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CAN THE CENTRE-TO-BE BECOME A REAL CENTRE?

Gdańsk revisited

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ABSTRACT

The historic centre of Gdansk in Poland evolved over the centuries. The decision made at the beginning of the new millennium to incorporate neighbouring former industrial area into the city centre created a new opportunity to investigate the dynamics of central city core. The municipality envisioned the new area to have the liveability of a city centre. This paper investigates this area potential, first by looking at the development of historical centre in 1792, 1933, 2005 and taking into consideration translocation of the integration core to compare the morphological picture with the configurational model's predictability in respect to pedestrian movement and functional distribution. The research for this part of the study was carried out as a part of PhD thesis 'Functional performance of space - Gdansk case studies'. The investigation of urban activities has shown how they coexist with movement and to what extent they are correlated with integration potential. Subsequently, four concepts of urban developments of former industrial area (centre-to-be) have been considered, with particular attention to their integration potential and intelligibility analysis, and some recommendations for the revival of the centre-to-be area and for planning process of its integration with existing centre have been formulated. In the second part of the study the question of centrality has been put forward when the case of Gdansk centre has been revisited a few years later to examine how city centre development and first new investments influence urban dynamics.

KEYWORDS

Urban Dynamics, Spatial Integration, Post-Industrial Area

1. INTRODUCTION

What is an *urban heart*? Can we identify it with an urban centre by definition, planners' decision, inhabitants' perception, or according to its liveability? The question about an urban centre brings into attention the notion of centrality. This term is perceived differently depending on the context of discussion (Hillier 1999, Cutini 2003). Urban centrality can be perceived from the historians' point of view as a central urban area where the historical memory of community and its inhabitants is materialized and expressed. The sociological perception defines the centre as a part of town which is distinct from other areas in terms of institutional infrastructure, urban composition and architecture. At the same time it is the best located and most accessible area - crucial for functioning of urban community where public life takes place. The architectural perspective deals with urban morphology of centres. The regional planning approaches the issue from the functional perspective - taking into account attractiveness, intensity and types of functions located in specific areas.

These definitions do not make it easier to deal with the problem of centrality. They do not specify the problem clearly enough to answer the question about the reasons influencing the primary location of activities in a centre. Why a given place is central? Are land use aspects independent

of space, or do centres change in response to economic and planning decisions, or are there any underlying spatial processes pushing the development in a specific direction (Hillier 1999)? As B. Hillier (1999) wrote: “centrality is clearly not simply a state, but a process with both spatial and functional aspects”. It means the transition from concentrating on problems of given places towards dealing with spatial characteristics. Therefore we could call the *urban heart* this part of any urban structure that integrates space and generates the most intense movement.

The reflections on centrality seem to be an essential part of discussions about urbanity nowadays. However, managing the process of centrality proves to be a difficult one. Urban transformations – especially those characteristic for sudden economic and political changes – appear to be overwhelmingly rapid while accompanying planning decisions do not always manage to embrace the complexity of urban reality. The process of transformation of centrally located derelict sites and incorporating them into urban structure can serve as an example. The issue of regeneration and transformation of post-industrial sites for new functions under the conditions of knowledge economy has been extensively dealt with in Western European countries, but it still constitutes a substantial challenge for municipal authorities, developers and urban planners and designers in Poland. It proves to be more complex than it was originally anticipated. Since the transition of the political system from communism into democracy in 1989 new economic conditions enabled urban transformations and since then several sites have been the subject of debates in the search for regeneration process (Stangel 2012). Joining the European Union community in 2005 has given a new impact on these processes as it resulted in the possibility of acquiring European funding substantial to make progress on several Polish projects.

In this paper it is the city of Gdańsk that will be investigated. The decision of incorporating an industrial area into the city centre created a new opportunity to investigate the dynamics of central areas. The municipality envisioned the new area to have the liveability of a city centre. Several questions concerning this new development need to be asked. Will the development of the discussed area reduce the process of disintegration throughout the whole downtown? If so, will the current centre lose its meaning (as a result of shifting the central area) or gain when being extended (as a result of a synergic effect)? Can we say that a new urban centre will be established? Will the new district be locally integrated (internally coherent)?

2. DATASETS AND METHODS

The analysis of the new area potential needs to be seen through the perspective of the development of historical centre of Gdańsk in 1792, 1933 and 2005 taking into consideration the characteristics of translocations of integration core. The results of syntactic analysis are to be compared with the inhabitants’ perception of the city centre and the liveability measured by pedestrian movement and distribution of retail.

Historical evolution of city centre. Gdansk is a port city of a long historical tradition. In the XVIII and XIX century it used to be the rich merchant city of vibrant multinational population and it belonged to the Hanseatic League. In 1920s and 1930s the city was taken under the protection of the League of Nations. The historical centre of Gdansk evolved over the centuries. During the last two centuries one can observe a few stages of its development: the historical centre went through the process of discrete transformations of its kidney-like form. Gdańsk in 1792 is the city of a clearly defined area enclosed by the Dutch style fortification system built at the beginning of XVII century. It has an internal port located on the Motława River to the east of the city centre. Gdańsk in 1933 is the city with dense, highly populated housing, enriched by the new public buildings erected on the city outskirts at the end of XIX century after levelling the fortifications. At the time, as the fortification was no longer a barrier, the urban fabric started to spread. Gdańsk gained a new entry road and the railway arriving to the west of the city centre. Contemporary Gdańsk reconstructed after the war damages was also transformed (the alterations of some streets’ layout), however the urban fabric itself was not entirely filled in. The post-war city centre has been cut in two parts by a busy road (three lines in each direction) separating its southern part (the Old Suburb).



Figure 1 - Axial map of Gdańsk (IntRn)

In the contemporary urban structure of Gdańsk it is difficult to delineate the municipality limits. Gdańsk is perceived with the cities of Sopot and Gdynia as one urban organism called Tricity. For the purpose of the research a configurational model was processed in Axman for a bigger area than the administrative limits of Gdańsk (axial map). The syntactic model was elaborated to depict the spatial and functional urban phenomenon in a longer time span. Three characteristic periods of urban form development were analysed. Figure 2 shows that in the model of 1792 the shape of the central area is typical for traditional historic towns. It is characterised by a compact grid covering the area of the historical district called the Main Town. Both the water canal system and the fortifications limit and embrace the urban structure which has a compact shape with a distinct integration core containing key public buildings within its limits. The second map (fig.2) represents the model of Gdańsk in 1933 - the integration core has a more irregular form and seems to change its axis reaching towards the north-south direction. The core moves to the west towards the route parallel to the newly built railway. While at the beginning of the XX century the main part of the integration core with the east and west projections was still located within the Main Town, the 2005 model shows that the integration core is less defined and shifted. It is linear and fragmented: the first stretch has the key importance for road traffic in macro scale; the second one is used as the route connecting the railway station with the historical street called the Royal Route located in the Main Town. Both strips seem to be connected, but in reality they are independent: the meeting point is just a traffic junction.

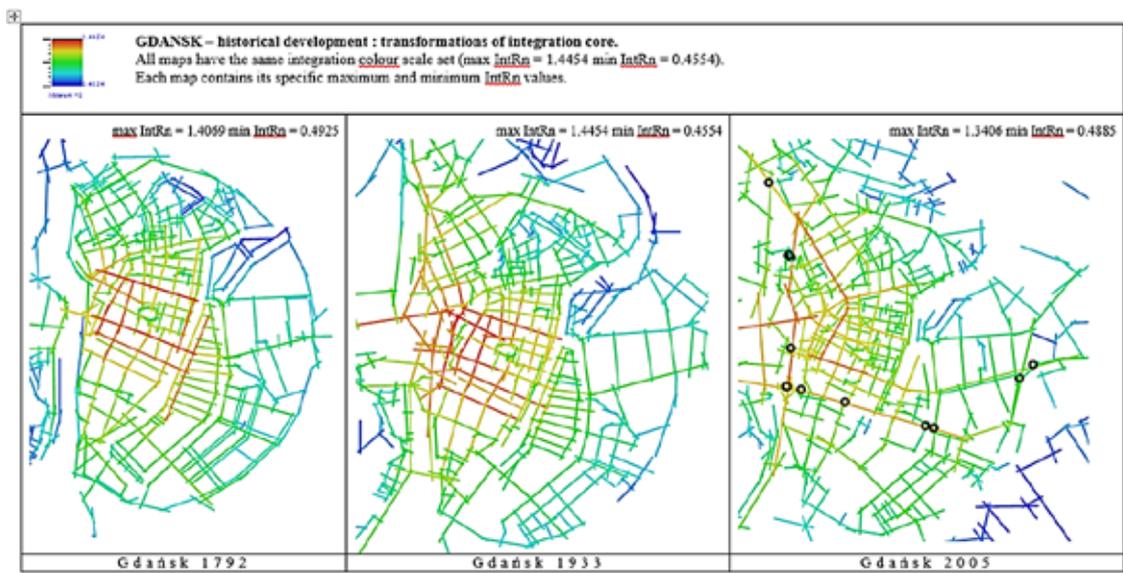


Figure 2 - Gdańsk – the historical city centre development.

The transition from the closed and compact integration core to the linear one is a characteristic change in the process of disintegration and dispersion of urban structures as it is the result of incautious layout adjustments and incidental locations of extensive commercial centres (Hillier 1999). This observation proves true for Gdańsk centre. The fragmentation of the integration core is associated with urban development and the city dispersion. It is also possible to observe the drainage of local retail from streets to commercial centres. As the result of opening of two shopping centres next to the railway station, most small shops - situated along a lively street leading to the Main Town - were first closed to be reopened later as banks and restaurants but mainly in the areas of the most intense pedestrian movement.

The inhabitants of Gdańsk associate the most lively and popular element of the Royal Rout in the Main Town as the most important indicator of city identity (Załęcki 2003). They perceive the area depicted as the most integrated part on the map of Gdańsk 1933 as the actual city centre: almost 70 % of the inhabitants identified the centre with this historical area associated with cultural values.

Liveability of contemporary urban structure. The configurational analysis has been confronted with pedestrian movement levels to verify the syntactic model's predictability. Several observations were done for 95 gate points evenly distributed in the city centre in October 2003 when the weather was favorable to walk and it was possible to observe everyday urban dynamics without the holiday activity shifts due to the presence of tourists or special events. It was proved that the model represents well the spatial interrelations: the correlation between movement and integration values was strong ($R^2=0.85$).

The good design practice advocating for urban life described in the literature emphasises the significance of maintaining appropriate levels of movement intensity as a good indicator for urban liveliness (Gehl 1996, Carmona et al 2004). It enhances human-friendly streets and squares as well as creates good conditions for different formal and informal activities. It is indicated to maintain the number of pedestrians at peak hours at the level of 20 persons per minute per meter of pavement width - according to the research in American cities (Whyte 2004). Other research for European cities claims it is enough to provide the half of the number postulated by Whyte that is 10 persons per minute per meter of walking area (Gehl, 1996).

The observations done in off-season period depicting inhabitants' movement showed two most intensively used spaces in the centre of Gdansk. The first one is the street next to the subway entrance leading to the railway station - 29 persons per minute. The second space where the

movement of 26 persons per minute can be observed is located along the Royal Route (the Long Street and the Long Market Street). This pavement area of 15 m width has two lines of side cafes therefore the effective walking space is decreased to 7-9 meters. Having taken into account the diminished numbers it appears that the rate of 3 person/min/m does not reach the score postulated by Gehl. However this changes in summer when the flow of foreign tourists and local visitors raises significantly the movement intensity up to 15 persons per minute per 1 m of pavement. The study of city activities and functional distribution has shown how they coexist with movement and to what extent they are correlated with integration values (table 1). The retail distribution follows the logic of integration values within urban centre (strong correlation – 0.764)

		Number of retail for every 25 m of street length	Integration value IntRn	Number of pedestrians per minute
Number of retail and shops for every 25 m of street length	Pearson's correlation	1	0.764**	0.821**
	significance		.000	.000
	N	47	45	46
Integration IntRn	Pearson's correlation	0.764**	1	0.798**
	significance	.000		.000
	N	45	46	46
Number of pedestrians per minute	Pearson's correlation	0.821**	0.798**	1
	significance	.000	.000	
	N	46	46	47

** p value < 0.01

Table 1 - Correlations between integration, pedestrian movement and retail activity.

Spatial analysis of Young City development. The studied area is located to the north of the existing centre (fig.4). The shipyard site remained industrial till 1995 when the first ideas of reurbanisation were developed following the decision of withdrawing the shipyard activity to the Ostrów Island on the opposite bank of the river (Dead Vistula River). The terrain contains a former shipyard area, gasworks, factories and a bus depot. In Gdańsk there is a tradition of naming historical central districts as 'towns' what underlines the separateness and distinctness of each urban part. The new area is promoted as the Young City what seems to relate to this tradition of creating local environment of a 'town' (and obliges to fulfill urban standards of integration and liveability on local level) but also accentuates contemporary vibrant characteristics associated with the name 'city'. Since the beginning it has been believed that the new development would give a chance to create a new lively and coherent district (Kochanowski and Kochanowska 2005) serving as a natural extension of the existing city centre.

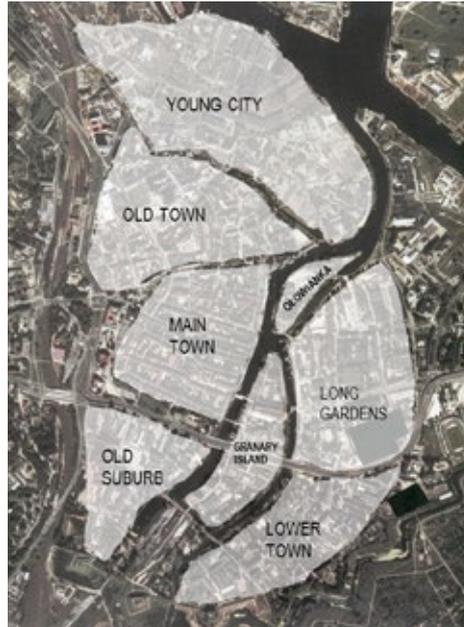


Figure 3 - The location of the Young City area.

Design concepts selected for the present analysis were conceived in the years 1996-2000. They were prepared in first years after the withdrawal of shipyard and presented a wide scope of approaches to address the possible area development. It is however essential to underline that these discussions were undertaken in the conditions on relatively young democracy acting without any adequate procedures ready to be applied. The development of HafenCity in Hamburg for example was preceded by several years of planning and preparing consequent urban strategies. In Polish situation it was the sudden deterioration of shipyard economic situation that opened discussions about the release of the industrial site for other urban functions.

The version 1 (fig. 4) is the vision created by architects wishing to restore the historical city plan with its characteristic fortifications. They intended to create the street layout on the perimeter of former bastions providing a strip of green areas as an equivalent of water canals. The area of Young City itself was supposed to be developed on a different grid outside the outlines of the fortification line (Hryniewicz 2000). The options 2 and 3 represent urban strategies that envisaged the Young City as a modern extension of the city centre building the area identity on the basis of existing values (the industrial character and the history of the Solidarity movement). The version 2 follows indications of the Revitalisation Study from 1996 specifying the directions of district development to accommodate housing, retail and leisure with a substantial part dedicated to museums. The idea of unrestricted urban corridors of protected views was underlined there as well as the significance of maintaining the connection between the Solidarity Square and the waterfront via so called . The technical parameters of the main street of the district were specified to create a ring road for the city centre rather than internal district road with several underground passages for pedestrians. The third concept was prepared as the Vision Master Plan in 2000 for developers (Pieprz 2001). It continued basic principles of the version 2 (protected views, waterfront promenades), but it was postulated to introduce a traditional urban block structure and shape the main district road with pedestrian boulevards and traditional street-level crossings. The option 4 is a result of a configurational experiment (see figure 4).

3. RESULTS

The concepts of urban development of the centre-to-be have been considered with particular attention to their integration potential and intelligibility analysis. The analysis of syntactic parameters made it possible to draw some interesting conclusions. In the case of the solution 1 and 2 the users of the Young City would have problems of perceiving the new district as a coherent and intelligible urban structure what signifies wayfinding problems and difficulties in defining the area identity. The area intelligibility (R^2) is low (0.24-0.26) what is comparable to results characteristic for criticised modern housing estates. This kind of spatial quality contributes to further urban fragmentation characteristic for architectural urbanity (Marcus 2000). Both solutions will not create the district with its own local integrating core. However, in each case the area development will have a positive impact on city centre seen as a whole. The mean integration values increase (IntRn: from 0.88 to 0.93-0.98, and IntR3: from 1.97 to 2.08-2.18) what can be related to the increase of central urban dynamics.

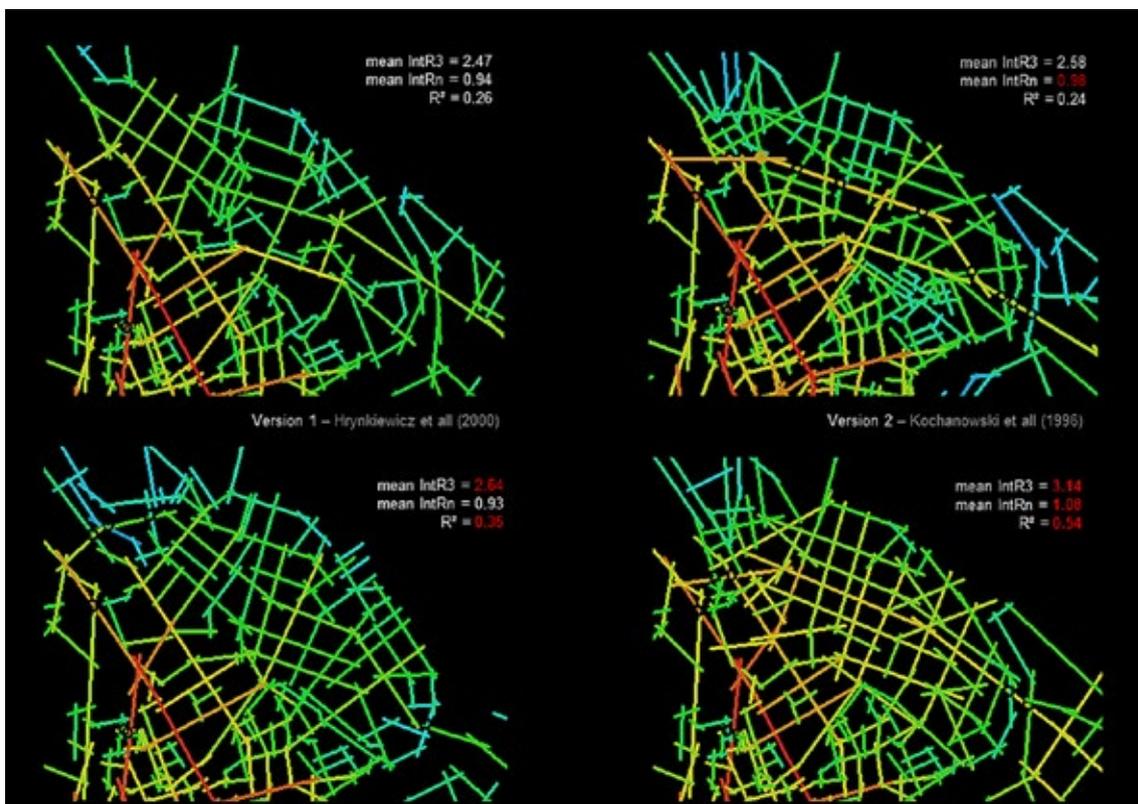


Figure 4 - Gdansk - Young City development alternatives (axial map: global integration IntRn)

The solution 2 creates a vivid distinction between the internal part within the heavy traffic road and the external one (relatively segregated). The area would be illegible and incoherent on the local level. The solution 3 creates a district that would be peripheral to the city centre but locally integrated what might enhance a good living environment. Taking into account the potential for enhancing the centrality, the version 4 – an experiment following configurational logic of promoting connections to well integrated streets - achieves the highest values of parameters.

As it is shown in the analysis the urban fabric of the centre of Gdańsk is going to be extended and enriched by a new urban structure but regardless of the planning solution (1-4) the development of the Young City is not going to be reflected in any substantial change or shift in the existing integration core. The only difference within the core is the position of streets located on the

north-east of the train station, close to the Solidarity Square. That area located close to the Young City and former shipyard entrance will become more lively, integrated and attractive for investment. The Young City itself as a whole district is not going to be characterised by spatial measures typical for central areas. It is inclined to have rather low liveability associated with natural movement generated by urban grid itself, what is common for peripheral urban areas. One may expect the mean number of max 1-2 person/min on streets on everyday basis. The waterfront promenade may become popular during cultural events and for weekend walks, but the regular grid-defined movement would oscillate below 1 person/min.

The results of the above analysis demonstrates the area potential in configurational values translated into estimated levels of movement. It underlines the strong and the weak points of the Young City's position. However these results were not well received by urban planners and designers in 2005 and there was no interest from the city municipality to consider the use of space syntax approach to investigate further the urban potential of this new development. The analysis was claimed to be irrelevant and incomprehensible. It is possible that the results were contradictory to the ideas promoted by planners or politicians. Due to those difficulties the analysis was neither used nor published. However the questions about managing centrality in Gdańsk remained.

The situation of the Young City after 2005. The transformation of the discussed area has been developed according to the guidelines of the revitalization plan represented by the version no 2 which was questioned in this study due to the impact of the main district road on the integrity of the area. The definition of the main district road (the Nowa Wałowa Street) - its position, form and characteristics – stays as a very important factor for the revitalisation of the Young City. Two local development plans were established in 2006 and 2008 and there was a correction of the line of the Nowa Wałowa Street which was slightly moved to the north, creating around the Solidarity Square an area for commercial centres. The change seemed to be an economic decision (postulated by developers) rather than a reconsideration of the district integrity. It was associated with buildings' demolition but allowed to liberate a vast terrain relatively close to the railway station and designated for commercial galleries. Unfortunately, the characteristics of the Nowa Wałowa Street stayed defined according to separating strategy of the solution 2. The road is planned as four traffic lanes and a tramway line, with a few hundred long embankment, and just two crossings (possibly two more in the form of elevated footbridges or pedestrian underpasses) facilitating passages through the 2 km long street. This solution causes controversy in local social media. As shown in the analysis this potentially attractive district effectively is going to be cut into two parts by the traffic line. The construction of the Nowa Wałowa Street is done in stages what still gives an opportunity for rethinking the anti-urban impact of the present form of this street. Local urban activists and some architects underline a commonly expressed concern about the lack of the sense of identity of Young City as the new development is planned mainly to satisfy economical needs of developers and current proposals for architecture lack any originality of local industrial heritage.

Since 2010 the official discussions concerning the Young City concentrate on presenting future visions of vibrant city. It is a seducing and elegant perspective however the envisaged liveability might become true mainly inside planned commercial centres which does not equal liveable urban street. The district is supposed to contain 3.5 thousand flats and many commercial buildings like three 100 meters high skyscrapers, centre for innovation for business, hotel, conference centre and a huge shopping centre. However till now it is not clear how exactly the Young City is going to look like.

Even though the industrial heritage preservation was declared in urban strategy in 2000, in reality several buildings were left without any protection and some were destroyed. It might be seen as a part of a silent strategy of developers who managed to acquire vast and prominent terrain in the city without any public discussion or sale announcement. Developers seemed to be more interested in the land value itself than in the heritage protection. It is also evident that it is easier to build on the empty terrain than to be restricted by heritage protection requirements. Currently the growing social consciousness and the strong movement of artists promoting the genius loci of shipyard area has succeeded in advocating for the preservation

of crane structures and industrial buildings what was not so obvious ten years ago. The social actions helped to protect several buildings and last shipyard cranes – they are now listed as a part of national industrial heritage.

Architectural micro-interventions. Since 2005 urban dynamics in Gdańsk was stimulated locally by developments of some historical sites. It is much easier to influence urban reality by a micro-intervention aimed at densifying plots' use. Three interventions concern the areas located on the outskirts of the existing centre of Gdańsk what helps to extend the scope of existing city centre attractions. The municipality invested in promoting the city via cultural buildings meant as architectural icon landmarks. These buildings are important symbols for national or local identity and as such their construction attracted the common attention and the collective willingness for cooperation.

The first architectural icon is the European Solidarity Centre (Fig.5), located next to the entrance to the former Gdańsk Shipyard (at the Solidarity Square) where in 1970 the shipyard workers were killed and where there is a symbolic construction of three crosses called the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers. The international architectural competition was hold in 2007 and the opening took place in 2014. The building houses a centre for the ideas of freedom, democracy and solidarity to be fostered as well as the museum and the conference venue. The 5-storey building has the tilting walls reminiscent of a ship's hull. The building is co-funded by the European Union.

The second architectural icon is the *Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre* located to the south, next to the remnants of the city walls of the Main Town (Fig.5). The building was designed as a result of an international competition organized in 2005, on the site of a 17th-century theatre, where English travelling players performed. It was opened in 2014 when the construction became possible due to the EU funds. The building has a brick shell which houses a playhouse structure - the Renaissance wooden theatre with the retractable roof (Limon 2014).

The third architectural icon is the *Museum of the Second World War* (Fig.5) opened in April 2017. This symbolic space of memory is located on a plot on the bank of the water canal in the southern part of the Young City, 200 m from the historic Polish Post Office in Gdańsk and 3 km across the water from Westerplatte Peninsula, both of which were attacked in September 1939 to begin the Second World War. The building was designed as a result of an international competition hold in 2010 and financed from the state funds. It is described as a unique, powerful icon and a new symbol of Gdańsk and serves as a centre of education, culture and research but also contains the space reserved for the permanent exhibition.

Behind each of these buildings there is a strong iconic idea (solidarity, war, multinational tradition of Gdańsk) that is easy to identify with and ready to promote what is very important in the situation of fund raising. The concepts of creating the European Solidarity Centre and the Museum of the Second World War became an important element of political discussions what influenced the careful choice of prominent sites and the organization of international architectural competitions. The nationally recognised significance of historical events helped to complete the projects regardless of exceeding the primary project budget. This situation demonstrates the important aspect of the Polish reality. City municipalities in Poland are obliged to prove the necessity of a given project to be supported by state funding. The Polish governance system leaves no real economic power to local city municipalities. The income paid in taxes cannot be used by any city itself, it is transferred to the regional governance and later redistributed to local municipalities but only for specific purposes. This situation establishes evident constraints on any strategic urban planning. It allows for punctual interventions but proves it almost impossible to prepare long-term urban development strategies without the cooperation of developers. Municipalities govern cities but stay without real economic power. It means that project goals promoted by city municipality need to be distinct and short-term (possible to accomplish within the period defined by the date of next elections).

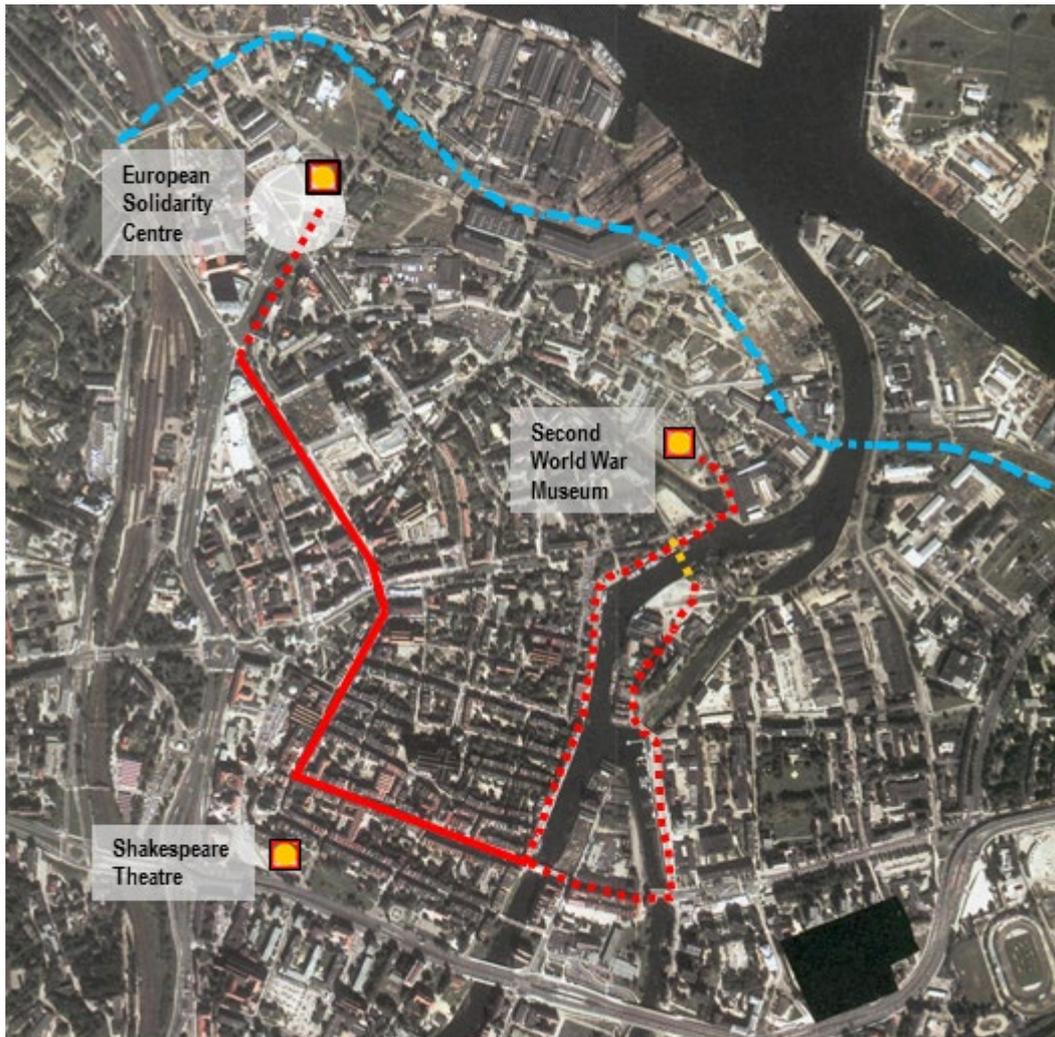


Figure 5 - The location of architectural micro-interventions in Gdańsk city centre.

Urban micro-intervention. Another example of micro-intervention in Gdańsk is the long discussed idea of a footbridge. Since 2000 there were discussions concerning the accessibility problem of the Ołowianka Island defined in the municipal strategy of urban development as the Cultural Zone (fig.6). This small island on the Motława River used to be an industrial site and now houses the Polish Baltic Philharmonic in an old converted power station complex and the Maritime Museum. In 1997 the first open air concert was held in the amphitheater on the river, but the actual concert hall was opened in 2007 when the financing from EU and city municipality was available. This area is located in the immediate vicinity of the Main Town and the Old Town, but is accessible for visitors mainly by ferry in the opening hours of the Maritime Museum or via a long route leading to a considerable distant bridge on the extension of the Royal Route. Public space on the Ołowianka Isle is well maintained and has a potential to become an attractive place for inhabitants and tourists. However, it is evident that the cultural buildings do not serve as a sufficiently strong magnet to attract people on everyday basis. The place is deserted except for the period of concerts and cultural events. People usually have problems to find the Philharmonic as the access is complicated.



Figure 6 - The location of the Ołowianka Island (left) and its distance to other elements in urban structure – point depth map (right).

In 2004 the director of the Philharmonic started the public discussion about a footbridge to link the Ołowianka Isle with the Gdańsk Old Town where a parking could have been potentially located. It was believed that the construction of such a bridge would create the possibility of extending the tourist route along the river waterfront what would allow for viewing the Main Town from a new perspective creating a circuit route through the Ołowianka Isle and the marina located on the other side of the Granary Island (see Fig. 5).

The footbridge idea as a possible micro-intervention was verified by the author using syntax analysis. The study explored other alternatives to see which solution is able to meet the expected requirements of bringing life to the island: reviving it and reciprocally enhancing life in the Old Town. What bridge characteristics should be applied to solve the problem of the Ołowianka Isle - visible from the Main Town, but not accessible? The configurational study showed that currently the integration values for individual streets on the island oscillate around 0.65-0.8, while on the other side of the Motława River they reach 1.1-1.2. The number of passing people on the isle could be translated as less than 0.05 person/minute, while on the other side of the river there is an average of 5 persons/minute.

The figure 8 shows four proposals for the footbridge location represented by the point depth map (the closeness of urban grid elements from the island is expressed by changing colours: red is very close, green and blue very distant).

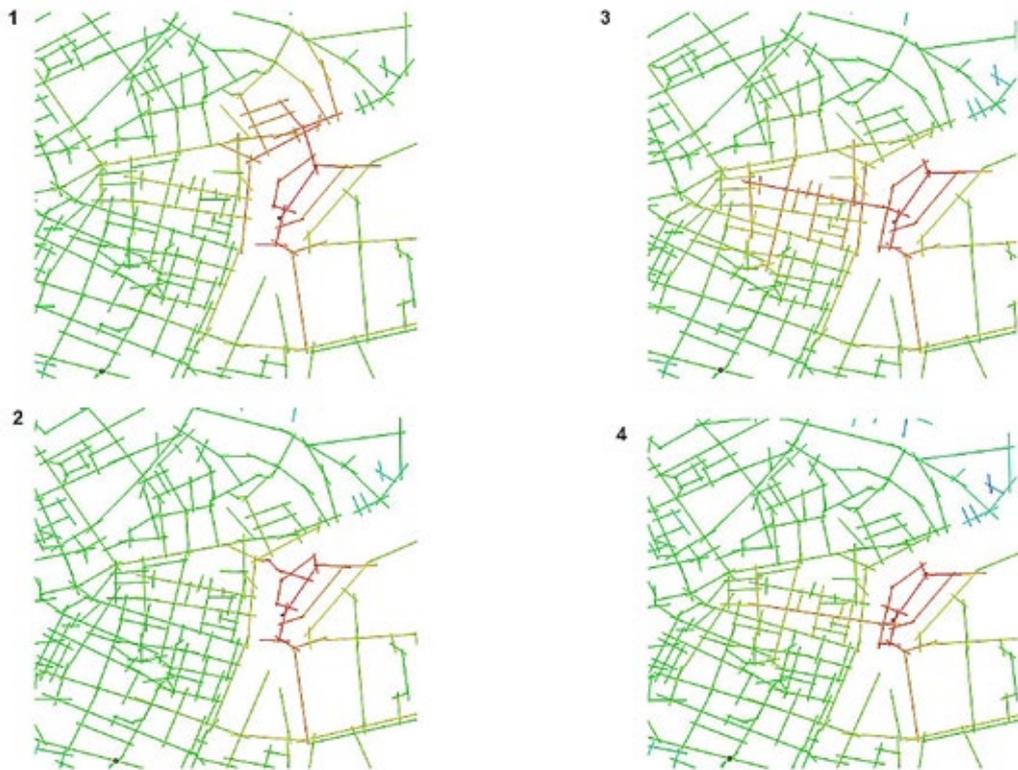


Figure 7 - The Ołowianka Island - footbridge alternatives ('depth point' map).

The option no 2 is the proposal of designers from the Department of Bridge Construction in Gdańsk and it was promoted by the director of the Polish Philharmonic in 2005. The structure was supposed to contain a series of elevated ramps ending near an open stage on the Ołowianka Island. The options 1, 3 and 4 were invented for the purpose of comparative analysis. The option no 1 is a link towards the Old Town. The options 3 and 4 propose the extension of streets of the Main Town.

In the case of solution 1 the Ołowianka Island gains a substantial connection with the Old Town. The bridge influences the urban structure enhancing its integration values. The impact of the footbridge in option 2 turns out to be smaller – the isle will seem more segregated. The problem stems mainly from the form of bridge construction. The access via elevated ramps would be more complicated, so less people would spontaneously decide to use it. In both alternatives (no 1 and 2) the local livability measured by local integration values will increase ($IntR_3 = 1.83-1.84$). In the solution no 3 the Ołowianka Island gains a direct access to lively area of the Main Town. This connection creates an impression that the Philharmonic is just right the corner and the areas can benefit mutually. The mean local integration values for the Isle raises significantly ($IntR_n=2.01$). The version 4 is similar (the increase of mean local integration value $IntR_3=1.908$).

	Ołowianka Island		City Centre		
	IntR ₃ - mean value	Intelligibility (r ²)	IntR ₃ - mean value	intelligibility (r ²)	IntR ₃ (max value)
existing	1.741	0.355	1.974	0.466	1.336
Solution 1 (Rycerska St.)	1.834	0.456	1.98	0.472	1.341
Solution 2 (Fish Market)	1.841	0.169	1.977	0.469	1.339
Solution 3 (Straganiarska Street)	2.012	0.609	1.982	0.472	1.346
Solution 4 (St. John's Street)	1.908	0.668	1.98	0.473	1.35

Table 2 - The Ołowianka Island – syntactic parameters for footbridge alternatives.

The highly promoted solution no 2 was fortunately abandoned. Till early 2010s different alternatives of location and form of river crossing were considered by the city municipality (a tunnel, a ferry or a bridge). Finally, in 2012 the city municipality organised an international competition for the footbridge in the location specified in the solution no 1. It is not clear if the present study had any influence on the choice for the above location. The coincidence might be purely incidental. Even though it is fortunate that the place and the specified landings promoted the good connection with urban grid. The Slovenian company Ponting who won the competition, delivered an elegant and simple point-draw bridge (70m long). The bridge is under construction now and hopefully it will provide a good solution for the urban liveability of the area. The position and simplicity of the crossing with landings at street level on both sides will give an easy access and create an interesting tourist circuit connecting the most integrated Royal Route via the riverfront towards the Museum of Second World War and providing an interesting return to the Main City via the footbridge to the Ołowianka Island. The bridge is also going to have a positive impact on the urban grid: it creates a connection between the Young City and the cultural buildings on the Ołowianka Island.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The syntactic perspective gave the ground for in-depth study of the Young City potential and the development of Gdańsk centre, however other factors influenced the choice of planning solutions. It would be beneficial to repeat the analysis in the near future when the final planning decisions will be specified as currently there is no substantial amount of data to run analysis for the whole area.

The area did not develop as rapidly and as successfully as it was first envisioned. The obvious economic burden of constructing the main district road and still discussed river crossing that are expensive and time-consuming has an inevitable impact on time and work progress. However the long time span of area development appears to be beneficial for rethinking planning decisions. It is optimistic to observe that eventually some of small developments followed the configurational logic in design decisions as it was presented in the case of the footbridge. The choice might be incidental but it foreshadows the increasing awareness of urban elements impact on city spatial structure and hopefully will give the ground for more careful explorations of different design and planning solutions at least on the level of micro-interventions.

Managing urban centrality is still regarded as the fundamental goal of contemporary spatial development strategies aiming at revitalising city peripheries or reviving historical towns. At the same time the lack of effective management of centrality makes these aims illusory. The

phenomenon of urban transformations is often noticed ex post. It is however interesting to observe the process systematically, or even to anticipate it and cooperate with it. The need of monitoring in the case of minor changes is even more significant. Micro-transformations happen every day. As a result of actions in one place, there are unexpected changes in another, sometimes very distant one. Understanding the process and anticipating what may happen, can help to control spatial dynamics causing shifts in urban core and avoid expensive and irreversible consequences. Unfortunately contemporary focus in Gdańsk is concentrated on acting in macro scale and according to global visions. The new district of Young City risks to lack basic urban features (like a local integration core as its internal centre) necessary to maintain the area identity and distinctiveness.

There is something disturbing in the common conviction that the urban centre is there where one plans it to be. The technological means available today allow for building a city from the scratch anywhere using developers' implanting strategies that can be called 'from now on the city is there'. However, the success of investors does not necessary equal working for urban wellbeing. The opening of huge multifunctional commercial complexes in restored industrial areas leaves every city distorted. Such developments suck life from substantial parts of cities. It seems to be not the right urban game to play. The ideas on how the city should look like are supposed to be accompanied by taking the responsibility for the results of their fulfilment.

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