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## SHAPING OF WATERFRONTS IN SELECTED POLISH PORT CITIES

### Abstract

*The paper presents experience from three Polish port cities, included into the Waterfront Urban Development project, which is realised within the framework of the INTERREG II C programme.*

*Basing on the examples of Gdynia, Gdańsk and Elbląg it may be stated that that the project resulted in increased awareness and interest of authorities, planning services and inhabitants in the transformation of the dilapidated land/water contact areas. Further realisation of the project gives a chance to upgrade and enliven the waterfront spatial structures using good examples from West Europe.*

Numerous projects with participation of the Polish side have been started in the framework of the INTERREG II C programme, which supports international strategic regional planning.

Five Polish port cities: Gdynia (leading role in the project), Gdańsk, Szczecin, Elbląg and Tczew participate in the project Waterfront Urban Development [1].

The utilitarian objective of the project is the exchange of experience connected with various initiatives aiming at animation of the coastal areas of the cities. Especially in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea Region, cities have turned away from the water – from the sea, river or port embankments. At the same time, during the last decades in West European port cities quite reverse processes became active, consisting in the animation for new aims of old port and industrial structures located in near-water zones. Many already realised projects, in result of which new functions entered decisively into the degraded waterfront areas, used previously for cargo handling, storage and for various branches of port industry, are spectacularly successful. In effect new spatial solutions appeared, offering various cultural, tourism and trade services, and even housing has been introduced. Contact with water

proved in these spatial realisations the most important matter, even to the point of being economically measurable. London, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Copenhagen are just a few of the many examples of cities, which since many years are successfully restructuring their waterfronts, treating this as a continuous action, permanently written into the policy of forming a sustainable spatial structure of the port city.

The project *Waterfront Urban Development* assumes that each of the participating cities shall present, with the help of foreign and own experts, a vision of transformation of its waterfront structures, and as a next step – the methods and means for realising the transformation.

Basing on the experience of three port cities: Gdynia, Gdańsk and Elbląg, some general reflection may be attempted whether, and to what extent, realisation of the project can help to improve the picture of the port/city contact areas and to implement in planning practice the good, tested standards of shaping waterfront areas in West European port cities.

## Gdynia

It should be stressed that there is no element of chance in the selection of Gdynia for the coordinator of work carried out by the Polish participants in the project. Since several years, the city very consistently realises a planning policy concerning its waterfront with the objective of forming it as the most prestigious part of the urban space, using some parts of the port quays, along which restructuring of the outdated port potential is planned (President's Basin area). This can be traced beginning from the decisions in the land-use plan for the central and port districts of Gdynia, through the strategy of development of Gdynia to elaborations of operational character: The Coastal Zone of Urban Prestige [2] and the Zone of Central Gdynia Development [3]. Especially the Coastal Zone of Urban Prestige contains a very detailed development of the idea of forming the port/sea contact area, distinguishing in the area specific spatial units and determining for each of them the aims of spatial transformation, the methods and the effects of implementation. With such rich starting material, Gdynia focused in the project on solving a relatively narrow problem – the development of the concept of a new port basin for museum ships, and possibly for other vessels, located in the area of the South Pier.

The following reasons support the concept of a multifunctional sail ship basin in the area of the South Pier in the Port of Gdynia:

- consistent creation in planning documents in force and in studies and operational elaborations concerning the Gdynia waterfront (“Study of conditions and directions of spatial development of Gdynia”, “Land-use plan of the central district of Gdynia”, “Strategy of development of Gdynia”, “Coastal Zone of Urban Prestige of Gdynia”) of a vision of development, which assumes very comprehensive utilisation of the cultural values and resources of the city centre/port contact area in order to activate highest quality tourism services (production of high grade products, based on promotion of “history, nature and culture” of the site);
- the returning concept of designating the most prestigiously located in port Pomerania Quay for serving touristic passenger traffic in its numerous forms, and for playing the role of the representative quay of the port and city; at present, of the 628 m of the quay with 6 – 9 m depths, about 220 m is used for the museum ships “Dar Pomorza” and “Błyskawica”; the remaining length is used for mooring of school and research vessels, which have no permanent berth in the port. Also the existing building of the Coastal Shipping Passenger Terminal is not used in accordance with its purpose;

- the objective of concentrating in one area a richer set of museum functions, realised on the South Pier; a museum of tradition of Polish yachting, exhibiting museum vessels on water, may be a unique chance of improving the attractiveness and enlivening such exhibition activities, also through using the new basin for various yachting spectacles.

Three programme and spatial variants of the new basin were developed. Preference was given to the variant shown in Fig. 1. For each of the variants a draft cost assessment was made. Work on the concept of the new basin, named the *Yachting Tradition Basin*, was accompanied by public consultation.

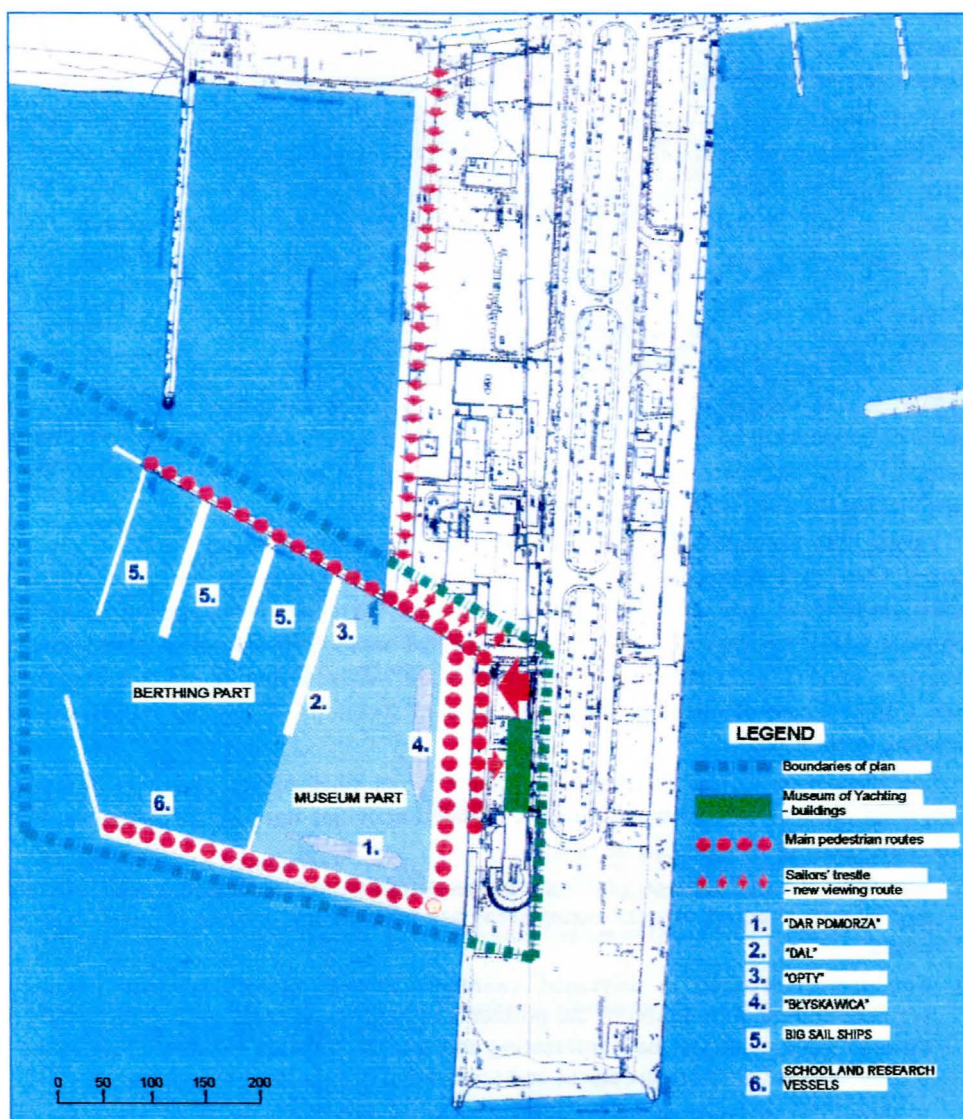


Fig. 1. Port of Gdynia – concept of the new Yachting Tradition Basin at the South Pier, developed in the framework of the *Waterfront Urban Development* project.

## Gdańsk

Participation of Gdańsk in the project proceeded along different lines. The city organised a conference, in which took part many experts presenting their views on the possibilities of shaping waterfronts in the spatial system of a city with an especially big complex of marine and river basin, which at the same time is very little open to contacts with water. Recent years saw big improvements in the process of bringing some order to the near-water structures – it may be enough to point to the new spatial picture of the Długie Pobrzeże (Long Quay), the continued works on the Granary Island, or the new marina at Szafarnia Str. In the plans of town development it is planned to transform a part of the post-shipyard areas into a modern city centre, strongly exhibiting contact with water. Also a part of the little used port areas is well fit for the development of new functions and for shaping of based on them waterfronts. The invited experts defined more clearly the compliance to transformation of specific near-water structures of Gdańsk, the directions of transformation, with special attention given to water tourism, and the expected conflicts in the use of the water basins and near-water areas. On this basis mapping the “hot-spots” might be attempted, in order to indicate these areas, which first of all should be restructured. Also a draft programme of such activities can be developed using the obtained information.

## Elbląg

Similarly to Gdańsk, the city started its participation in the project with a conference aimed at introducing to the participants the idea of shaping waterfronts, using numerous examples from various European cities, and showing the possibilities and rationality of transforming the near-water structures of Elbląg.

Taking into account and respecting the results of earlier planning works of the city, various sites were selected in the Elbląg seaport, which qualify for the development of widely understood water tourism functions: yachting, kayaking, servicing the Vistula Lagoon and Baltic passenger shipping. For the selected locations programme/spatial concepts were developed (Fig. 2) and costs of their realisation were assessed. In effect Elbląg developed a bold vision of adapting its port to modern standards of shaping waterfronts and servicing water tourism.

The *Waterfront Urban Development* project is not finished yet, and it is difficult to assess what chances of continuation of the initiated activities has each of the cities. However, some general remarks can be made:

- 1) The project is a “bulls-eye hit”; problems of activating, integrating with the cities and proper shaping of near-water areas are of vital importance to all Polish port cities;
- 2) The project resulted in increased awareness of city authorities, spatial planning services and the population of the problems of near-water areas of the cities, showing through good examples how interesting and socially awaited can spatial solutions be if they activate old port structures and areas freed of industrial functions;
- 3) It should be understood that processes of activating the near-water areas are long term and require proper planning and preparation of realisation programmes. They should result in mitigation of port-city spatial conflicts.

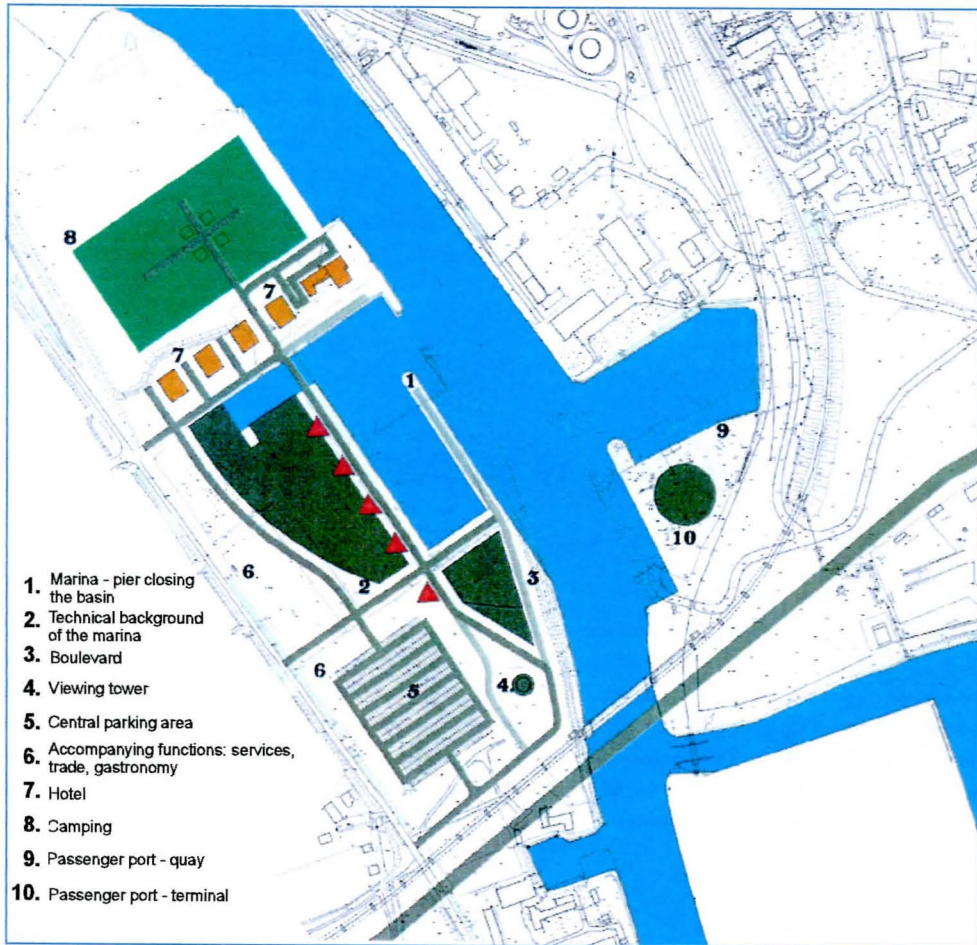


Fig. 2. Port of Elbląg – concept of shaping the touristic area, developed within the *Waterfront Urban Development* project.

## References

- [1] *Waterfront Urban Development – A Network of Cities in the Baltic Sea Region*, Main Applicant: Claus Dyckhoff Gemeinsame. Landesplanungsabteilung Berlin/Brandenburg
- [2] Bańkowska B. et al, 1997, *Coastal Zone of Urban Prestige of Gdynia*, City Authority of Gdynia. (In Polish).
- [3] Kochanowski M. et al, 1997, *Gdynia. The zone of development of the centre of the city*. City Authority of Gdynia. (In Polish).