

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

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.

references:

Miessen, M. (2010) *The Nightmare of Participation*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Mouffe, C. (1999) Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism? *Social Research* 66(3), PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY. The Johns Hopkins University Press.745-758

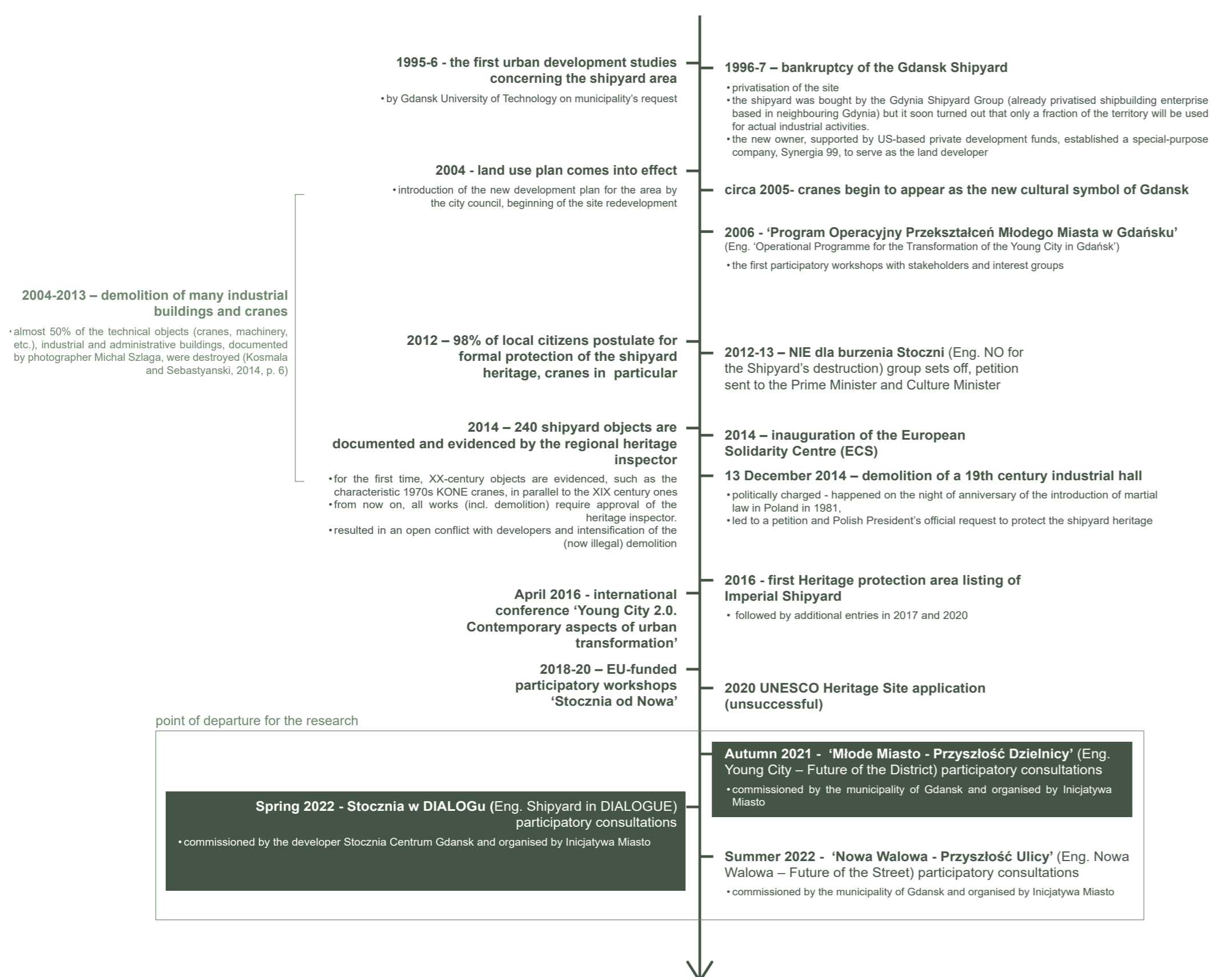


Figure 1. Timeline of public engagement in the shipyard area after 1989. Made by the author (2023).

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)

