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SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION OF A RESILIENT COASTAL CITY

Seminar and workshop report

GDAŃSK 2025

SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION OF A RESILIENT COASTAL CITY

Seminar and workshop report

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Fig. 1. View of the Duty Free Zone. Photo by: Jarosław Zulewski

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1 Introduction

In early September 2024, an international workshop and seminar on **Sustainable Transformation for a Resilient Coastal City** was held, organised by the City of Gdańsk in cooperation with the Union of the Baltic Cities.

The Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is an organisation bringing together cities located in the Baltic Sea region. It is a cooperation network comprising cities from countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Norway. Founded in 1991 in Gdańsk, the UBC aims to foster collaboration among cities in the region and promote sustainable development, as well as the exchange of knowledge and experience. Its members are mainly cities engaged in joint projects and initiatives. The UBC organises meetings, conferences, and workshops that facilitate the sharing of good practices.

The goals and areas of activity of the UBC include:

1. Promoting cooperation and the exchange of experience among cities in the Baltic Sea region to develop and implement sustainable urban solutions and improve quality of life, delivering additional benefits to these cities;

2. Promoting cities as drivers of smart, sustainable, green, and resource-efficient development;

3. Supporting inclusive, diverse, creative, democratic, and safe urban centres that foster active citizenship, gender equality, and participatory decision-making;

4. Representing the common interests of cities and their residents, acting on their behalf, and advocating for the interests of the Baltic Sea region.

The UBC operates through various thematic commissions that address key aspects of urban development. Major decisions are made during the General Conference, held every two years.

Fig. 2. View of the Port of Gdańsk and the Still Vistula River. Photo by: Jarosław Zulewski

The UBC goals for 2022–2030 are outlined in the document "UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030. Cities Together for a Sustainable Baltic Sea Region" (Fig. 3), as well as in the ongoing UBC projects co-funded by the European Union:

1. **EMPEREST** – technologies and tools for eliminating micropollutants from wastewater to enable strategies for its reuse.
2. **BALTIPLAST** – zprevention and reduction of plastic waste in the Baltic Sea region.
3. **Climate-4-CAST** – a decision-support tool that accelerates cities' progress towards climate neutrality.
4. **SUMPs for BSR** – efektywne planowanie zrównoważonej mobilności effective planning of sustainable urban mobility to promote active transport.
5. **Urban Biodiversity Parks** – co-creation platforms supporting biodiversity, education, and community engagement.

Fig. 3. Cover of the publication "UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2022–2030", source: ubc-sustainable.net

Fig. 4. Workshop participants. Photo by: Mariia Andreeva

The core of UBC's practical, goal-oriented work lies in the active cooperation of member cities within its thematic commissions. UBC operates through eight working commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Learning Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities, and Youthful Cities. The seminar and workshops in Gdańsk were organised by the City of Gdańsk (City Architect's Office, Gdańsk Urban Development Agency and the Department of Energy and Ecology of the Municipal Office) in cooperation with the UBC Planning Cities Commission and the Sustainable Cities Commission. They focused on the challenges of transforming urban spaces in coastal cities.

As a dynamically developing city with a rich maritime and historical heritage, and the birthplace of the Union of the Baltic Cities, Gdańsk has become an ideal venue for exchanging experiences and developing innovative solutions for sustainable development. With its well-developed transport infrastructure — including one of the largest ports in the Baltic Sea, an airport, and a rail network — the city serves as a key transport hub in the region.

Contemporary Gdańsk strives to implement the concept of a compact city, where urban development takes place close to the city centre, and former industrial areas are adapted for new functions. A key challenge is the integration of port and post-industrial zones with rapidly developing residential districts, which requires innovative approaches to urban planning.

The main goal of the workshop was to develop innovative ideas for transforming selected areas under analysis in a way that harmoniously combines port, residential, recreational, and ecological functions. The proposed solutions were expected to take into account:

- sustainable development and mobility,
- improvement of residents' quality of life,
- preservation and utilisation of historical heritage.

Areas with significant potential, located in the more industrial part of the city and currently remaining undeveloped, were selected for the study. The seminar provided a unique opportunity for collaboration between specialists from various fields, including architects, urban planners, local government representatives, and residents, with the aim of developing practical, modern urban planning solutions.

The workshop brought together over 50 experts from cities such as **Gdańsk, Gdynia, Elbląg, Reda (Poland), Turku (Finland), Malmö (Sweden), Riga (Latvia), Greifswald (Germany), Pärnu (Estonia), Mariehamn (Finland), Visby (Sweden),** and **Hamburg (Germany)**. The participants represented the fields of urban and regional planning as well as development policy at the local and/or regional government level. The event also welcomed guests from the academic community, along with practicing architects and urban planners.

Working collaboratively, the participants explored possibilities for transforming the urban fabric and creating sustainable and smart urban areas. The developed concepts may contribute a fresh perspective to the ongoing discussion about the future of these sites.

2 Urban Development Issues in Gdańsk

The City of Gdańsk, located on the Baltic Sea, has played a key role in maritime trade since its very beginnings. Due to its strategic location and wealth, it became an important member of the Hanseatic League – an association of port cities with significant influence over Europe's maritime economy.

The first records of Gdańsk date back to the 10th century, when it appeared in the hagiographies of Saint Adalbert as "Gyddanyzc" described as an "urbs" (city). Its development accelerated in the 14th century, when the Teutonic Order took control of the city. During this period, numerous brick structures – both secular and sacred – were built, and the river network was adapted to serve the needs of the growing economy (gdansk.pl, historiagdanska.pl). The city's golden age came in the 16th and early 17th centuries, when Gdańsk reached the peak of its prosperity, becoming not only the wealthiest city in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth but also one of the most influential cities in Europe. This affluence spurred intensive urban development – citizens invested in decorating streets, building grand townhouses, and erecting churches that today define the city's beauty and unique character.

However, this dynamic growth was halted by wars in the 17th century, which weakened both the state and the city. Gdańsk became part of Prussia and lost its position as one of the region's main trade and political centers. Before World War II, it functioned as the Free City of Gdańsk, intended to ease tensions between Polish and German residents. Yet, on 1 September 1939, it became the site where World War II began. By the end of the war, Gdańsk was almost completely destroyed – particularly the Main Town, where about 90% of the buildings lay in ruins.

After the war, a process of reconstruction within the framework of the socialist system that then prevailed in Poland has begun. Over time, the first clear signs of public discontent with the authorities began to emerge, leading to strikes and riots in December 1970, during which several residents of Gdańsk lost their lives. A turning point came in August 1980, when the Solidarity movement was born at the Gdańsk Shipyard under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa, later a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and President of Poland. The August Agreements signed at that time paved the way for the legalisation of Solidarity, which, despite later repression such as the introduction of martial law, continued its fight for change in Poland. These events culminated in the Round Table Talks in 1989, which initiated the process of political and economic transformation, leading to the opposition's victory in democratic elections the following year (gdansk.pl, ipn.gov.pl).

However, Gdańsk is not only about history – it is a dynamic city where the past meets modernity. Walking through its streets, one can see not only the traces of its former power but also signs of contemporary aspirations, making Gdańsk one of the most fascinating cities on the map of Poland and Europe.

The city is currently home to 487,371 residents (as of the end of 2023, https://www.gdansk.pl/gdansk--w-liczbach), and in 2023 it welcomed 4.1 million tourists. In 2022, following the rapid changes brought about by the pandemic, the city updated its strategy for 2030 (Fig. 5).

The City Development Strategy was developed through multi-stage and multi-stakeholder consultations, and the vision it presents reflects the expectations of residents and stakeholders. The goals set out in the **Gdańsk 2030 Plus Strategy** define the city as **green, inclusive, accessible, and innovative**. The document specifies the expected outcomes of the proposed actions, along with indicators to measure whether the city is progressing in the intended direction.

Fig. 5. Cover of the publication "City Development Strategy: Gdańsk 2030 Plus", source: gdansk.pl

The stated goals are pursued not only through the aforementioned strategic document but also through a range of other tools developed to meet the expectations of residents and businesses. In recent years, the city has introduced documents such as the **Gdańsk Green Policy, Gdańsk Water Policy, Gdańsk Urban Street Standard**, and the **Universal Design Guide**, as well as accessibility maps and the **Strategy for the Implementation of the Bicycle Route System** (STeR).

Regular traffic flow studies are conducted, and changes in the urban and developmental structure are analysed to inform the preparation of **Local Spatial Development Plans** and the **General Plan**, scheduled for completion in 2025. This plan will serve as the basis for future urban planning documents, replacing the existing local plans and the **Study of Conditions and Directions of Spatial Development** (SUiKZP).

3 Scope of the Workshop

3.1. Introduction to the Workshop

The seminar began on Monday, 9 September 2024, with participant registration and a networking session aimed at fostering collaboration, as well as the exchange of knowledge and skills. The guests were then welcomed by Piotr Grzelak, Deputy Mayor of the City of Gdańsk and Vice-President of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), Agnieszka Ilola, Head of the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission Secretariat, and Paulina Szewczyk, Chair of the UBC Planning Cities Commission, who outlined the activities and goals of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

An introduction to Gdańsk's urban planning, along with its environmental realities and challenges, was then presented by Emilia Lodzińska, Deputy Mayor of the City of Gdańsk, and Dagmara Nagórka-Kmiecik, Deputy Director at the Department of Ecology and Energy of the Gdańsk City Hall.

Fig. 6. Participant registration. Photo by: Magdalena Zaborowska

The first presentation, delivered by Emilia Lodzińska, focused on the strategies and directions of the city's spatial development. It discussed Gdańsk's rich history as a dynamic cultural, business, and residential centre, while also highlighting the challenges related to urban planning in the city.

The presentations placed particular emphasis on the revitalisation of degraded areas and initiatives to improve the quality of life in various districts of the city. An innovative approach to spatial planning was showcased, addressing:

- the needs of new residents, including the growing demand for housing and public spaces,
- the development of infrastructure supporting sustainable mobility, such as the tram network, cycling paths, and new solutions prioritising pedestrians,
- the protection and expansion of green urban infrastructure, including the creation of rain gardens, tree planting, and measures to increase water retention.

Emilia Lodzińska highlighted the importance of involving residents in spatial planning processes. Through the use of participatory tools, citizens can have a tangible influence on the city's development. The presentation concluded with an overview of current and future spatial development plans aligned with Gdańsk's vision for sustainable growth by 2030.

The following presentation, delivered by Dagmara Nagórka-Kmiecik, focused on the city's environmental initiatives and strategies for adapting to climate change. She began her speech by outlining the challenges posed by Gdańsk's geographical conditions, including variations in terrain elevation and the presence of numerous rivers and streams, which heighten flood risk.

The remedial measures discussed included:

- the regulation of watercourses and modernisation of retention reservoirs,
- the construction of modern stormwater drainage systems,
- the development of small-scale retention infrastructure, including rain gardens, green roofs, and water reservoirs.

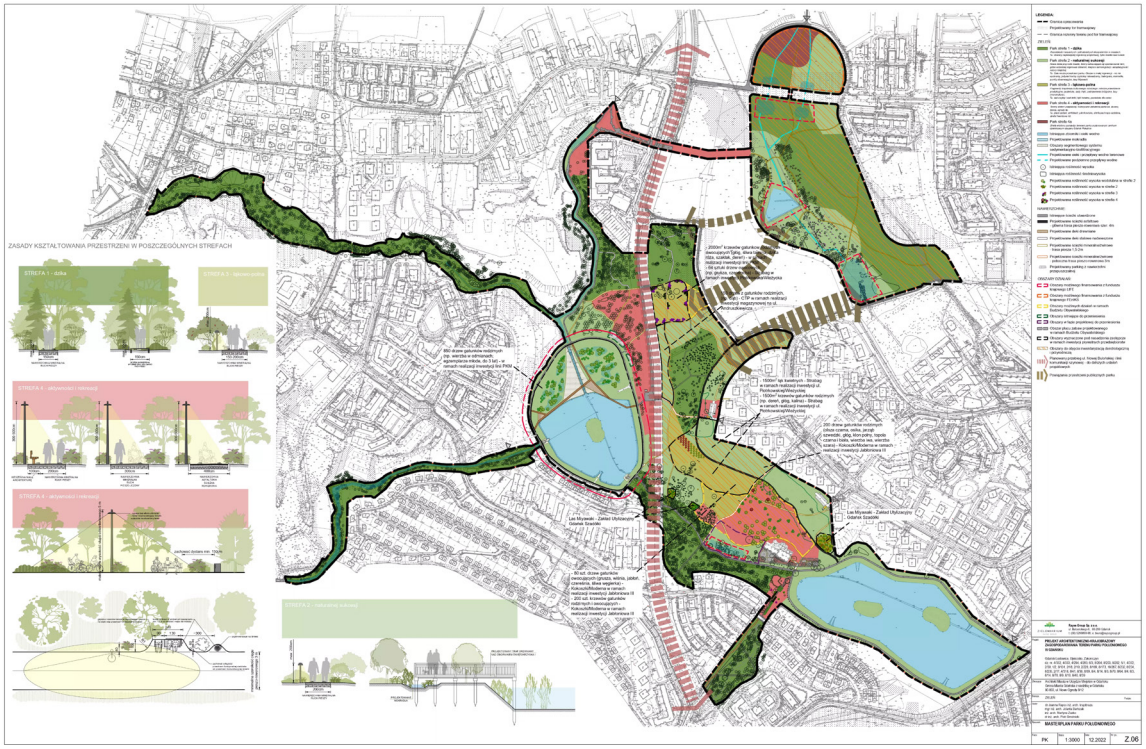

Fig. 7. Masterplan of the Southern Park by Rayss Group, source: gdansk.pl/bam

Plans for the development of the city's green areas were also presented. One example is the creation of the Southern Park, which will ultimately become the second-largest park in Gdańsk, covering an area of 77 hectares (Fig. 7). As part of the city's environmental policy, plans also include planting 50,000 new trees, expanding green spaces, and establishing 12 new protected areas.

The presentation also showcased examples of initiatives involving residents, such as the **Green Civic Budget** (in Polish: Zielony Budżet Obywatelski), which allows citizens to submit projects related to greening the city, building rain gardens, or revitalising existing green spaces (Fig. 8). Dagmara Nagórka-Kmiecik highlighted the importance of environmental education, carried out, among others, at the Environmental Education Centre, as well as initiatives such as the **Climate Change Forum**, which provide residents with a platform to discuss climate change and ways to counteract it (Fig. 9).

Fig. 8. Poster promoting the Green Civic Budget, source: gdansk.pl/budzet-obywatelski

It was emphasised that Gdańsk aspires to be a "green city" – innovative, sustainable, and resident-friendly – where care for the natural environment goes hand in hand with social and economic development.

Fig. 9. The 3rd Gdańsk Climate Change Forum held at AmberExpo on 29 September 2023. Photo by: Piotr Wittman/www.gdansk.pl

As a complement to the seminar's introductory part, two processes for co-creating sustainable cities were presented: the "**Gdańsk Design Workshops**" introduced by Prof. Piotr Lorens, City Architect of Gdańsk, and the international project "**Liveability – Designing Public Services for Resilient Cities**" presented by Prof. Dorota Kamrowska-Załuska from Gdańsk University of Technology.

The Gdańsk Design Workshops (GWP) are a series of meetings organised by the City Architect's Office in Gdańsk, dedicated to innovation in shaping urban space. These workshops are inclusive in nature and open to all interested parties, including residents, urban planning and architecture professionals, investors, researchers, municipal officials, and representatives of non-governmental organisations.

Fig. 10. Cover of the report from the consultation process "Study of the Aleja Grunwaldzka Belt" source: gdansk.pl/bam

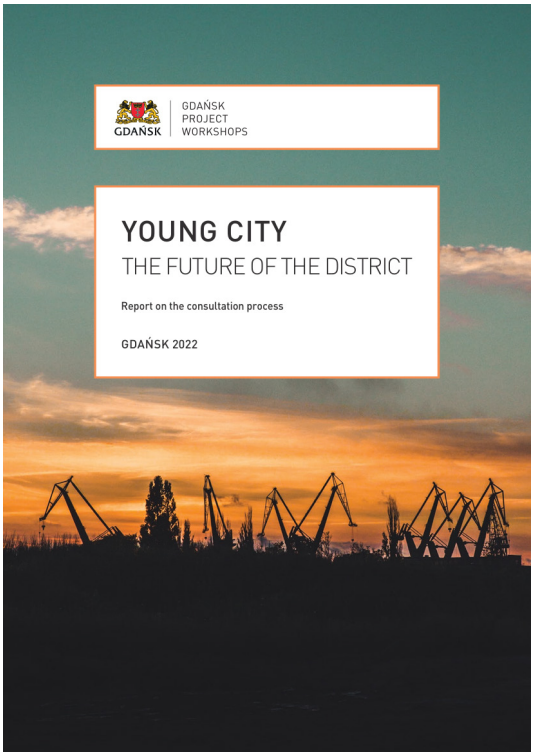

Fig. 11. Cover of the report from the consultation process "Young City. The Future of the District" source: gdansk.pl/bam

The aim of the GWP is to define new directions for the development of Gdańsk's urban space through a participatory approach to planning. The workshops address various urban aspects, such as green areas, architecture, and socio-cultural life, fostering the creation of coherent and sustainable solutions. This process engages local communities, experts, and government representatives, enabling the formulation of recommendations for the city's future spatial planning.

An example of GWP implementation is the **Study of the Grunwaldzka Avenue Belt** (Fig. 10), centred on the city's main thoroughfare, which focused on increasing the number of jobs, housing units, and service points, protecting green areas, and expanding the public transport network.

Other projects have included, among others, developing an architectural and urban vision for the Stogi beach entrance area, aimed at improving its functionality and aesthetics, as well as creating a new urban concept for the emerging **Young City** district in Gdańsk (Fig. 11).

Fig. 12. Meeting on the Workshops for the Grunwaldzka Avenue Belt Study. Photo by: Piotr Wittman/gdansk.pl

The cycle of GWP meetings has been documented in publications prepared by the Gdańsk City Architect's Office, available at: https://www.gdansk.pl/urzad-miejski/biuro-architekta-miasta.

The initiative promotes values central to the Gdańsk Development Strategy 2030+, such as co-operation, education, openness, environment, and mobility. By emphasising the shaping of public space, social integration, and civic activity, the workshops help build local community trust in the city administration and foster a shared sense of responsibility for Gdańsk's development. Through Gdańsk Design Workshops, the city actively manages its built environment, striving to ensure high quality of life and well-being for its residents. This initiative serves as an example of participatory urban planning that can be adapted by other cities and regions. In 2023, it was recognised by the European Union (within the Living Spaces programme) as one of the 30 best spatial planning practices in Europe.

The **Liveability** project focuses on finding innovative solutions to create resilient and liveable cities in the Baltic Sea Region. Its main objective is to improve residents' quality of life through an integrated and sustainable approach to planning and managing various aspects of urban space, such as green areas, architecture, public service infrastructure, and socio-cultural life. Achieving these goals requires joint efforts and cooperation between policymakers, public administration, citizens, and other key stakeholders.

The project is based on a user-centred participatory approach, where residents, local civic initiatives, city administration, and other interested parties jointly identify problems and develop innovative, publicly accessible solutions. This approach not only strengthens citizen engagement in urban life but also fosters a sense of belonging and pride in the place of residence.

The outcome of each activity within the project should be the delivery of concrete solutions to challenges jointly identified with target groups. These may include entirely new ideas, modifi-

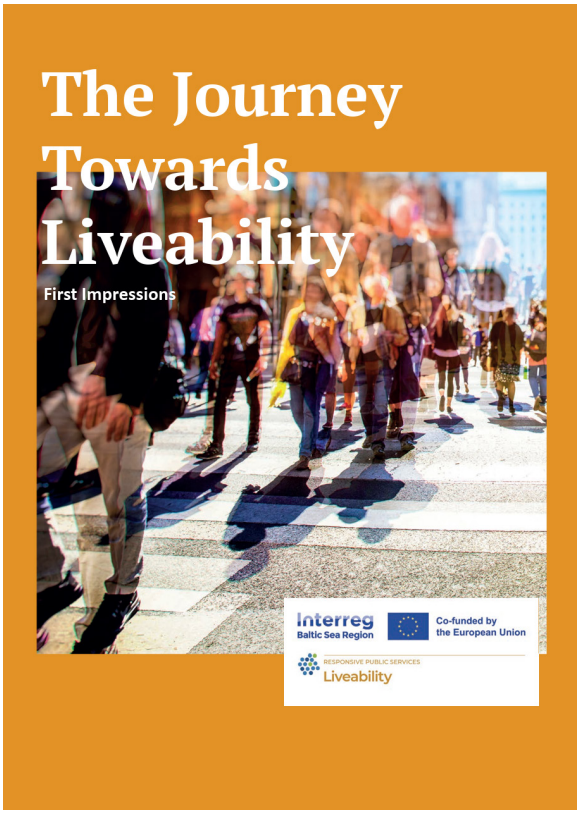

Fig. 13. Brochure „The Journey Towards Liveability", source: interreg-baltic.eu

cations of existing solutions, or their improvement and wider dissemination. A key element is the application of the Public Interest Design (PID) concept, which places the common good and public interest at the heart of public service design and urban planning.

The Liveability project places particular emphasis on supporting medium-sized cities in the Baltic Sea region, which, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, face new social, environmental, and economic challenges. These cities have the opportunity to become "liveable" centres—closer to citizens, more open to social initiatives, and more flexible in decision-making. By implementing the principles of sustainable development and engaging residents, cities can turn their limitations into opportunities for growth and improved quality of life.

An important element of the project involves **educational and pilot activities** carried out in partner cities such as Kiel, Pori, Gdynia, and Kolding. Examples of initiatives include transforming a former bus station in Pori into a creative hub, or modernising the adult education centre in Kiel to become a space for social integration. Each of these projects serves as a test case for the PID approach and as proof that cross-sector collaboration and citizen engagement can yield lasting results.

This part of the seminar concluded with an open discussion in which representatives of several cities associated within the Union of the Baltic Cities exchanged insights on Gdańsk and its development potential. This discussion also served as an introduction to the workshop segment of the seminar.

3.2. First Workshop Session

The workshop session scheduled for 10 September began with two presentations: "**Quality of Life in Baltic Cities – Asset or Curse?**" delivered by Dr Monika Arczyńska, co-founder of the A2P2 Architecture and Planning Studio, and "**Developing Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans**" presented by Prof. Marcin Wołek from the University of Gdańsk.

In her presentation "**Quality of Life in Baltic Cities – Asset or Curse?**", Dr Monika Arczyńska addressed key issues related to the quality of life in cities across the Baltic Sea region. She discussed both the achievements and the challenges faced by contemporary cities in the context of urban planning, tourism, sustainable development, and residents' expectations.

The presentation began with an analysis of the criteria defining quality of life. Based on research findings, it was noted that Gdynia and Gdańsk stand out for their high levels of resident satisfaction, supported by successful completed, ongoing, and planned investments, such as the revitalisation of Elektryków Street in Gdańsk and the renovation of the Długie Pobrzeże promenade in Gdańsk.

Fig. 14. Elektryków Street, source: gdansk.pl

Fig. 15. Długie Pobrzeże promenade after renovation, source: gdansk.pl

The second part of the presentation addressed urban challenges such as:

- air pollution (PM2.5),
- tourism pressure and short-term rentals affecting housing prices,
- infrastructure issues and an excessive number of parking spaces in the city centre.

Dr Monika Arczyńska also presented the concept of transforming the Manhattan shopping centre in the Wrzeszcz district, emphasising the importance of community input in planning urban changes. She highlighted the need for sustainable development by promoting eco-friendly transport and improving the management of public spaces.

Professor Marcin Wołek, in his presentation titled "**Developing Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans**", discussed the importance of strategic transport planning in the context of both global and local challenges. He underlined that sustainable mobility not only improves residents' quality of life but also enhances cities' resilience to climate change, economic crises, and social challenges.

The presentation began with an overview of issues such as climate change, rising transport emissions, and the necessity of shifting mobility habits. The speaker pointed out that the answer to these problems lies in implementing **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP)**, which integrate transport policies with environmental protection, spatial planning, and public health. SUMPs move beyond traditional infrastructure-oriented approaches towards solutions that improve accessibility and overall quality of life.

In particular, the presentation outlined the key principles of SUMP:

- promoting active mobility, such as walking and cycling, which are cost-effective, healthy, and environmentally friendly forms of transport,
- reducing car dependency by improving access to public transport and pedestrian infrastructure,
- creating compact, mixed-use cities where residents' daily needs can be met within walking or cycling distance.

An example of successful SUMP implementation was Gdynia, where the plan's rollout between 2014 and 2016 led to an increased share of pedestrians and cyclists in the city's transport structure. Campaigns such as "**Cycling May**" (polish: Rowerowy Maj) encouraged children and young people to choose active travel to school, resulting in measurable benefits in reducing car dependency (Fig. 16).

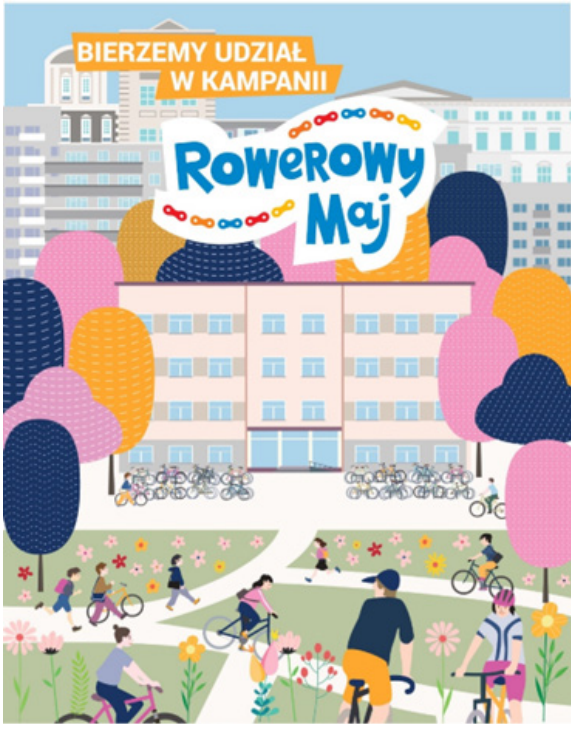

Fig. 16. Promotional poster for the "Cycling May" campaign in Gdynia, source: gdyniasport.pl

Prof. Marcin Wołek also presented the "**SUMPs for BSR**" project, implemented in the Baltic Sea Region. This initiative supports cities in developing and implementing mobility plans, focusing on:

- using modern technologies to collect data on transport emissions,
- developing tools to monitor actions,
- supporting small and medium-sized cities, whose resources are often limited.

The speaker stressed that the development of sustainable urban mobility requires an interdisciplinary approach, active involvement of local communities, and cooperation between cities. Building pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly urban environments, supported by public transport, is key to achieving climate goals and improving residents' quality of life.

The seminar also showcased experiences from the sustainable transformation of selected urban districts in Malmö, Turku, and Gdańsk. In her presentation, Anna-Leena Jokitalo, an architect and urban planner from Turku, described in detail the process of developing the "**Marine Vision of Western Turku**" a project aimed at transforming coastal areas (Fig. 17). Designed by architect Red Schauman, it seeks to convert an area dominated by industry and transport infrastructure into a modern, sustainable urban space that benefits both residents and the environment.

Work on the vision began with a thorough analysis of the existing situation. Research revealed that the area, spanning more than 4 km^2, while having great potential, faces numerous challenges. The main obstacle to its development/transformation is limited access to the shoreline due to large arterial roads and industrial facilities. Districts within the area function as isolated "islands," which hinders their integration with the rest of the city.

Opportunities identified for the transformation include:

- maintaining the natural direction of the city's developing urban structure,
- using the Raisionjoki River as a driver for area renewal,
- strengthening and linking the green infrastructure with the coastal area,
- making use of the area's topography,
- connecting existing districts (Pansio & Perno, Artukainen, Pahaniemi, and Satama) with the shoreline.

Fig. 17. "City of the Sea": Vision for the development of western Turku. Source: schauman-nordgren.com

The vision drew inspiration from international examples. Projects from cities such as Malmö, Copenhagen, and Oslo were analysed, where coastal areas have been successfully transformed into public, recreational, and residential spaces. These examples demonstrated how the shoreline can be integrated with the urban fabric, creating spaces that encourage a variety of social, cultural, and sports activities.

Based on the analysis results, a detailed transformation concept was developed. The vision includes improving coastal accessibility through the development of both land and water public transport, constructing pedestrian and cycling boulevards, and creating ecological corridors linking districts to the shoreline. Public spaces such as boulevards, parks, and recreational areas play a central role in the concept, aiming not only to enhance the area's attractiveness but also to improve its functionality and environmental impact.

Anna-Leena Jokitalo emphasised five key aspects of the vision: **maritime identity, environmental positivity, community engagement, sport and recreation**, and **sustainable mobility**. Through sustainable planning and extensive public dialogue, Turku aims to create a space that is both functional and appealing for residents and visitors alike.

At the end of the meeting, a joint discussion led to a summary of the first day of the seminar. The conclusions were as follows:

1. Main challenges for the City of Gdańsk
   - adaptation to climate change,
   - lack of green spaces in the city centre,
   - urban sprawl,
   - energy supply to the city,
   - engaging the younger generation in shaping public space,
   - digitalisation,
   - ageing population.

2. Ideas for shaping urban development
   - transforming ideas into implementation,
   - aligning expectations with reality.

3. Using the co-creation process
   - flexibility in participation,
   - education on participation,
   - working in line with the city's strategy,
   - defining a minimum scope of cooperation.

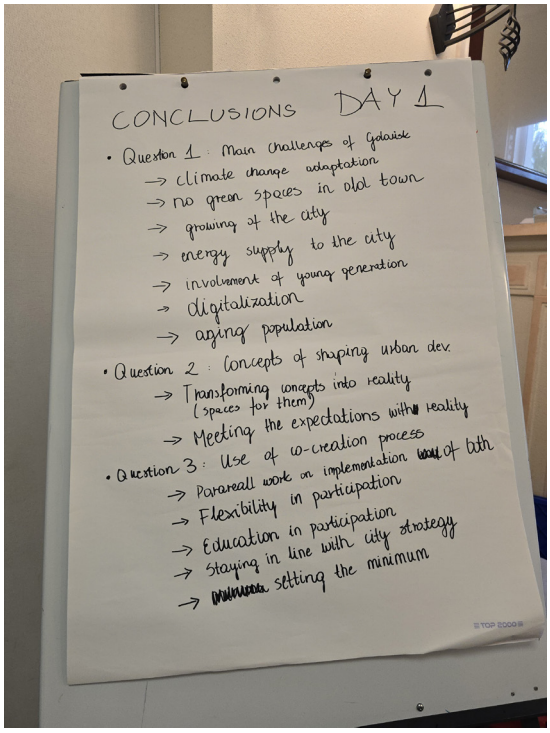

Fig. 18. Summary of the first day's work.
Photo by: Paulina Bone

3.3. Second Workshop Session

Workshop Areas

During the seminar, participants were divided into six project groups, focusing on three selected workshop areas that represent diverse challenges and opportunities for urban space transformation.

Fig. 19. Identification of workshop areas on the map of Gdańsk, prepared by: Gdańsk Urban Development Agency

Duty Free Zone (1) (Fig. 20) – This 38-hectare section of the New Port district, located in the northern part of the city near the port entrance, is characterised by a contrast between historic buildings, green spaces, and existing industrial zones. The main activities in this part of the seaport, situated within the district's boundaries, include the handling of general cargo such as fruit, commercial vehicles, frozen fish, and seafood. The area holds strong potential for transformation and integration with surrounding neighbourhoods.

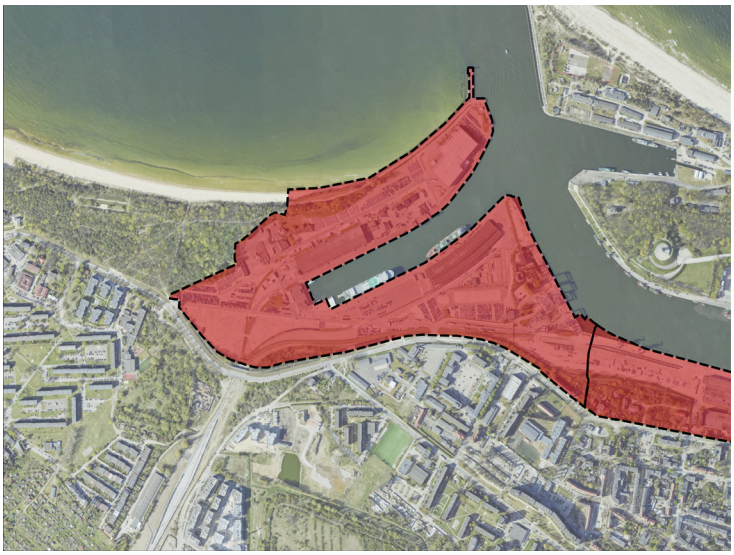

Fig. 20. Duty Free Zone, prepared by: Gdańsk Urban Development Agency

New Port – Oliwskie Quay Area (2) (Fig. 21) – Covering 19 hectares and situated opposite the Westerplatte peninsula, this part of the port is burdened by heavy truck traffic, which conflicts with the nearby expanding residential areas. Its transformation could change it into a modern service and recreational space. The area borders the historic New Port and remains part of the Port of Gdańsk.

Fig. 21. New Port – Oliwskie Quay Area, prepared by: Gdańsk Urban Development Agency

Letnica – Stadium Area (3) (Fig. 22) – This 17-hectare section of the rapidly developing Letnica district has, over the past decade, been transformed from an industrial zone into a modern mixed-use residential and service area. The proximity of the Polsat Plus Arena Gdańsk stadium and the AmberExpo congress and exhibition centre gives it significant development potential. The location benefits from convenient access to public transport – rail, tram, and bus – and sits next to a major road junction leading through the tunnel under the Still Vistula River.

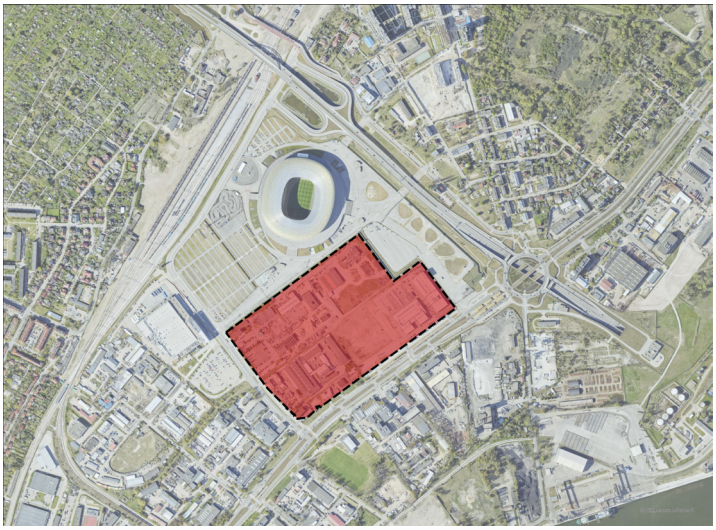

Fig. 22. Letnica - Stadium Area, prepared by: Gdańsk Urban Development Agency

After the presentation of the conditions and project areas, workshop participants took part in a guided field trip through the discussed sites (Fig. 23).

Fig. 23. On-site visit to the project areas. Photo by: Mariia Andreeva

During the site visit, they had the opportunity to explore the areas in question, gain a deeper understanding of their characteristics, and ask questions. Each team carefully analysed the location, compiled photographic documentation, and took detailed notes.

Upon returning, participants exchanged their initial impressions and ideas. This was followed by in-depth analyses and discussions on the proposed concepts. Each team received a complete set of maps of the area in various scales and projections, along with essential drafting tools and tracing paper.

Fig. 24. Workshop work on the concept. Photo by: Paulina Bone

Fig. 25. Workshop work on the concept. Photo by: Mariia Andreeva

The workshop participants, working in their assigned target groups, engaged in lively discussions about their designated areas. They began hands-on work with maps, freehand sketches, and tracing paper. Detailed analyses and initial concepts were developed.

During the plenary session, key issues relevant to shaping the studied areas were discussed:

1. Quality of Life
   - a personal matter,
   - balancing building density with public spaces,
   - comprehensive social infrastructure,
   - multifunctionality,
   - starting with infrastructure,
   - sustainable mobility.

2. Sustainable Mobility
   - promoting walking, cycling, and public transport,
   - balancing different needs,
   - safety as a priority,
   - shared spaces,
   - prioritising public transport.

3. Key Issues
   - redefining identity.

The workshop work continued into the third day, which was entirely devoted to the independent work of the project groups, as well as the opportunity to ask questions in order to prepare as thoroughly as possible for presenting their results.

Fig. 26. Beach in the New Port. Photo by: Jarosław Zulewski

4 Workshop Results

The official presentation of the workshop results took place in the Gdańsk City Council building. The introduction to the summary was delivered by Prof. Piotr Lorens, the City Architect of Gdańsk. In total, there were six project groups, with two teams assigned to each project area.

4.1. New Port – Duty Free Zone

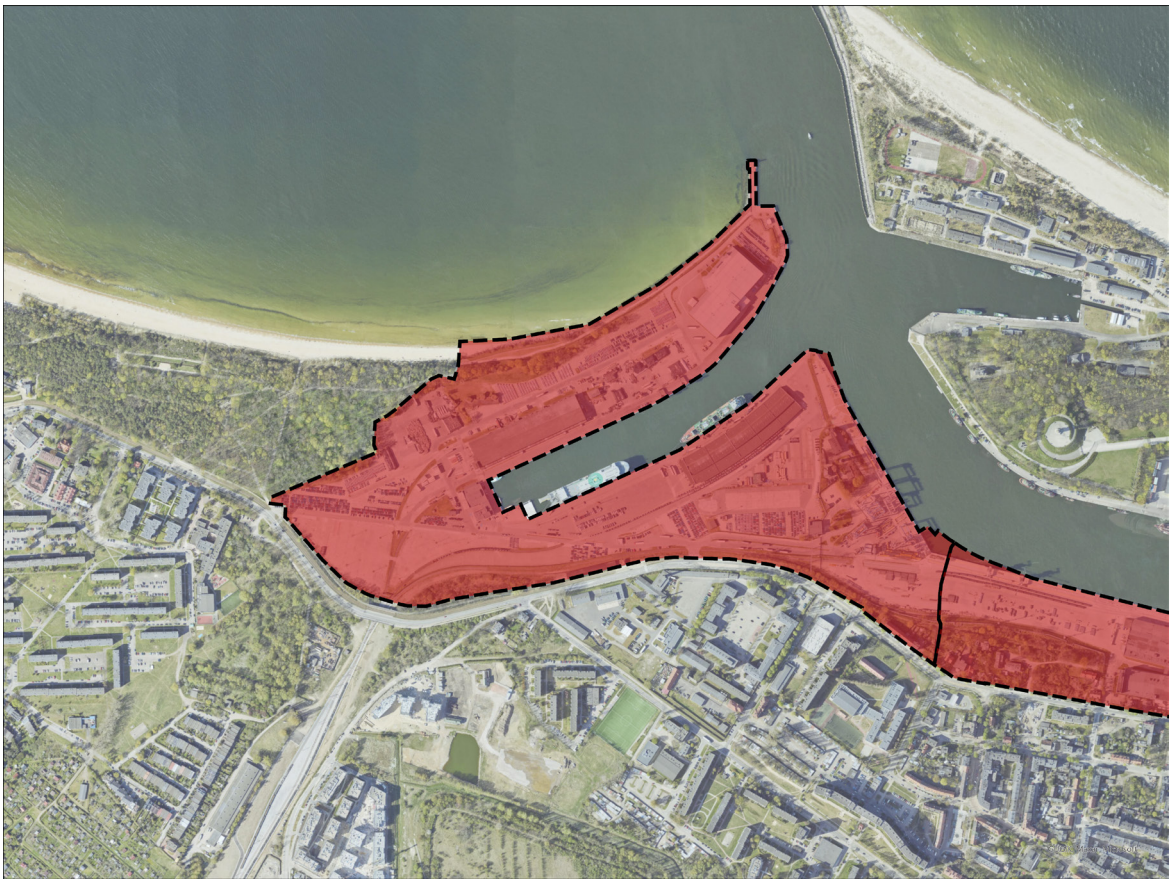

Fig. 27. Duty Free Zone, prepared by: Gdańsk Urban Development Agency

Fig. 28. Members of Team I

The first group, consisting of Maja Grausa, Jacek Józekowski, Anna Ramos, Dürten Schölens, and Jens Will (Fig. 28), focused on leveraging Gdańsk's rich history and its access to the Still Vistula River. They explored the possibility of creating a green park with water-absorbing vegetation, serving both recreational and ecological functions. The proposal prioritized meeting the needs of Gdańsk's residents, with particular emphasis on their participation in the area's future development, improving public transport, and enhancing the comfort of using urban spaces. Tourism would play a secondary role, with a key element of the concept being the experience of water through all five senses: touch, sound, taste, smell, and sight.

Fig. 29. Team I workshop project – masterplan for building structure. Source: workshop materials

The project envisions the creation of numerous public spaces and new multifunctional developments integrating various urban functions. One of the key elements of the proposal is the establishment of a marine aquarium in the old part of the port, near the historic fortifications, as well as the creation of a green corridor connecting Brzeźno with Westerplatte via the Still Vistula River and New Port. In addition, the group proposed introducing three types of watercraft to operate in the area: small passenger ferries, medium-sized sightseeing vessels serving both residents and tourists, and larger cruiser-type ships.

Fig. 30. Team I workshop project – master plan for water mobility. Source: workshop materials

The second group, composed of Johanna Hagström, Anna-Leena Jokitalo, Jakub Korzekwa, Agneta Persson, and Mustofa Kemal (Fig. 31), analysed the site's context in terms of its connections with the city centre, including public transport and road links, as well as the existing greenery and functions of the area. Their focus was on integrating different elements into a cohesive whole, highlighting the importance of synergy between transport infrastructure, public spaces, and the surrounding natural environment.

The team identified significant potential arising from the existing railway connection, extensive green areas, long waterfront, and proximity to historic sites. As a result, they developed a vision for an attractive urban space combining recreational, social, and cultural functions. A central concept was to establish a new urban centre with a promenade and marina, serving as an open, resident-friendly hub for gatherings and activities.

The project also proposes a sequence of public spaces, with a central square designed to foster social interaction and host city events. Along the marina, multifunctional buildings are planned, culminating in an architectural landmark with a cultural function. Another crucial component of the concept is improved mobility through the development of pedestrian connections, renovation of existing railway tracks, and the introduction of a water tram to enrich the area's transport network.

Fig. 31. Members of Team II

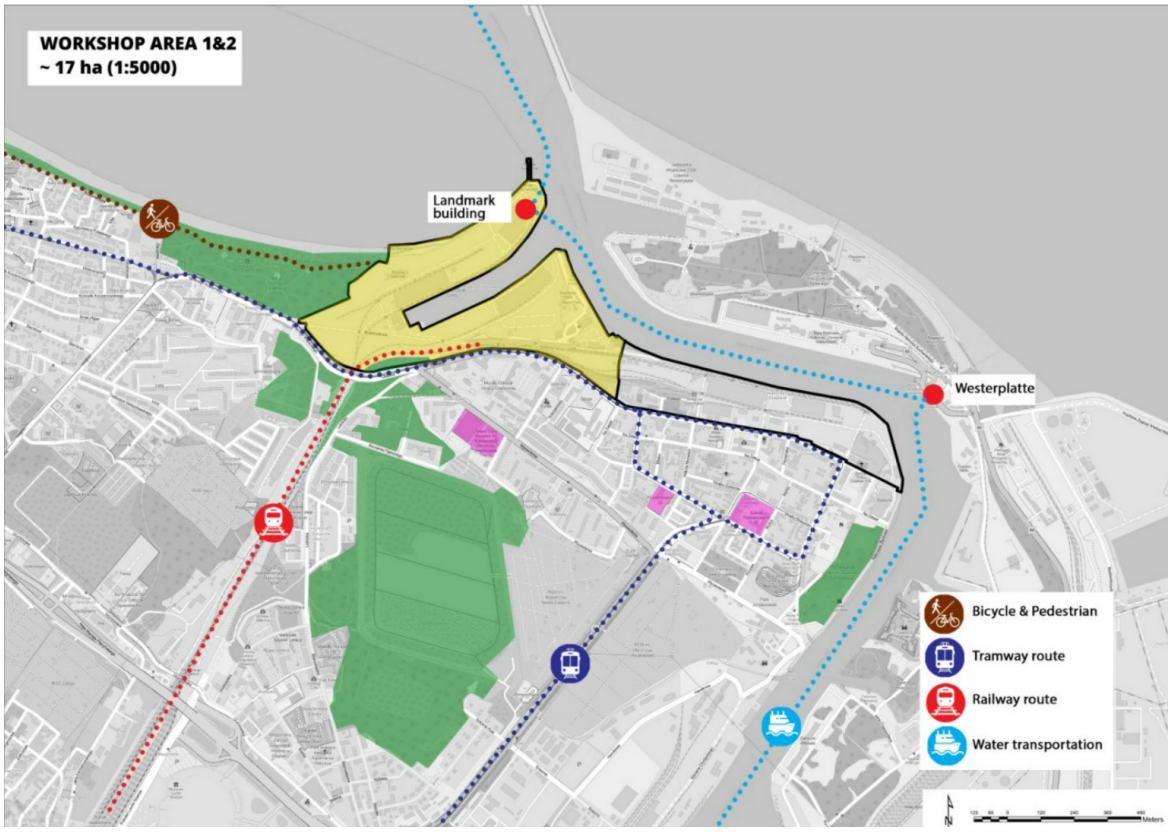

Fig. 32. Team II workshop project – transport analysis of the area. Source: workshop materials

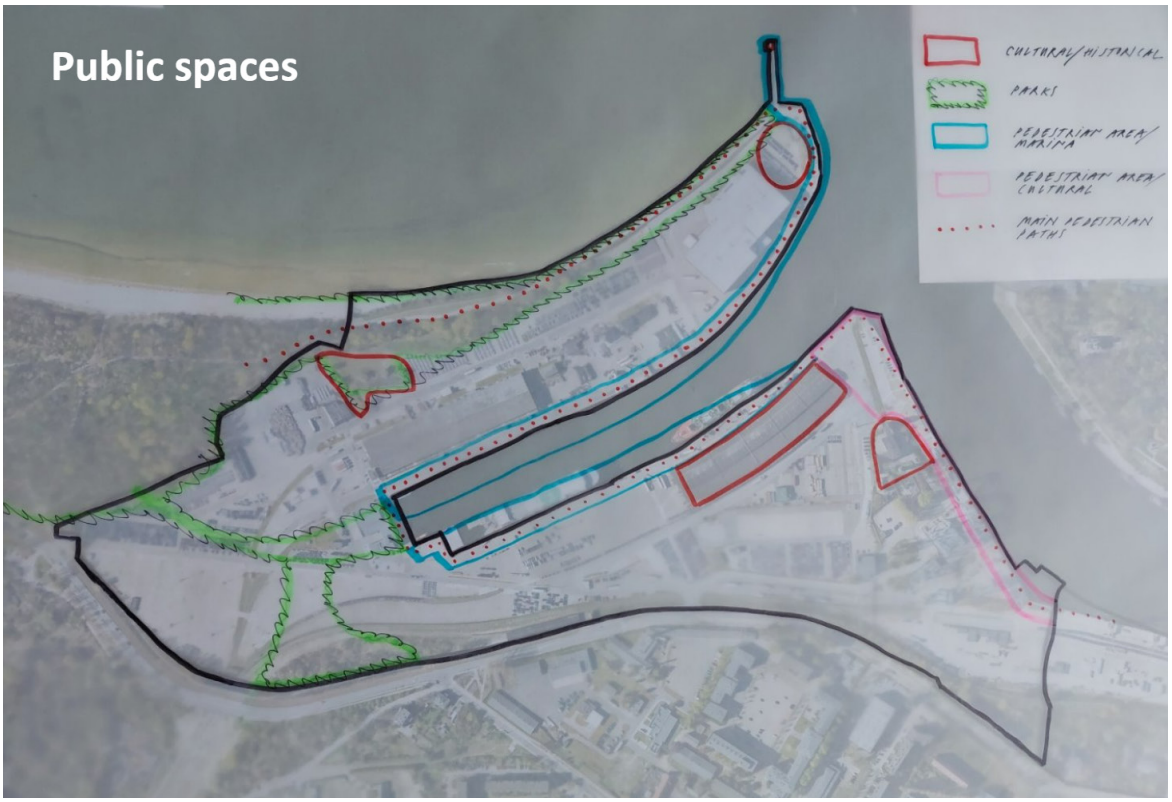

Fig. 33. Team II workshop project – vision. Source: workshop materials

Fig. 34. Team II workshop project – building structure. Source: workshop materials

4.2. New Port – Oliwskie Quay Area

Fig. 35. New Port – Oliwskie Quay Area, prepared by: Gdańsk Urban Development Agency

Fig. 36. Members of Team III

The third group, consisting of Lukas Lyttkens, Vassilis Kitsos, Ira Sibelius, Solvita Kalvite, and Małgorzata Wójcik (Fig. 36), focused on improving accessibility and integrating the port area with the city. The team concluded that the key to the future of this site lies in reconsidering the port's expansion and its potential relocation, which would enable better connections with the surrounding urban fabric and open the waterfront to residents. An important aspect of the concept was also to highlight the historical character of the area and to revitalise the existing residential buildings and green spaces.

The project proposed new residential development with passages leading towards the water and varied building heights, aiming to create an attractive and harmonious urban structure. Another key element of the concept was a pedestrian promenade designed to foster social interaction and improve waterfront accessibility.

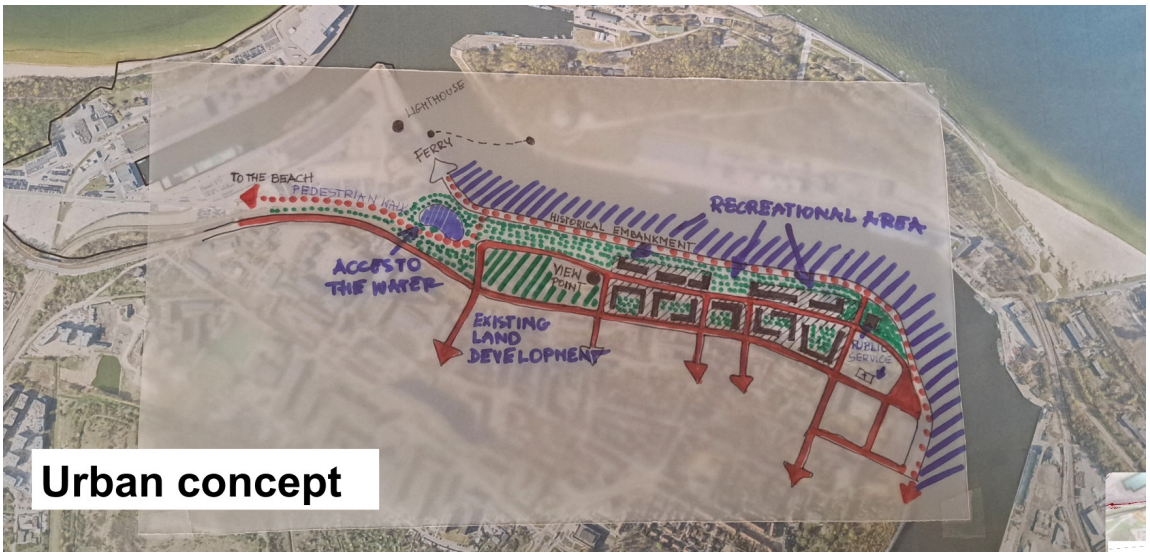

Fig. 37. Team III workshop project – urban design concept. Source: workshop materials

In the western part of the area, the plan included the creation of a central park, intended as a recreational space for residents and connected to the new urban layout. In addition, due to the revised building arrangement, the group proposed introducing new tram stops to increase the efficiency of public transport and integrate it more effectively with the developing district.

In terms of urban planning inspiration, the project drew primarily from the experience of Copenhagen, as well as from solutions implemented in Turku and Stockholm. Following the example of these cities, the group aimed to create a space combining functionality, aesthetics, and sustainable development, where history and modernity intertwine in a harmonious way.

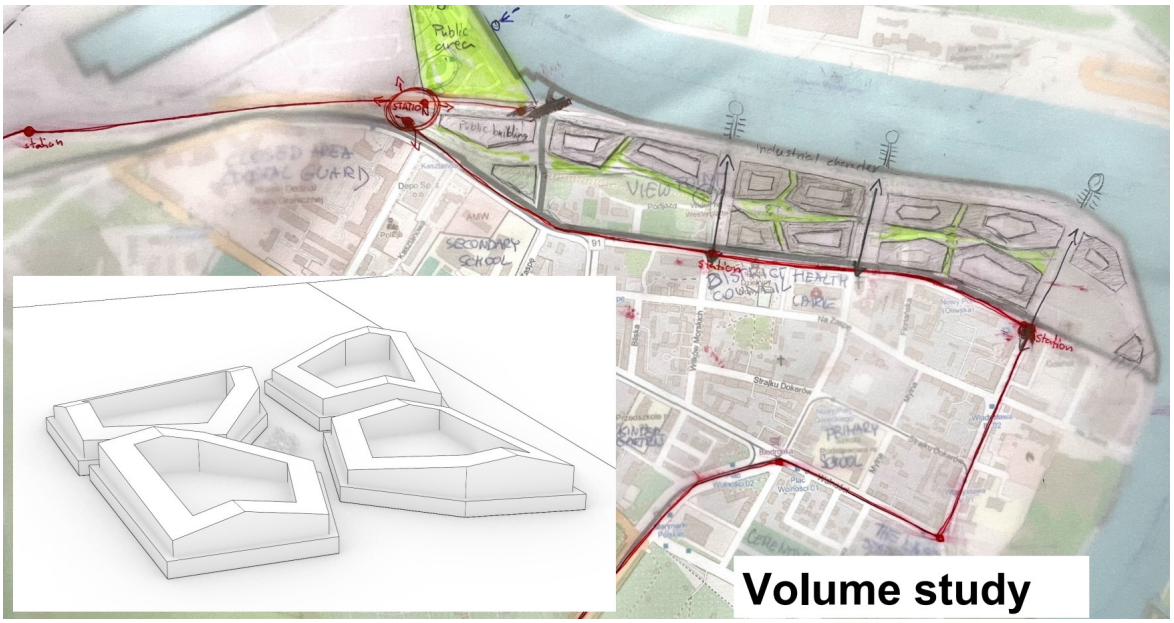

Fig. 38. Team III workshop project – volume study. Source: workshop materials

Fig. 39. Team III workshop project – overall vision of the area. Source: workshop materials

Fig. 40. Members of Team IV

The fourth team, "Newport's New Seagate", consisting of Frida Brunner, Maarika Urm, Ugis Kaugurs, Jessica Pettersson, Dorota Kamrowska-Załuska, and Mariia Andreeva (Fig. 40), focused on the issue of the poor connection between New Port and the city centre of Gdańsk. The group observed that if the port was to remain in its current location, the city should consider creating a new, attractive space situated away from its intensively used part. According to the team, the current plans for populating this area require reconsideration, and the main entrance to the new urban complex could be relocated to a more optimal location, not directly adjacent to the port.

The project proposed new residential development with passages leading towards the water and varied building heights, aiming to create an attractive and harmonious urban structure. Another key element of the concept was a pedestrian promenade designed to foster social integration and improve waterfront accessibility.

In terms of urban layout, the project built upon the concept developed by the third group, basing the design on the existing built environment while complementing it with public spaces and a system of green areas. A key feature of the concept was the introduction of a green boulevard linking the individual green areas and serving as an important spatial axis of the new district.

The team emphasised that this area should be designed primarily with residents in mind, rather than tourists. The priority, therefore, was to provide infrastructure and functions tailored to the daily life of the local community. The proposal envisioned mixed-use development, which would allow for the creation of a dynamic and sustainable urban space.

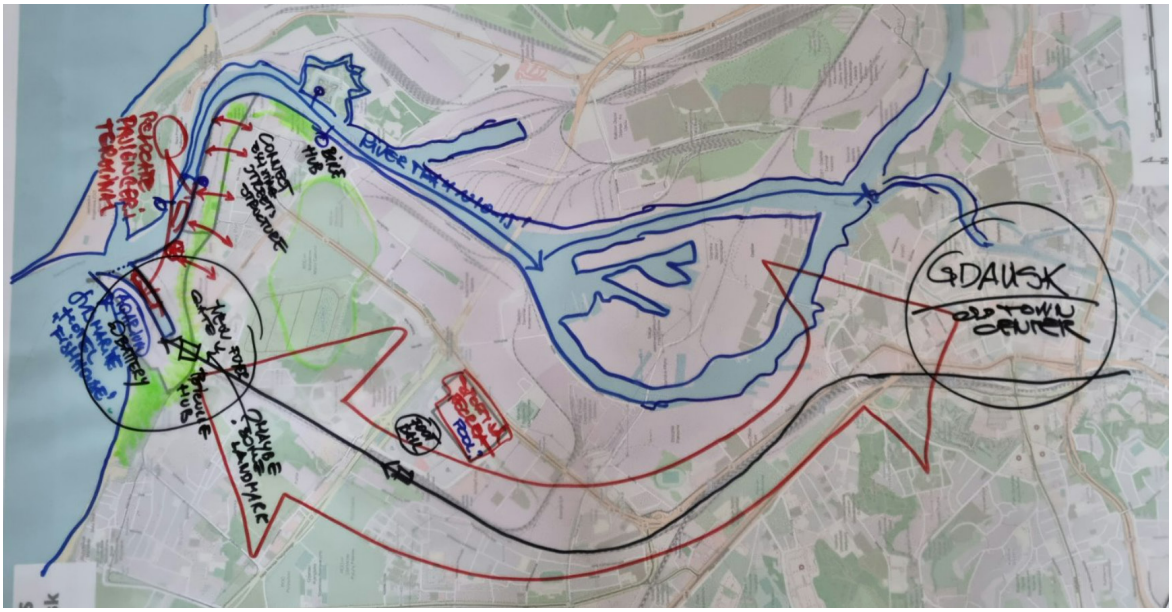

Fig. 41. Team IV workshop project. Source: workshop materials

Fig. 42. Team IV workshop project. Source: workshop materials

4.3. Letnica – The area near the Stadium

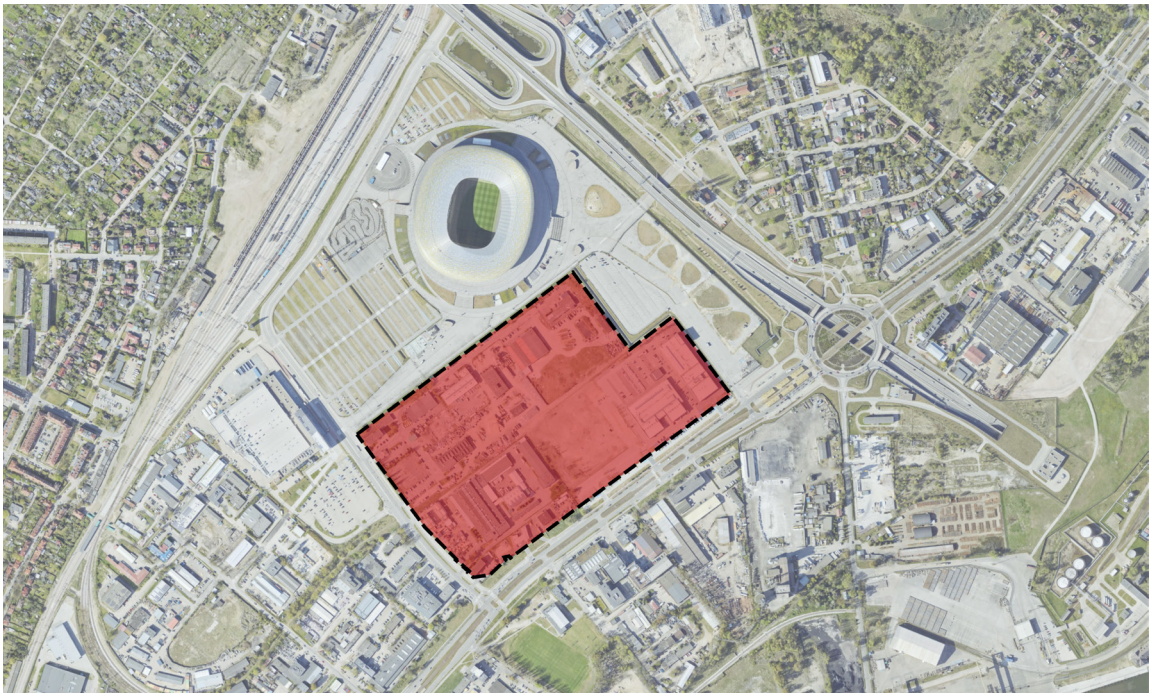

Fig. 43. Letnica - The area near the Stadium, prepared by: Gdańsk Urban Development Agency

The fifth group, consisting of Kadri Karjus, Paulina Szewczyk, Michael Rink, Agnieszka Ilola and Anna Butkiewicz (Fig. 44), focused on analysing the current spatial and functional situation of the stadium and its surroundings. Initial observations highlighted significant urban issues in the area, including extensive concrete surfaces, a lack of human-scale design, limited greenery around the stadium, and the absence of everyday functions that could activate the site. Despite its iconic character, the stadium is surrounded by an unwelcoming environment, with its immediate neighbours being empty parking lots, a power plant, and the Amber Expo conference centre. Good public transport connections are used only periodically, further emphasising the problem of lacking daily activities in the area.

This analysis led the group to conclude that the key solution was to create a space functioning year-round, offering a variety of activities for both residents and visitors. The proposal included introducing new functions such as gastronomy, meeting spaces, a transport hub, and green areas that could attract people before, after, and during stadium events. An important aspect of the concept was also the incorporation of green innovations, including the use of renewable energy sources and an increase in tree planting and greenery, which would improve the aesthetics and microclimate of this part of the city.

According to the group, the stadium should become the heart of the area, offering spaces for spending time not only during sporting events but also in everyday life. The proposal envisioned taking advantage of the site's multifunctional potential, not only through the development of offices and services but also by introducing residential buildings. These would be separated from the stadium by green belts while preserving view corridors towards the sports facility.

Fig. 44. Members of Team V

An important aspect of the project was also biodiversity and water retention, which can improve the quality of the space and its resilience to climate change. Increasing the biologically active surface area and integrating green solutions, such as a botanical garden or retention systems, would be key to transforming this area into a more friendly, functional, and environmentally sustainable place.

Fig. 45. Team V workshop project – design solutions sketch. Source: workshop materials

Fig. 46. Team V workshop project – area vision. Source: workshop materials

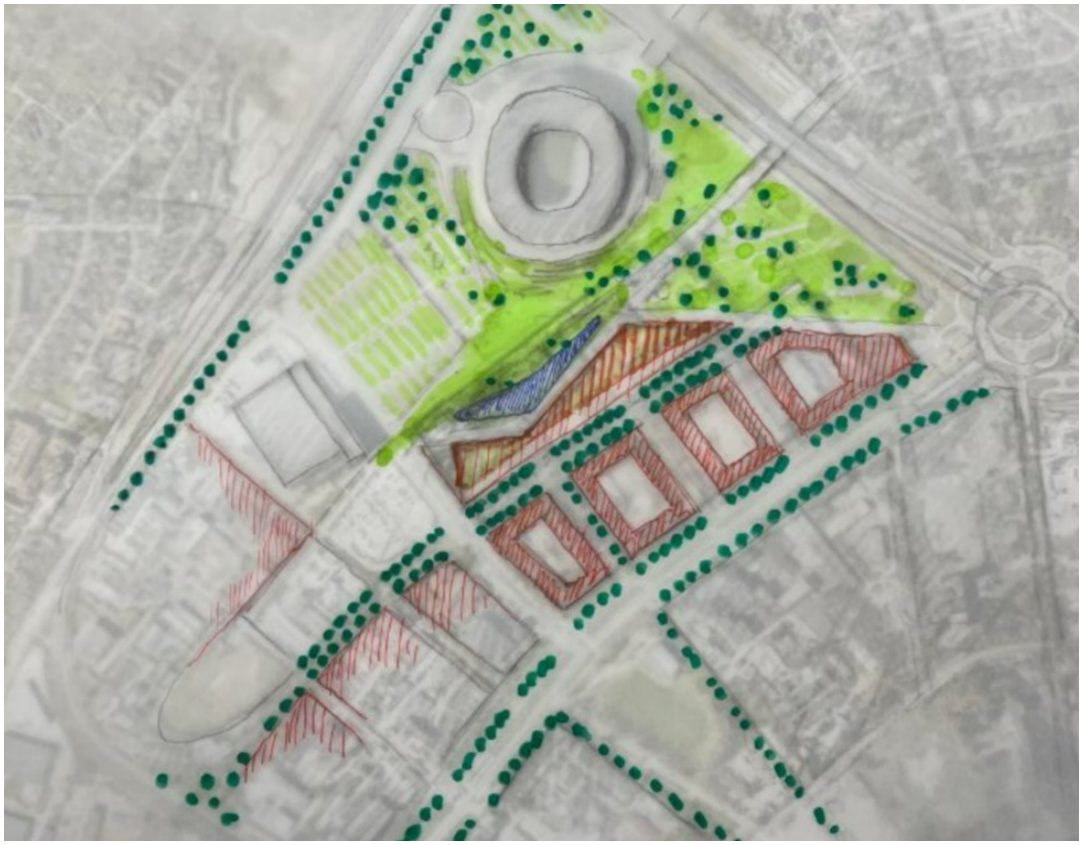

Fig. 47. Team V workshop project – area vision. Source: workshop materials

Fig. 48. Members of Team VI

The sixth team, consisting of Irbe Karule, Sofia Korte, Tomasz Janiszewski, Per-Arne Nilsson, Adham Maharramli, and Justyna Sobczak-Kozłowska (Fig. 48), focused on analyzing the space around the stadium and its potential development directions. The group noted that the area is characterized by high noise levels, both from road traffic and events taking place at the stadium. An additional challenge is the overload of infrastructure during major events, which calls for re-considering new functional and spatial solutions.

In response to these issues, the team suggested the construction of a hotel or short-term rental facility that could relieve other parts of the city during mass events, while also providing additional functions for daily use. The group also emphasized Gdańsk's rich historical heritage, pointing to inspiring examples of well-designed public spaces in the city, especially in the Main Town area. They stressed that a human-scale design and multifunctionality are key to creating urban spaces actively used by residents.

In the context of the stadium and its surroundings, the team highlighted the role of existing spatial landmarks, such as the European Solidarity Centre (ECS) and the Museum of the Second World War, which serve as distinctive orientation points in the city's structure. For the studied area, the introduction of a blue-green infrastructure corridor was proposed to increase biodiversity and improve the quality of the space. In particular, the team pointed out the need to strengthen green connections with the city center, including the development of green corridors along cycle paths and sidewalks.

The group also proposed a new transport hub to improve accessibility and connections with other parts of the city. A key element of the concept was the inclusion of residential functions, which are already present in the stadium's vicinity. By introducing multifunctional development,

Fig. 49. Workshop work of Group VI – area vision. Source: workshop materials

the team aimed to create a space that combines residential, service, and recreational uses while maintaining view corridors toward the stadium. The project focuses on a forward-looking approach to the area's development, incorporating climate change resilience, positive energy use, diverse recreational activities, and the creation of an attractive, dynamic district. The team developed a list of eco-friendly solutions, including solar energy, heat pumps, and wind power, as well as a concept for a solar-powered mobility hub. Public transport and the development of recreational spaces are intended to play a key role in making the area more resident-friendly.

As part of their final considerations, the group also proposed introducing a new high-rise landmark to complement the city's skyline while highlighting the stadium's significance as both a volumetric and functional dominant.

Fig. 50. View of New Port and the Duty Free Zone. Photo by: Jarosław Zulewski

5 Conclusions

The seminar and workshop held in Gdańsk were not only an opportunity to present ideas for the future of the area but, above all, a platform for open exchange of opinions and experiences. Thanks to the participation of designers, city representatives, experts, urban planners, and architects, it was possible to look at New Port and Letnica districts from many perspectives – from strategic issues of city development to the everyday needs of the local community. During the workshop key challenges of transformation of workshop areas were identified, such as ensuring coherent social infrastructure, increasing access to green areas, and creating attractive public spaces. Also key potentials of these sites were identified – including the districts' unique location, the possibility of giving them a new identity, and attracting diverse functions. The conclusions drawn from the event became the starting point for further development work.

All these activities form a coherent process in which each stage represents another step towards the realization of the vision of modern, resident-friendly, and sustainable districts. If the proposed solutions are implemented, Letnica and Nowy Port have the chance to become examples of the successful transformation of post-industrial areas into vibrant, multifunctional parts of Gdańsk.

Fig. 51. View of the Duty Free Zone. Photo by: Jarosław Zulewski

GDAŃSK

STUDIES
MATERIALS
ANALYSES