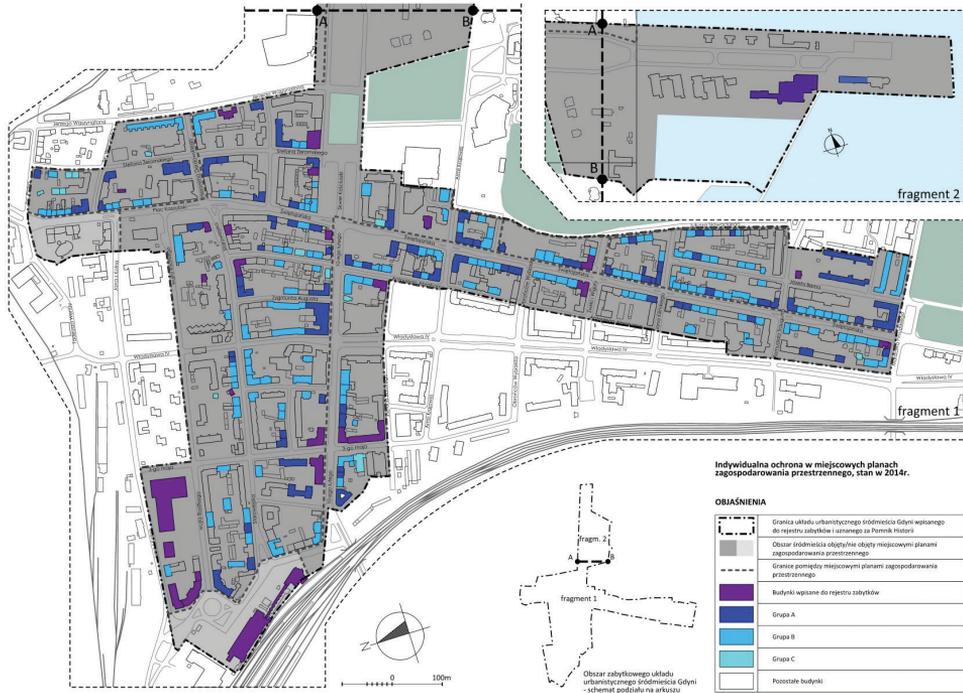


Fig. 3 The area of the city center of Gdynia considered to be a Monument to History with marked categories of building protection, established in local spatial development plans (author's study)

Some cities in Poland, in order to better protect historical space, use the regulation resulting from the current Act on the Protection and Care of Historical Monuments, creating cultural parks within the historical area. These cities include Kraków, Wrocław and, most recently, Poznań, where the Old Town Cultural Park in Poznań was established in 2018. This form of protection may be useful in regulating some spatial issues in the area of the Monument to History as well, but it is not directly related to this highest status and is not obligatory. Moreover, the areas where cultural parks are created are not the same as the areas recognized as Monuments of History.

In this case, what solutions and standards could be implemented for better protection? In the case of Monuments of History, which are historical urban complexes such as Gdynia, the experience of various cities which follow the UNESCO recommendation on the historical urban landscape (HUL)¹³ may be very useful. There should also be a requirement to develop management plans and monitor the status of the World Heritage List assets and to establish a special management entity with special powers and authority. A management plan would allow the identification of resources and assets of a monument designated as a Historical Monument. In one strategic document it would be possible to include various issues, important from the point of view of the protection of the urban system and its development, including: buildings, greenery, surface, small architecture, etc., but also taking into account the issues characteristic for the contemporary

¹³ Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, Paris, 10 November 2011.

functioning of the city, e.g. new investments, functions, communication issues, etc. Such a plan would be developed in a public procedure.

Such a document would be the basis for monitoring the area of the Monument of History and preparing reports on its functioning and possible threats, which should be collected and analyzed by a central institution such as the National Heritage Institute, which deals with Polish heritage on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In Gdynia, assumptions are currently being prepared for the management plan for the urban substance of the downtown, however, it is only an optional local initiative.

Summarizing the current status of the Monuments of History, it can be stated that it is only by name a form of protection of monuments. The law does not impose any special requirements on users and does not involve any obligations, e.g. budget commitments on the part of the state. From the point of view of heritage protection, such a state of affairs is undoubtedly flawed. We might come up with ideas on the details of the system of protection of Monuments of History, and the conservation community has many thoughts and specific proposals in this respect, presented in numerous publications. However, in order for the situation to change, implementation of new statutory regulations is necessary.

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