## Perceptions, Politics and Participation

## The role and relevance of public participation in the redevelopment of Gdańsk Shipyard



Miessen, M. (2010) The Nightmare of

Participation. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Hopkins University Press.745-758

Mouffe, C. (1999) Deliberative Democracy or

Agonistic Pluralism? Social Research 66(3), PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY. The Johns

cohort 2021 2023

This work examines the critical theory of public participation through a case study of the post-shipyard area redevelopment in Gdańsk, Poland, interrogating the relevance of such processes in a context where cultural heritage is crucial, but there is also an urgent need for new development. This centrally located, (post)industrial waterfront has undergone multiple restructuring attempts over the past 30 years. The negotiation between a vision for an integrated inner-city district and commemorating its heritage value as the cradle of the Solidarność (*Eng.* Solidarity) movement have stood in the way of substantial progress.

1995-6 - the first urban development studies 1996-7 – bankruptcy of the Gdansk Shipyard concerning the shipyard area by Gdansk University of Technology on municipality's request the shipyard was bought by the Gdynia Shipyard Group (already privatised shipbuilding enterprise) • the new owner, supported by US-based private development funds, established a special-purpos company, Synergia 99, to serve as the land developed 2004 - land use plan comes into effect introduction of the new development plan for the area by circa 2005- cranes begin to appear as the new cultural symbol of Gdansk the city council, beginning of the site redevelopment 2006 - 'Program Operacyjny Przekształceń Młodego Miasta w Gdańsku' Eng. 'Operational Programme for the Transformation of the Young City in Gdańsk' 2004-2013 – demolition of many industria 2012 - 98% of local citizens postulate for etc.) industrial and administrative buildings, documente 2012-13 – NIE dla burzenia Stoczni (Eng. NO for by photographer Michal Szlaga, were destroyed (Kosmala formal protection of the shipvard the Shipyard's destruction) group sets off, petition and Sebastyanski, 2014, p. 6 heritage, cranes in particular 2014 – 240 shipyard objects are 2014 - inauguration of the European documented and evidenced by the regional heritage Solidarity Centre (ECS) 13 December 2014 - demolition of a 19th century industrial hall for the first time, XX-century objects are evidenced, such as the characteristic 1970s KONE cranes, in parallel to the XIX century ones politically charged - happened on the night of anniversary of the introduction of martial from now on, all works (incl. demolition) require approval of the law in Poland in 1981 2016 - first Heritage protection area listing of April 2016 - international Imperial Shipyard conference 'Young City 2.0. followed by additional entries in 2017 and 2020 Contemporary aspects of urban transformation 2018-20 - EU-funded participatory workshops 2020 UNESCO Heritage Site application Stocznia od Nowa (unsuccessful) point of departure for the research utumn 2021 - 'Młode Miasto - Przyszłość Dzielnicy' (Eng oung City – Future of the District) participatory consultations Summer 2022 - 'Nowa Walowa - Przyszłość Ulicy' (Eng. Nowa Walowa – Future of the Street) participatory consultations ned by the municipality of Gdansk and organised by Inicjatywa Miasto

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2001 - ongoing - artists move
into shipyard's premises on
the invitation of developer
Synergia 99
- Art-activism activity connected to and
based in the shipyard area

Figure 1. Timeline of public engagement in the shipyard area after 1989. Made by the author (2023).

The narratives of the stakeholders and participants involved revealed the importance of positioning the most recent consultations in the wider history of public involvement in this area. Examining the latest participatory consultations not in isolation, but rather as a consequence of earlier grassroots initiatives, allows to trace their evolution from bottom-up to top-down. The interviews revealed differences in the meaning behind notions such as **heritage**, **naming**, **values**, and **conflicts** used by the participants, suggesting these discrepancies can influence dialogue in participation. Finally, the work links the findings back to the critical theory of public participation, using the concepts of crossbenching (Miessen, 2010) and agonism (Mouffe, 1999) to describe the mechanisms found in the case study.





Figures 2-3. Views of the shipyard. Source: Z photography (n.d.) (left); author (2023) (right)



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