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GDAŃSK'S CULTURAL HERITAGE THE CITY CENTRE DISTRICT AND MUNICIPAL HISTORICAL POLICY

Over the 25 years that have elapsed since the fall of communism in Central Europe, we can observe there a process of redefinition of regional identities. An example may be found in Gdańsk, where for the purposes of municipal historical policy, a new interpretation is being made of the city's cultural heritage, in which a foundation is sought for a new local identity based on a popular narrative taut between two great events of the twentieth century: the outbreak of the Second World War and the birth of the Solidarity movement. This process seems inextricably linked to the phenomenon of the creation of new museums and other institutions giving material shape to the new regional identity. Similar processes can be observed more widely in this part of the continent.¹ In Gdańsk, autumn 2014 saw the opening of the European Solidarity Centre, while construction of the World War II Museum is now nearing completion. This view of the cultural heritage of Gdańsk from a European perspective is nonetheless detached from the picture of the city itself and from the cultural heritage visible in its urban structure, built up over several hundred years. Although Gdańsk's city centre district was rebuilt from total ruin following the catastrophe of 1945, it is still the carrier of that heritage. Hence certain doubts may be aroused by the implementation of the city's historical policy, which focuses on the construction of new symbolic buildings, while remaining isolated from the authentic foundation for the local identity of the people of Gdańsk, namely the urban structure of the city.

This historical policy, although extremely valuable for Gdańsk's image, is nonetheless limited to the construction of new public buildings, "avatars" of the twentieth-century narrative drawn from a European perspective, and in reality gives too shallow a representation of the cultural heritage of this thousand-year-old city. On the other hand, a local identity based on pride in one's city – one that is alive and draws in new residents – is based chiefly on quality of life: the importance of a "liveable city". There seems still to be a lack of space for a new vision regarding the

¹ Taken here to include Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. This does not mean, however, that "Central Europe" and related terms necessarily always refer specifically to those countries.

direction of spatial transformations that need to be undertaken in Gdańsk city centre. For more than a decade a popular debate has continued in the city between the sides of the misrepresented dualism of “modernity” versus “tradition”. Both approaches, not fitting the actual picture of the city’s urban structure, refer without much reflection to the watershed of 1945, thus making a division between what was pre-war and what is post-war. Nonetheless, the cultural heritage recorded in the urban structure of the city centre, even at the greatest level of generality, functions within at least three different narratives: that of the historic city, that of Prussian Danzig, and that of Polish Gdańsk. This article argues for the need to take a wider view of the cultural heritage of Gdańsk’s city centre as recorded in its urban structure, and attempts to give such a broader outline.

This article, although critical of the current narrative which views the city’s cultural heritage from a European perspective, does not have the aim of negating it. That narrative undoubtedly has value, but it must remain complementary to an informed historical policy focused on the city itself, which must be clearly reflected in municipal planning policy, oriented primarily towards the people of Gdańsk themselves. Such a direction of spatial transformation of the city, clearly rooted in the three existing narratives, would lead to the conscious creation of a new, fourth narrative – that of the contemporary city. Its quality, however, depends on proper adjustments being made to the processes that have been taking place with vigour for a decade or more. This article aims above all to emphasise that the only lasting foundation for a local identity for the people of Gdańsk can be the multi-layered story written in their city’s urban structure, shaped as the city developed over many centuries, as well as their high quality of life, serving as proof of the real value of that development.

MUNICIPAL HISTORICAL POLICY

Over the past decade or more, as a result of a need to define a new local identity, Gdańsk’s municipal historical policy has been rewritten with a focus on a new reading of its cultural heritage. In this way a new narrative has been adopted, taut between “two historical events which in the twentieth century made Gdańsk a European symbol city, namely the outbreak of the Second World War and the birth of Solidarity.”² A narrative perceived chiefly from a European perspective, presenting Gdańsk as a city of freedom, has many times been alluded to by leading scholars and public figures, including Guy Sorman, Donald Tusk, Andrzej Tomaszewski, Basil Kerski and Peter Oliver Loew. When one year ago the *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper launched a new supplement “Gdańsk. Where the New Centre of Europe is Growing”, its title referred to words spoken by Guy Sorman in January 2013:

² P. O. Loew, *Gdańsk i jego przeszłość. Kultura historyczna miasta od końca XVIII wieku do dzisiaj*, Gdańsk 2012, p. 430.

The symbol of the new Union might be a new European capital. I propose Gdańsk, halfway between East and West, a city whose historical turns of fate will remind us of what it is that Europe protects us from. The old motto of the Gdańsk-born Solidarity movement – “courage and moderation” – might become the motto of the new federal Europe.³

In the first edition of that new supplement, Donald Tusk, the then newly elected President of the European Council, spoke in an extensive interview of his vision of Gdańsk and the fact that “if one is seeking a symbol of Europe, then Gdańsk is fitting in many respects, in view of its history.”⁴ The same text again presents the aforementioned narrative whereby Gdańsk is viewed from a European perspective.

In the same supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Paweł Adamowicz, mayor of Gdańsk continuously since 1998, set out more extensively a vision of the future of Gdańsk as a “city of freedom”⁵ – a vision towards which the city’s historical policy is oriented,⁶ and which has been consistently put into practice over more than a decade.⁷ The slogan coined by Guy Sorman is of course merely a form of intellectual game, aiming to underline the importance of Gdańsk seen from the European perspective. Nonetheless, the city’s potential is real, and Gdańsk does indeed function in a certain sense perhaps not as one of the European capitals, because in fact “Europe has many capitals”,⁸ but as an important European city of remembrance. The political events associated with Gdańsk regularly attract the European political elite to the city, including on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War (and not only, as is traditional, in relation to the outbreak of that war and anniversaries of events associated with the Solidarity movement). Donald Tusk declared that during his time in office he would bring to the city many similar international meetings and important discussions.⁹ In that way, however, the European perspective on Gdańsk’s cultural heritage, described in more detail by Andrzej Tomaszewski,¹⁰ causes it to be restricted to twentieth-century history and consistently realised in that form. There is nonetheless a continuing search for a Gdańsk identity, the best

³ G. Sorman, *A może Gdańsk stolicą Europy? Europa na jaką czekamy*. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 January 2013.

⁴ D. Tusk, *Donald Tusk o swoim Gdańsku: Mam tu wszystko, co najświętsze, to, co się kocha*. *Gazeta Wyborcza*: “Gdańsk. Tu rośnie nowe centrum Europy”, No. 275.8306, 27 November 2014, pp. 3-5.

⁵ Although Paweł Adamowicz outlines the concept more broadly, writing: “I would like the residents of the city to be proud of it and to identify with the freedom story of Gdańsk. Gdańsk today and tomorrow remains a city of freedom.” P. Adamowicz, *Tożsamość: pamięć czy doświadczenie indywidualne?*, in: B. Kerski (ed.), *Gdańskie tożsamości. Eseje o mieście*, Gdańsk 2014, p. 220.

⁶ P. Adamowicz, *Gdańsk jest inspiracją dla Europy*. *Gazeta Wyborcza*: “Gdańsk. Tu rośnie nowe centrum Europy”, No. 275.8306, 27 November 2014.

⁷ P. Adamowicz, *Gdańsk jako wyzwanie*, Gdańsk 2008, pp. 81-86, 90-94.

⁸ G. Sorman, *Dlaczego francuski pisarz Guy Sorman chce, aby Gdańsk został stolicą Europy*. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 31 August 2013.

⁹ D. Tusk, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5.

¹⁰ A. Tomaszewski, *Ku nowej filozofii dziedzictwa*, Kraków 2012, pp. 302-305.

evidence of which is an anthology published at the end of April 2014 titled *Gdańskie tożsamości* ("Gdańsk Identities"), in which Basil Kerski, although beginning his introduction with the words "Gdańsk is a European place of remembrance"¹¹, goes on to express the following hope: "Gdańsk's mosaic of memories is rich, and I believe that thanks to this anthology it will be possible to fit it together anew."¹² Gdańsk indeed deserves more than a narrative written from a European perspective on its cultural heritage, which gives far too shallow a representation of its more than one thousand years of history.

A MEDIUM OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

The concept of heritage is today making its presence felt in a wide variety of scholarly fields. This phenomenon is described in depth in the latest book of Krzysztof Kowalski, who carefully considers an issue that has been at large in Europe for several decades:

Heritage has a role to play wherever history is too academic and impersonal, where memory proves to be too particularistic, and tradition too local and closed. It also offers an escape from old ways of interpreting the past, taking account of the new goals which the present sets for the past. Through the fact of conscious choice, without which there is no heritage, it expresses a particular type of control over the past by the present. It is always the power of the living over the dead, never the reverse.¹³

It is for this reason that selectively defined *heritage* serves today as one of the basic political instruments, exploited by shaping a specific historical narrative – for the needs of local communities, for instance. The foundations for a cultural heritage understood in this way can be identified everywhere, including Gdańsk's urban structure, which remains a particular example of a medium of that heritage, and within the area of modern-day Poland has accumulated sometimes over several centuries or even more than a millennium. Its value was once again specifically acknowledged in a set of recommendations published by UNESCO in 2011 concerning protection of the „historic urban landscape”, threatened by aggressive capitalism, yet regarded as being of value in itself.¹⁴ Although the idea of protecting cities as a special form of cultural heritage may today seem relatively obvious, this does not mean that the city space, and especially its urban structure, is in fact treated in such a manner.

Following the political transformations of 1989, the assumptions of Central European historical policy, including those at local or municipal level, naturally had

¹¹ B. Kerski, *Gdańskie tożsamości. Wstęp do antologii*, in: B. Kerski (ed.), *Gdańskie tożsamości. Eseje o mieście*, Gdańsk 2014, p. 7.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 14.

¹³ K. Kowalski, *O istocie dziedzictwa europejskiego – rozważania*, Kraków 2013, p. 6.

¹⁴ *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*, Paris 2011.

to be revised, resulting in attempts to redefine the identities of its inhabitants. In 1997, on the occasion of the millennium of the city of Gdańsk, an attempt was made to have its city centre district entered on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List. Artur Kostarczyk, then director of the Regional Centre for Studies and Protection of the Cultural Environment in Gdańsk, noted in relation to that project the emergent need for a “new identification of Gdańsk’s cultural heritage”¹⁵. He recognised how important for the “construction of a coherent vision of development” of Gdańsk city centre was the “evaluation of the entire urbanist heritage of the twentieth century.”¹⁶ At the foundations of the application lay a pioneering decision taken in 1947 by the first post-war provincial conservator, Jan Borowski, which placed the whole of the city centre district under conservation protection, mainly within the boundaries of the seventeenth-century fortifications. Although the application for entry on the UNESCO list was unsuccessful, the very fact that it was made might lead to the erroneous conclusion that there exists in Gdańsk a widespread understanding of the need to preserve the cultural heritage recorded in the urban structure of its city centre.

In reality, the city’s current historical policy, based on the popular narrative concerning Gdańsk, taut between two great events of the twentieth century, practically ignores its cultural heritage preserved in the urban structure. Its implementation is largely limited to attempts to lend material shape to that narrative in the form of new institutions – buildings as symbols, which are intended to maintain the vitality of the cultural heritage seen as being written in their walls. Such actions have led to Gdańsk’s two most important museum projects, intended to function somehow as “avatars” for the city – as materialisations of its European heritage. The European Solidarity Centre was opened at the end of August 2014, and the building of the new World War II Museum is due to be completed in the near future¹⁷. Although the construction of these new public buildings is essentially to be viewed positively, the realisation of only this type of projects cannot be considered sufficient from the perspective of the whole city centre district. Such actions are in line with a widespread tendency, perceptible in Central Europe over the last quarter-century, where it has become popular to create more and more new cultural units or simply museums, dominated by “thinking in the category of a building as a symbol, which like the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao will give a city a place on the world map.”¹⁸ Of course, this “Guggenheim effect” cannot be achieved by an unthinking attempt to repeat that project, which is connected with a broader revitalisation both of the Abandoibarra post-industrial zone (which covers

¹⁵ A. Kostarczyk, *Gdańsk – Pomnik historii. Kod genetyczny. Misja dziejowa. Wizja rozwoju*, in: G. Boros and Z. Gach (eds.), *Program ożywienia śródmieścia Gdańska*, Gdańsk 2001, p. 30.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

¹⁷ For updated information see <http://www.muzeum1939.pl/> (translator’s note).

¹⁸ K. Jagodzińska, quoted at <http://mek.krakow.pl/informacje-prasowe>. For broader discussion see: K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów w Europie Środkowej. Muzea i centra sztuki współczesnej (1989-2014)*, Kraków 2014.

an area of 35 hectares!) and of Bilbao itself¹⁹. Bilbao's authorities in fact undertook a courageous project to improve quality of life and bring about revitalisation on the scale of the city as a whole, and the symbolic building merely became its icon. It is important to understand that the quality of a city's urban structure has a direct impact on residents' lives, and thus is also dependent on its authenticity, including that of the cultural heritage recorded in it. It is not museums, but the quality of the city that matters to the people who live there.

TWO APPROACHES

The construction of new public buildings in the city centre district would appear to be a current priority of the city's authorities, serving to provide a symbolic embodiment of the two key assumptions of their historical policy based on the European narrative. Theoretically they are expected to act as catalysts for spatial changes in the entire city centre, particularly in its northern part, the Młode Miasto ("Young City") neighbourhood developing mainly on the site of the former Gdańsk Shipyard. These essentially positive actions nonetheless contrast with the city's archaic planning policy, which is based on functionalist assumptions outlined in the 1960s and 1970s, whose realisation has only today become possible thanks to the expenditure of enormous sums of European Union subsidy. This paradox concerning the vision of the city's spatial development merely provides a backdrop for the debate based on a dualist reading of its history in relation to the watershed of 1945, which saw the destruction of pre-war Danzig. Peter Oliver Loew used the words "modernity" and "tradition" to label two approaches that characterise the attitudes of public opinion in Gdańsk over the past quarter-century to architectural activity related to the debate over the form of the new buildings coming into being in the city centre district²⁰. This debate became most palpable at the end of the 1990s, when the postmodernist ideas referring to the city's pre-war heritage broadly conceived²¹ were confronted in public discussion with the modernist ideas that were generally considered to have been dominant in Polish architecture since the political thaw of 1956 and "went fundamentally unquestioned right up to the 1980s"²², and which survive to a certain degree even today.

¹⁹ J. Orzechowska-Waślawska, *Sukces Bilbao możliwy tylko w Bilbao*, in: M. Jankowska (ed.), *Miasta z wizją*, Warsaw 2014, pp. 34-53.

²⁰ P. O. Loew, *op. cit.*, 2012, pp. 431-433; this source also contains a full scholarly description of the entire discourse, together with a bibliography.

²¹ During that time buildings in historical style were constructed which theoretically alluded to the townhouses typical of Gdańsk, even far outside the boundaries of the city centre district.

²² J. Friedrich, *Problem nowoczesności w kulturze architektonicznej powojennego Gdańska*, in: J. Friedrich, E. Baryłewska-Szymańska, W. Szymański and A. Wołodźko (eds.), *Niechciane Dziedzictwo. Różne oblicza architektury nowoczesnej w Gdańsku i Sopocie*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 42.

Both of these approaches, which in a certain sense sanction the division into pre-war and post-war Gdańsk, would appear above all to be founded in a lack of a scientifically defined reference, linked to the fact that the 1945 watershed is accepted while often entirely neglecting the actual differentiation of the cultural heritage recorded in the urban structure of the city centre. The result of this is the current division between blind “modernity”, always opting for the need to create contemporary architecture regardless of its context, and nostalgic “tradition” which defends everything that remains from pre-war times and proposes the recreation of a city which has been non-existent for the past 70 years. These are the extreme attitudes which can be sketched out on the basis of the discourse understood in such a way. There is a certain paradox in this debate: “the Polish residents of Gdańsk felt positive emotions towards the German cultural heritage rather than the post-war Polish heritage. Of course this is a great simplification, since contemporary residents of Gdańsk are not always fully aware of what in the former city is ‘German’ and what is ‘Polish’ (and this again is very much a mental shortcut).”²³ Hence from the perspective of the described urban structure of the city centre it is easy to see that the dualist nature of the discussion does not in any way correspond to the actual picture. Of course, the understandable need for an approach labelled “modernity” must make certain concessions to the context in which it comes into being. Sometimes these concessions must be very far-going, out of respect for valuable spaces. Unfortunately they may risk reinforcing, on the principle of blind consistency, all of the planning errors made in the past. More importantly, however, the nostalgic approach referred to as “tradition”, alluding to a vague recollection of the pre-war city, is based on an oversimplified picture of that city, which fails to differentiate the stages of spatial transformations of specific areas, leading to unnecessary chaos. This approach also stands in opposition to all kinds of post-war heritage which do not fully reflect the city’s pre-war form. As a result there is no place in the discourse so construed for the achievements made in the rebuilding of Gdańsk, which has been continuing now for more than 70 years. Even the initial post-war period of reconstruction, to which we owe the recreation of the Głównie Miasto (*Rechtsstadt*) neighbourhood, Gdańsk’s most important set of old town buildings restored in their historical forms, is seen from this perspective as an inept attempt to restore the pre-war city, instead of existing in the consciousness of the city’s population as a source of pride in the reconstruction effort undertaken. Happily, however, these divisions are beginning to fade, and the post-war heritage too is coming to take on its own value and win the respect due to it.

²³ J. Friedrich, *Polskość? Niemieckość? Gdańskość? O tożsamości sztuki i architektury Gdańska w XIX i XX wieku*, in: B. Kerski (ed.), *Gdańskie tożsamości. Eseje o mieście*, Gdańsk 2014, p. 196.

THREE NARRATIVES

The urban structure of Gdańsk's city centre remains an explicit record of the turbulent history of spatial transformations that have taken place there over the past several hundred years. It is the medium of a unique cultural heritage which ought naturally to remain the foundation for the identity of Gdańsk's contemporary inhabitants. Although this is a trivial statement, at its essence lies the fact that only after making a proper reading of this cultural heritage can one begin a valuable discussion concerning the direction of the city's further evolution, avoiding the blind acceptance of a universal scheme based on a dispute between modern and traditional architecture. In relation to Gdańsk's city centre, such a discourse between a nostalgic recollection of the pre-war city and an unreflecting striving for modernity would seem to be especially inappropriate. The vast scale of the destruction caused by the catastrophe of the Second World War did indeed break the continuity of the city's existence, creating the powerful watershed of 1945 that divides its history into pre-war and post-war, and often leads to the making of simple dualist distinctions. However, the cultural heritage recorded in the urban structure of the city centre should be interpreted today through at least three different narratives, which for the purposes of the present article may be given the labels "historic city", "Prussian Danzig" and "Polish Gdańsk"²⁴, although they should not be identified with the three myths of the essentially multicultural, German or Polish nature of the city, which have been definitively debunked by Peter Olivier Loew²⁵.

²⁴ It is natural that both Poles and Germans refer to the city of Gdańsk (Danzig) using the name that has become established in their own language. However, a problem arises in describing the history of such multicultural places from an international perspective, in view of the multiplicity of names used. This is a very serious problem, as noted by, among others, N. Davies, in his book *Vanished Kingdoms* (Polish edition: Krakow 2010). Similar questions have been raised by users of the English version (the most global language version) of Wikipedia, in working on an encyclopaedic entry on the history of Gdańsk. Hence, while it seems justified to use the names Danzig and Gdańsk for the city whose history is divided by such a clear watershed as that of 1945, it is hard to indicate unambiguously a name for the first narrative, that of the city existing before the start of the long 19th century (the use of Latinised names such as *Dantiscum* or *Gedania*, which are related in an obvious way to the preceding two, does not solve the problem). For this reason, for simplicity of communication, in the present text the specific phrases will be used only as names for the individual narratives, and in other cases the present-day Polish name of Gdańsk will be used. [In the English translation, however, I have used the name *Danzig* in cases where this is most appropriate to the historical context (translator's note).]

²⁵ P. O. Loew, *Trzy mity. Niemieckość, polskość, wielokulturowość*, in: B. Kreski (ed.), *Gdańskie tożsamości. Eseje o mieście*, Gdańsk 2014, *passim*. The myths of the essentially German and Polish natures of Gdańsk were created for the purposes of nationalist narratives, aiming to claim possession of the city, while the myth of multiculturalism, theoretically opposed to them, and in fact ahistorical, functions today as their successor.

HISTORIC CITY

The oldest narrative recorded in the urban structure of Gdańsk's city centre district can be labelled, for maximum neutrality, with the phrase "historic city". This narrative would encompass the oldest authentic monuments of Gdańsk, now few in number, providing evidence of its long history, invaluable in that they survive against the backdrop of the city rebuilt from the destruction of 1945. This narrative undoubtedly still functions as a common cultural heritage of all of the people of Gdańsk, covering the memory of the cities of both the Teutonic Order (1308–1454) and the Polish Kings (1466–1793), to which memory both Polish and German historiographies refer.²⁶ The character of the historic city narrative is ideally illustrated by the city's coat of arms, which was originally used by the *Rechtsstadt*. The arms imposed by the Teutonic Order, with "two crosses placed vertically", replaced the earlier Hanseatic "seal with a depiction of a cog ship."²⁷ Significantly, the normal black and silver colours of the Order, which "closely oversaw the process of the creation of town coats of arms, requiring references to its own arms and colours",²⁸ were replaced by the Hanseatic red and silver. The arms, for a long time not welcomed by the people of Gdańsk, were finally accepted only after being "dignified" by King Kazimierz Jagiellończyk (Casimir IV) "by the addition above the two crosses of a gold crown" representing the "Polish kings' symbolic guardianship of the city."²⁹ In this way, a single "graphical mark" came to record the complexity of the heritage of the city as a whole, formed over several hundred years, which could until recently be rediscovered in its historical urban structure along with all of its accumulated layers.

The historic city narrative is best illustrated by a map made almost 150 years ago by Buhse – an invaluable record of the mediaeval urban structure that somehow solidified within the tight ring of the new fortifications. This state of affairs, captured immediately prior to the city's Great Renovation, somewhat resembling a large open-air museum, can be compared with the Stockholm Map dated to around 1600, just before the construction of the ring of fortifications consisting of 14 bastions that encircled the town to the south, east and north. By means of such a comparison it is easy to see how clearly visible, right up to the start of the twentieth century (and even longer, up to 1945, when more than 90% of the buildings were destroyed), were the three old-town neighbourhoods (*Rechtsstadt* or *Główne Miasto*, *Altstadt* or *Stare Miasto*, and *Vorstadt* or *Stare Przedmieście*) and the main premises of the urban structure of Gdańsk city centre, which appear to have solidified in a very similar form for more or less 300 years. The delimitation of the city by the fortifications

²⁶ I deliberately overlook the pre-1308 city, founded under Lübeck law, as will be explained later.

²⁷ B. Śliwiński, *Herby miasta Gdańska i dzielnic. Główne Miasto Gdańsk*, in: B. Śliwiński and J. Mykowski (eds.), *Encyklopedia Gdańska*, Gdańsk 2012, p. 389.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.



The "Stockholm Map", dated to 1600 or 1601. It already clearly depicts the three chief old-town neighbourhoods: Rechtsstadt (Główne Miasto) in the centre, Altstadt (Stare Miasto) to the north, and Vorstadt (Stare Przedmieście) to the south. The map was made just prior to the construction of the new fortifications, which would surround the city from the south, east and north until 1895.



Buhse's map of 1866–1869. Still clearly visible in the central part is the urban structure based on the three main city centre neighbourhoods. The western and northern strip of fortifications would become the site of further expansion of the city, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.

allows us today to link this narrative with a specific area of the city centre. It should be noted that in spite of Gdańsk's millennium-long history, the historic city narrative remains legible above all in the structure that was shaped only following the events of 1308, known as the Gdańsk Slaughter³⁰, when the city

³⁰ For more on this subject, see the materials from an academic meeting which took place on the 700th anniversary of the takeover by the Teutonic Order: B. Śliwiński (ed.), „Rzeź gdańska” z 1308 roku w świetle najnowszych badań, Gdańsk 2009.

founded under Lübeck law was almost completely destroyed as it was taken over by the Teutonic Order.³¹ Only in the following years did the Altstadt neighbourhood cede its primacy to Rechtsstadt, favoured by the new rulers, which was given a charter under Kulm law and granted favourable privileges around 1342; this would lead via several hundred years of evolution to the state of affairs shown on the above-mentioned Stockholm Map. The history of the foundation and spatial transformations of Gdańsk remains a subject of interest to many German and Polish historians.³² Nonetheless, the historic city narrative itself is important in view of its universal nature. Interpreted and used in different ways by the two national historiographies, although to a large extent destroyed, it remains a record of the great history of Gdańsk, still recalled by the lofty towers outlined in the panorama of its central district. This narrative can be described here only superficially, since any attempt to recount it even in succinct form would require a separate article.³³

PRUSSIAN DANZIG

The second of the narratives recorded in the urban structure of Gdańsk city centre, intuitively given the label “Prussian Danzig”, relates above all to the Great Renovation of the city at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This period needs to be framed a great deal more broadly, starting from the Prussian takeover of the city in the Second Polish Partition of 1791, through the whole of the “long” nineteenth century up to 1945, including the period of political turbulence in the interwar years and during wartime, when Prussia in fact no longer existed. Lying on the eastern border of the German Empire, and by the same token of German-speaking Central Europe, Danzig functioned above all as a garrison town. At the time in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when successive German cities were rapidly being defortified,³⁴ Danzig long remained enclosed within a tight ring as a border fort, providing protection for the internal territory of the Reich. Even though

³¹ B. Śliwiński, *Wydarzenia w Gdańsku i w okolicach w okresie września do 12/13 listopada 1308 roku*, in: B. Śliwiński (ed.), *„Rzeź gdańska” z 1308 roku w świetle najnowszych badań*, Gdańsk 2009, pp. 79–114.

³² Much information about the historiography of Gdańsk is given by P. O. Loew, *op. cit.*, 2012. However, the most important works on the history of the city’s spatial transformations include several of the most popular publications: B. Szermer and J. Stankiewicz, *Gdańsk. Rozwój urbanistyczny i architektoniczny oraz powstanie Zespołu Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia*, Warsaw 1959; R. Massalski, J. Stankiewicz and J. Kowalski, *Rozwój urbanistyczny i architektoniczny Gdańska*, in: A. Czesun (ed.), *Gdańsk, jego dzieje i kultura*, Warsaw 1969; B. Szermer, *Gdańsk – przeszłość i współczesność*, Warsaw 1971.

³³ A. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 302–308.

³⁴ Y. Mintzker, *The Defortification of the German City, 1689–1866*, Cambridge, New York 2012, *passim*.

many public buildings were built during that time³⁵, it was only with the defortification of the city, begun in 1895,³⁶ that the so-called Great Renovation could take place. The structure associated with the historic city narrative, shaped over several centuries, and tightly enclosed within the defensive ring, began to undergo rapid changes. However, the new Prussian Danzig narrative did not come to be overlaid over the old urban structure. In the area of the demolished western line of fortifications there was created a new great-city space based on rings of boulevards after the fashion of Cologne and Vienna, brought to Danzig thanks to a man who was then regarded as a leading urban planner, Hermann Joseph Stübben.

Referring again to Buhse's map of 1866–1869, a further stage in the city's development can be observed in a manual addition to one of the printed copies. The new urban structure, growing out of the old centre, was filled out with the eclectic architecture characteristic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The architecture of the Wilhelm era was expected to play an important role in creating a regional identity (*Heimat*) for Danzig, as a city rooted in the united German Reich (*Vaterland*), even if located at its eastern edges.³⁷ The architecture of that time was created to serve a nationalist politics, to reinforce the myth that "Danzig in its history was a German city."³⁸ Nonetheless, in the consciousness of the city's populace, the symbol of the Great Renovation was not the public buildings, but pre-war Danzig's most luxurious hotel, the *Danziger Hof*, erected in 1896–1898 as one of the first objects to appear on the mud where the bastions had until recently stood. This grand building, designed by Berlin architect Karl Gaus, standing alongside the High Gate, naturally made a great impression on residents as a harbinger of the city's new future. With the levelling of Gdańsk's city centre in 1945, the *Danziger Hof*, like most of the buildings there, was left in ruins³⁹. After the war, many of the buildings of that era were torn down for political reasons. After Jacek Friedrich, we may refer to the 1949 text of Zbigniew Rewski "under the suggestive title 'On the De-Prussianisation of the Architecture of the Western Lands'"⁴⁰, in which the then conservator of monuments in the Recovered Territories put forward "the thesis that the massive brick buildings, so characteristic of the regions which Poland took over from Germany after the Second World War, [...] posed a serious threat to the revival of Polish life

³⁵ P. Lorens, *Przekształcenia obszaru śródmieścia Gdańska w latach 1793–1945*, in: A. Kostarczyk (ed.), *Gdańsk – pomnik historii*, Gdańsk 1998, pp. 26–81.

³⁶ M. Omilanowska, *Defortyfikacja Gdańska na tle przekształceń miast niemieckich w XIX wieku*, in: *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* (72) 2010, pp. 293–334.

³⁷ M. Omilanowska, *Cesarz Wilhelm II i jego inicjatywy architektoniczne na wschodnich rubieżach Cesarstwa Niemieckiego*, in: E. Pilecka (ed.), *Sztuka w kręgu władzy. materiały LVII Ogólnopolskiej Sesji Naukowej Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki*, Warsaw 2009, p. 264.

³⁸ P. O. Loew, *op. cit.*, 2014, p. 132.

³⁹ *Danziger Hof* remains in the consciousness of Gdańsk's residents as the "great departed" and as a key building for understanding the architecture of turn-of-the-century Danzig and the Great Renovation itself.

⁴⁰ J. Friedrich, *op. cit.*, 2014, p. 159.

in those lands.”⁴¹ Certainly at one time the Prussian Danzig narrative written in the urban structure of the city centre carried a powerful pan-Germanic message, which led to opposition, in some sense justified, from the city’s new inhabitants; but as from the mid-1990s, on the wave of the very popular publications of photographic albums titled *Był sobie Gdańsk* (“There Was Gdańsk”) by authors including Donald Tusk, showing the beauty of the pre-war city, that narrative may today carry a very positive emotional charge, associated with the erstwhile great city built during the Prussian era.

POLISH GDAŃSK

The urban structure of Gdańsk city centre, which had developed without interruption for several hundred years, was largely erased as a result of the events of 1945. It is estimated that 90% or even 95% of the city centre was then reduced to ruins⁴². The greatest part of the urban structure that had carried the narratives of the historic city and of Prussian Danzig ceased to exist. For this reason, the third narrative, which can unarguably be assigned the label “Polish Gdańsk”, is related above all to the myth of the city’s reconstruction. At the beginning of this century, Andrzej Tomaszewski described the essence of that myth:

When today one looks from the mid-century perspective on the phenomenon of the reconstruction of Gdańsk, one is astonished by the far-sightedness of its thinking. In the post-war period it was normal for cities to be rebuilt by their own inhabitants, who identified with their traditions and history and wished to resurrect them. This was the case, for example, with Warsaw and with many German towns. Gdańsk was reconstructed by an immigrant community which did not identify with its architectural shape, although they sensed its belonging to the common sphere of Western culture. This anticipated by half a century the mode of thinking in categories of “common European heritage”, which only today is becoming a signpost for our actions.⁴³

When considering the post-war reconstruction of Gdańsk, we usually think only of the old buildings of Głównie Miasto, rebuilt in their historical forms, with which it would also be easiest to connect the third narrative recorded in its urban structure. In reality, however, practically the whole of the city centre obliterated at the end of World War II came to exemplify the post-war creation of a socialist city, which clearly was not limited just to the buildings of Głównie Miasto.

Theoretically, the narrative of Polish Gdańsk ought to cover the past 70 years, but in fact it relates chiefly to the initial post-war period of reconstruction, when the urban structure was sketched out afresh – indisputably new, although having a clear rela-

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

⁴² M. Gawlicki, *Zabytkowa architektura Gdańska w latach 1945-1951. Kształtowanie koncepcji, konserwacji i odbudowy*, Gdańsk 2012, pp. 19-53.

⁴³ A. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

tionship to the pre-war structure. In the foreground, naturally, stands Głównie Miasto, reconstructed according to the postulates of the "Polish conservation school"; but the third narrative concerns also the implementations of the other two detailed plans that were created on the basis of the overall city centre plan of 1952. Głównie Miasto rebuilt in its historical forms, together with the now modern forms of the buildings of Stare Miasto and Stare Przedmieście, coincide with the picture of the city known from the previously mentioned Stockholm Map of the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From today's perspective, however, there may be a certain difficulty in extending the narrative to cover the later period after the political thaw of 1956, when new planning principles based on functionalist ideas introduced a new order to the city, one that today carries negative associations. These changes also relate to the aforementioned detailed plans for Stare Miasto and Stare Przedmieście, in which the planning directions taken remain a subject of widespread criticism.⁴⁴ The third narrative, that of Polish Gdańsk, outlined in this way, leaves a certain amount of space for a fourth narrative, associated with the city contemporary to us.

Today, paradoxically, the functionalist principles of the 1960s and 1970s serve as a reference point for successive projects carried out in both the city centre and in the whole of Gdańsk,⁴⁵ subordinated especially to the overgrowing road network. In spite of fully justified critical reflection concerning the functionalist directions taken in the city's urban planning, the Polish Gdańsk narrative is written particularly in the post-war urban structure built as part of the creation of a socialist city. In fact it is only thanks to the first period of reconstruction, associated with socialist realism, that Gdańsk city centre, deprived of most of its nineteenth-century urban structure, today retains at least a fragmentary great-city character. It must be remembered, however, that the current critical attitude towards later developments, associated with the modernist period in the architecture of the Polish People's Republic, may prove to be only temporary, just like the critical attitude to the architecture of the Wilhelm era that was prevalent in the early post-war years.

A COMMON HERITAGE

The vision of Gdańsk as one of many European capitals and one of the most important places of remembrance is a very valuable concept for the city. The current narrative, lying at the foundations of the city's historical policy, taut between two great historical events of the twentieth century, is able to function as an important

⁴⁴ The reconstruction of Głównie Miasto is the subject of a work by J. Friedrich, *Odbudowa Głównego Miasta w Gdańsku w latach 1945-1960*, Gdańsk 2015. This also contains more information on the neighbouring Stare Miasto and Stare Przedmieście and the plans for the western front of the city centre district in the area of the pre-war Ring.

⁴⁵ T. Parteka, *Czas na zmiany w urbanistyce Gdańska*, in: *Gazeta Wyborcza: Trójmiasto*, 9 May 2015.

part of the identity of its present-day inhabitants. It is based, however, primarily on the contemporary post-war picture of Gdańsk, placing emphasis on the events of the second half of the twentieth century (stretching between 1939 and 1989), while functioning as if outside the third narrative of Polish Gdańsk and the urban structure in which it is recorded. It therefore seems clear that such a way of telling the city's story, detached from its multi-layered thousand-year history, in fact leads to impoverishment of its people's identity. It is difficult, within the European perspective, to do full justice to the rich history of Gdańsk, spanning many centuries and recorded in all three narratives of the urban structure of its central district. In the city's current historical policy there is a lack of adequate space to recall, for example, the Great Renovation or even the struggle to reconstruct the city after 1945, which is after all most unquestionably related to the people living in the city today. Basil Kerski, in the aforementioned introduction to the anthology *Gdańsk Identities*, also recalled the words of Peter Olivier Loew, who "emphasised that commemoration ought to help in finding one's place in contemporary times, in choosing a direction of development."⁴⁶ This should be the role played by the cultural heritage recorded in the urban structure of Gdańsk city centre, which can be interpreted in the three narratives we have described: those of the historic city, of Prussian Danzig and of Polish Gdańsk.

It turns out to be easy, even by superficial observation, to read in the urban structure of the city centre these three narratives, which in a clear fashion systematise the picture of the cultural heritage of Gdańsk. This results primarily from the direction of spatial transformations that have taken place in the area in question. The urban structure shaped at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which today ought to be associated with the Prussian Danzig narrative, came into being on the boundary of the city centre district that had been shaped over several centuries and was associated with the historic city narrative. This means that the successive narratives recorded in the urban structure were not built up on top of each other in the same place. However, the picture of Polish Gdańsk is related primarily to the rebuilding (Główne Miasto) and redevelopment (Stare Miasto and Stare Przedmieście) of the three most important historical urban neighbourhoods, which correspond to the most important part of the historic city narrative. For this reason today's Gdańsk, despite the destruction at the end of the Second World War, retains a clear relationship with the pre-war city not only thanks to a few surviving buildings, but also because of their restored surroundings or simply the largely preserved street layout. This does not apply, however, to the area associated with the Prussian Danzig narrative, which for many years was rejected and functioned as an unwanted heritage. The area of the great-city architecture of the modern centre of pre-war Danzig has since the 1970s been used as the city's main north-south thoroughfare, and the new developments planned there treat the area

⁴⁶ B. Kerski, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

even today in detachment from its history, as ordinary unused land, deprived of its unique character.

After 44 years of communist rule in Poland and the more than 25 years that have elapsed since, it is worth attempting once more to understand the origins of the reshaped urban structure of Gdańsk, located in the place of a now erased urban organism that lived for hundreds of years, so as to define anew the directions to be taken in its still incomplete reconstruction, or rather modern creation, which ought to form the basis for a new, fourth, narrative of our contemporary city. Donald Tusk has noted that "even if certain decisions taken already in free Gdańsk, in free Poland, were unwise, including decisions concerning infrastructure and urban planning, nonetheless the power of freedom is such that slowly the city's internal shape is taking on a more natural character. Everything is becoming genuine again. In spite of the great effort to rebuild Gdańsk, for many years it lacked a heart. Only now is it regaining one."⁴⁷ Such changes, although clearly visible in the social plane, are much harder to perceive in the city's historical and planning policies. To determine a new cultural heritage for the city, there is an increasingly burning need for the two different approaches to be reformed into three narratives. It is important to recognise that it is much easier to build an identity on the pride flowing from a beautiful city that respects its multi-layered history – but above all a city in which it is good to live – than on new public buildings, however attractive. It is with this in mind that action should be taken to set a new direction for the shaping of an identity for the people of Gdańsk.

CONCLUSIONS

The city's current historical policy is stretched taut between two of the most important events of the twentieth century. The narrative of Gdańsk viewed from the European perspective remains very legible and attractive not only to an outside audience. In spite of its value, however, one must be aware of the danger that it conceals, namely the oversimplification of the local identity of the people of Gdańsk. The significance of both the myth concerning Gdańsk Shipyard and the myth of the site of the beginning of the Second World War, which also functions as a powerful historical watershed, certainly justifies the need for new museums to tell those stories. At the same time, however, we must not forget about the urban structure of the city itself, because it is there that its people live, and its quality that determines their standard of living. This is particularly obvious in the case of cities which have suffered a great deal as a result of war. Gdańsk is still in the process of rebuilding, or rather redeveloping, the city centre district that suffered more than 90% destruction. The cultural heritage recorded in its urban structure is the medium for three narratives, which

⁴⁷ D. Tusk, *op. cit.*

ought to become the real foundation for the local identity of the people of the city. Let us sum up the problem with reference to one of the most obvious examples that illustrate it.

At the end of 2014, European Heritage Labels were awarded for the second time. This is a new European Union initiative that replaces an intergovernmental initiative launched in 2006 to define a common cultural heritage of Europe by identifying its most important places of remembrance (not necessarily of material values). One of the first three Polish sites to which Labels were awarded was the Historical Gdańsk Shipyard, whose nomination included a specific list of buildings and structures: “the Health and Safety Building, Gate No. 2 and Solidarity Square with the Fallen Shipyard Workers Monument including the wall and plaques, and the European Solidarity Centre.”⁴⁸ In this way protection has been afforded to symbolic buildings, while at the same time the remainder of the cultural heritage of that area remains at the mercy of its private owners. Further demolitions are taking place,⁴⁹ which are leading to the erasure from the picture of the city of parts of its history, belonging to, among others, the Prussian Imperial Shipyard, one of the few relics of the city’s nineteenth-century architecture.⁵⁰ Discussions in this matter are continuing, and it is still not known what fate awaits, for example, the Gdańsk shipyard cranes, which appeared to have become a permanent feature of the city’s panorama. It turns out, however, that what municipal historical policy is incapable of doing is starting to be done at grass roots level. The projects of the Wyspa Institute of Art and of social activists and small entrepreneurs are gradually revitalising the former shipyard landscape, attracting young people in large numbers. For several years a variety of cultural events have been held there, and recently there have also been new commercial initiatives of a less and less temporary nature.⁵¹ The need is visible for a change in thinking about the city, which will also lead to the preservation of the authenticity of its space and improvement in the quality of life of its people.

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⁴⁸ Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, <http://mkidn.gov.pl/pages/strona-glowna/kultura-i-dziedzictwo/znak-dziedzictwa-europejskiego/polska-w-zde.php> (accessed 24 April 2015).

⁴⁹ An emotional record of this can be found in a photographic album by M. Szlag, *Stocznia Szlaga*, Gdańsk 2013.

⁵⁰ P. Lorens, *O przywrócenie Gdańskowi XIX wieku*, in: G. Boros and Z. Gach (eds.), *Program ożywienia śródmieścia Gdańska*. Gdańsk 1998.

⁵¹ A. Szyłak, *Stocznia to nie tylko substancja materialna*, <http://natemat.pl/137947,aneta-szylak-stocznia-to-nie-tylko-substancja-materialna> (accessed 15 April 2015).

ABSTRACT

The current municipal historical policy of Gdańsk focuses on two major museum projects purported to be a unique embodiment of the city's cultural heritage. Their underlying narrative, which is told from the European perspective, is based on two great events of the 20th century and seems to disregard the cultural heritage recorded in the urban structure of the city centre. However, it is precisely this urban structure that exerts the strongest influence on the local identity of Gdańsk's citizens and the quality of their life. So far the discourse on architecture in Gdańsk has been shaped by the dualistic debate between "tradition" and "modernity", founded on the division into pre-war and post-war developments. This approach does not take full advantage of the possible ways of reading the cultural heritage of Gdańsk, and should be replaced by at least three narratives: those of the historic city, of Prussian Danzig, and of Polish Gdańsk. Only a proper interpretation of the cultural heritage embodied in the urban structure of the city centre can serve as a foundation for a new and more mature municipal and spatial policy in Gdańsk.

