Poland is a country with a rich maritime heritage, although – due to the fact that for centuries many of the seaside cities that are part of contemporary Polish port system were under foreign rule – there is little social identification with it. Destruction of Gdańsk during World War II as well as cold-war realities prohibiting international contacts and freedom of using the sea by private parties for both commercial and recreational reasons also contributed to the fact that waterfronts remained abandoned and unattractive until the political and socio-economic transformation of 1990-ties. In result, only the emergence of the private real estate development sector and growing interest in regenerating historic urban structures were able to contribute to the change of this situation. In result, both in large cities (like Gdańsk, Gdynia and Szczecin) as well as in smaller ones (like Ustka, Łeba, Hel, Władysławowo, to name just a few) the waterfront locations have become in early XXI-st century a playground for numerous redevelopment initiatives.

What has to be pointed out is the fact that in each case the structure of the former harbour and character of the contemporary heritage preservation processes is different. This relates both to the history of the site (over 1000 years of history of Gdańsk harbour versus the relatively modern Gdynia seaport, developed during the interwar period), level of preservation of the historic structures (interesting XIX-th century harbour installations and buildings in Szczecin versus very limited heritage resources in case of smaller ports like Łeba), redevelopment strategies of the particular buildings (very careful restoration of the modernistic buildings in Gdynia versus new architectural concepts developed in case of Kołobrzeg) as well as approaches towards shaping the urban landscapes (preserving the modernistic port landscape in case of Gdynia or Władysławowo versus reintroduction of the historic landscape as in the case of Gdańsk).

Despite all these differences, it has to be pointed out that in each of the analyzed cases the waterfront transformation processes have been initiated and that heritage preservation plays an important role in these. But what makes Polish cases different from many other countries is almost full dependence on the private sector regarding the redevelopment of the distressed areas as well as tendencies of reusing the heritage buildings and structures for contemporary commercial purposes. Moreover, the state heritage preservation services only recently started

to recognize the importance of the industrial and maritime heritage, as i.e. in case of Gdańsk, Gdynia and Szczecin. But in many case the valuable pieces are still not preserved in a proper way, which relates to smaller harbours. This generates a specific set of problems and issues, which are widely discussed when the projects associated with waterfront heritage redevelopment sites are processed.

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**List of associations** for heritage defense:

- **ICOMOS Polish National Committee**
- **Towarzystwo Urbanistów Polskich (Society of Polish Town Planners)**
- **Stowarzyszenie Architektów Polskich (Society of Polish Architects)**
- **Stowarzyszenie Konserwatorów Zabytków (Society of heritage conservators)**

**Legal regulations** associated with heritage preservation and**:**

- **Ustawa o planowaniu i zagospodarowaniu przestrzennym (Spatial planning and development act), 2003**
- **Ustawa o ochronie zabytków i opiece nad zabytkami (Monuments preservation and protection act), 2003**
- **Ustawa Prawo Budowlane (Building law act), 1994**
- **Ustawa o portach i przystaniach morskich (Ports and sea harbors act), 1996**

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*Head Image: Reintroduced historic landscape for the old port of Gdańsk. (Picture by Piotr Lorens)*