

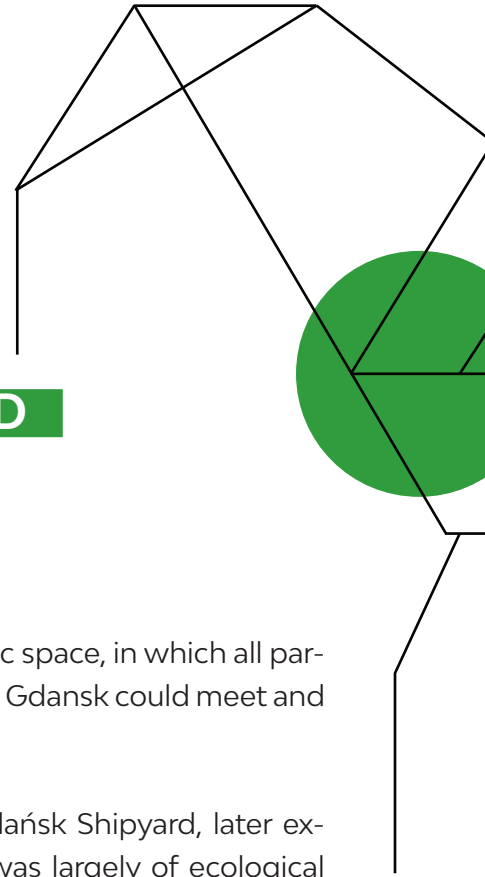
NATURE OF THE SHIPYARD AND SOLIDARITY

SHIPYARD ANEW was a kind of participatory urban laboratory of public space, in which all parties interested in the process of transformation of post-shipyard area in Gdansk could meet and freely present and discuss alternative visions of the future.

This public and visionary thinking about the future of the former Gdańsk Shipyard, later expressed in the *Dreams to Fulfil* (a document we jointly developed), was largely of ecological character. **It was strategically expressed in our common mission as ecological understanding and including the history of the area into its (dreamed-of) future. We believe that this kind of thinking proves to be ground-breaking in the current philosophy and practice of planning the transformation of this area.** The title of the *Shipyard Anew* dialogue-based project reflects this change in a very accurate way.

In the summer 2020 we ran a series of four discussions which explored the themes presented in the dreams under the GREENERY AND ECOLOGY category. The series was organised under a common title of *The City of Our Dreams: Nature of the Shipyard*. Together with all the interested participants, we discussed the question of understanding the significance and values carried by the most important elements of the cultural heritage of Gdańsk Shipyard, namely: the ideals of solidarity and shipbuilding production. The aim was also to use them as inspiration for planning ecological life forms in the future waterfront district of Gdańsk.

The participants of the discussion were of the opinion that the idea of solidarity could be still alive and attractive, however, it must be filled also with new content in the contemporary contexts. **Redirecting our thinking about the significance of solidarity towards ecology helps us to update it and to orientate it towards the future. According to the participants of the *Nature of the Shipyard* series, the idea of solidarity is related to freedom and freedom, in turn, is related to equality.** Such a libertarian understanding of the solidarity ideas is expressed in ecological thinking which assumes that Nature should have the right to self-determination and independence. Nature should be given opportunities and freedom (of choice) and become an equal participant of decision-making processes. This kind of thinking is reflected in a concept of a wandering garden, in which plants could freely choose and colonise places in the forms that Nature purposefully selects.



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An example of metaphoric transfer of such an idea of solidary freedom into some particular actions in the future district, is a joint concept presented by Filip Ignatowicz and Roman Sebastyański. They suggest **leaving a selected post-shipyard object to undergo changes brought by Nature which could freely colonise it with wild plants and animal species in the symbiotic relations**. The concept assumes that in the new district, plants will be freed from human control and regulation. They will be able to communicate, metaphorically speaking, the idea of freedom. **Consequently, the recipients of that eco-artistic installation will be transferred into the historical context of the solidary freedom rooted in the Shipyard's August 1980.**

Also worth noticing is the rebellious character of that spontaneous (however rational and conscious) action. It manifests the strength of natural and free life, set against the oppressive power of mechanisation, standardisation and regulation. Created in this open, naturally participatory process, the space conveys one more important solidarity message: all the participants of the process are given an opportunity to identify themselves with it – also humans (however, not in particular) who, equally to various plant and animal species will be able to participate harmoniously in that phenomenal spectacle of free and natural life.

Solidarity, in fact, consists in equality (of treatment, access, participation), without excluding anyone – also plants and animals (“non-human beings” as Olga Tokarczuk, the Nobel Prize winner, has put it). In this sense, the idea of solidarity implies the combined traditional-and- modern ecological thinking as a comprehensive, holistic view onto the reality: it is based on openness with simultaneous, harmonious consideration of desires, interests, attitudes and differences. Solidary thinking is the opposite of exclusion – in any form; it refers not only to pushing weaker (poorer) people out of the particular space by stronger (richer) people but also to pushing (weaker) living creatures – plants and animals by (stronger) people.

The participants of the Nature at the Shipyard series meetings believe that **public, non-commercial space that will be friendly to all living creatures should be established in the post-shipyard area**. As a result of our meetings, a new, non-formal FB group *Gdańsk Wszystkich Istot (Gdańsk of All Beings)* was established. The aim of the group is to integrate activities undertaken by numerous groups of activists who try to improve human consciousness and sensitivity to the fact that people are not the only inhabitants of Gdańsk. Another goal is to exchange relevant information and experience as well as to lobby for the rights on the non-human city dwellers. The participants expressed their hope that the newly-developed district of Gdańsk, built at the Solidarity birthplace, would become an icon of such interspecies solidarity.

Anna Gołędzinowska presented **a concept of restoring/revitalising the open park space which harmoniously integrates not only various species and their various activities but also post-industrial areas of the former Gdańsk Shipyard with other parts of the city**. She believes that the very attractive areas of the Steffens Park and the Great Linden Alley come as a vast and unused ecological potential. They are currently cut off from the public spaces of the city and of the Shipyard by the Aleja Zwycięstwa's road infrastructure and the railway tracks.

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During our discussion a concept was presented to connect that park to the newly-developed district with its simultaneous integration with the other part of the city centre by two existing footbridges over the railway tracks (the so called yellow bridge near *Brama Oliwska* and another one in the vicinity of the *Gdańsk-Stocznia* train stop) and at least one more footbridge constructed in the area of the northern edge of the Steffens Park. Supplemented with bicycle lanes, these footbridges could be additionally enhanced with some plants which would become a smooth extension of the greenery of the Park and the Great Linden Alley.

According to Kamila Chomicz, **in this historical place dedicated to industrial production, Nature can teach us solidary cooperation.** She indicated some examples of social insects (honey bees, ants, etc.) who develop well-organised “production cooperatives” and provided other examples of collaboration in Nature which could be observed despite species differences (e.g. between some species of fungi and trees – mycorrhiza). Kamila believes that in the post-shipyard area playgrounds for children could be constructed upon the inspiration taken from solidary behaviour of some herding animals who learn how to cooperate, to support each other, to share information, etc.

Another concept based on the idea of common solidary production (in this case: food) refers to the “Solidarity Garden”. It was presented by its author, Agnieszka Wołodźko. The essence of the garden would be **establishment of the common garden and participatory cultivation of fruit and vegetables there. It would also involve sharing the produce with all the interested parties and people in need, not to mention providing nutrition for pollinating insects.** The author believes that such activities can counteract the results of negative transformation of the discussed area, which can exclude former Shipyard workers, their families and poorer and weaker people from that place. The Solidarity Garden could be an open place for the integration of people of different age groups and backgrounds who would be interested in joint gardening and close contact with Nature.

We hope that our conclusions, especially, the re-interpretation of the fauna’s and flora’s role in the past and present development of the Gdansk Shipyard will contribute to the bigger appreciation of green heritage impact on the future of post-industrial, historic waterfronts also in other European cities. **We believe we have sown the seeds of change.***

by *Roman Sebastyański*

*cf. Mary Conroy’s art intervention “Seed Change” within *Memory of Water*

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The series *Nature of the Shipyard* (June – September 2020) as the round-up City Labs process SHIPYARD ANEW , within „Memory of Water” project.

Organised by: The Baltic Sea Cultural Centre in Gdańsk

Moderated by: **Roman Sebastyański**, Curator of the SHIPYARD ANEW City Lab Process (University of the West of Scotland)

The invited speakers:

Filip Ignatowicz, multimedia artist and film director, **Agnieszka Wołodźko**, artist and curator, **Kamila Chomicz**, biologist and film maker; **Anna Gołędzinowską**, urbanist and city councilwoman in Gdańsk.

Co-ordination: **Magdalena Zakrzewska-Duda** in co-operation with **Katarzyna Szewciów**

Podcasts production: **Łukasz Dąbrowski**, **Radosław Jachimowicz**

Podcast: [„Miasto naszych marzeń: Natura stoczni”](#)

Webinar: [STOCZNIA OD NOWA – NATURA STOCZNI](#)

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