

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Postmodern Reconciliation: Reinventing the Old Town of Elbląg

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The famous historic Old Town of Elbląg in northern Poland was comprehensively destroyed in the Second World War, neglected for several decades in the post-war period, and beginning in 1979, rebuilt from scratch in a postmodern style. The new, flamboyant, historically inspired buildings were promoted by the local head conservationist, Maria Lubocka-Hoffmann, and financed by the fledgling market economy. Developing against the background of an international trend towards old-town regeneration, these buildings grew from different roots than postmodernism in the West. They derived from an expanded concept of historic conservation and the goal to reconcile contradictory desires. These included a contested past in a town that had been German until 1945, a longing for local identity and visible historicity despite historical ruptures, and the establishment of traditional planning principles, such as small scale and mixed use, in a modern environment.

## Postmodernism in a Polish Town

The town of Elbląg, situated 60 kilometres east of Gdańsk in northern Poland and currently home to about 120,000 inhabitants, boasts an unusual example of postmodern architecture. By the end of the Second World War, Elbląg's famous Old Town, with its over 600 houses dating from the 15th to 19th centuries, was reduced to rubble and left largely ruined for more than three decades (Barton 1974; Lubocka-Hoffmann 1998). In the 1980s, it re-emerged as what was referred to as *retrowersja* ('retroversion'): a house-by-house reconstruction on the historical block plan, featuring historically inspired ornamented façades (master plan 1979 by Wiesław Anders, Szczepan Baum, and Ryszard Semka, comprehensively reworked between 1980 and 1983 to allow for house-by-house reconstruction, buildings by various architects) (Lubocka-Hoffmann 1998; Skolimowska 2013).

This article argues that Elbląg's new Old Town is an example of a postmodern project that grew from slightly different roots than postmodern architecture in Western Europe and North America, which has recently been in the limelight of architectural historiography (Martin 2010; Farrell and Furman 2017; Franklin and Harwood 2017; Branscome 2018; Szacka 2016). The rebuilding of Elbląg was influenced by an expanded discourse on historic conservation and is connected to the history and specificity of the site. It reconciles contradictory desires for postfunctionalist planning principles, visible historicity, and local identity despite a contested past.

The broad definition of Elbląg's rebuilt Old Town as 'postmodern' aligns with recent architectural historical

scholarship, albeit not necessarily with some of the architects' self-definitions (Ching, Jarzombek, and Prakash 2007: 746–52; Ellin 1996). The buildings absorbed eclectic neo-classical and vernacular influences and are based on a small scale, mixed use, and pedestrian orientation (**Figure 1**). Their layout and dimensions are historically inspired, but their block plan and ornamented façades are noticeably contemporary. The buildings were an architectural counter-proposition to the monotonous tower blocks outside the city centre and to the socialist technocrats who had promoted them (Basista 2001). Somewhat more hidden, but still evident, are aspects that were also gaining significance in Western Europe at the time: inner-city regeneration, increasing private investment, municipal image-marketing, and an increase in tourism (Harvey 1989; Ellin 1996; Williams 2004).

The rebuilding thus paralleled an architectural approach brought forward at the time, for example, by Rob Krier in his attempts to 'repair' European cities using historical typologies, or by Aldo Rossi in his promotion of historical buildings ('urban artefacts') as authoritative for design and development of a neighbourhood (Krier 1979; Rossi 1982: 28–61). As will be shown, these parallels to international postmodern theory resulted only to a small extent from direct influence, and much more from a common concern with the shortcomings of modern architecture that at the time were shared across the countries behind the Iron Curtain. Against this background, postmodernism can no longer be seen as an exclusively Western European and North American phenomenon related to an advanced stage of capitalism and the ironic play with classical precedents that are no longer venerated (Jencks 1977; Portoghesi 1982; Klotz 1984; Ellin 1996; Crinson and Zimmerman 2010). Rather, it has to be seen as growing from multiple roots, some of which were specific to



**Figure 1:** Elbląg's Old Town from the tower of the cathedral, looking northeast. The street running diagonally from top left to bottom right is Stary Rynek (Old Market), with the Brama Targowa (Market Gate) on the top left. On the left side are the few blocks that have not yet been rebuilt, with the cellars of the pre-war buildings excavated as part of the archaeological programme of 1979–83. Photo by Florian Urban, 2018.

the degree of state influence under a declining socialist regime in the Eastern Bloc (see, for example, Kulić 2018; Klein and Gzowska 2013; Stanek 2012; Cymer 2018; *Architektura Postmodernizmu* 2018).

This article will present Elbląg as an example of the particular significance of postmodern architecture in the final years of socialism – as a force that filled and widened the cracks that had appeared in the system since the 1970s, and a means to reconcile contradictory desires for historical continuity and creative innovation. The latter was particularly significant in light of a traumatic past: Elbląg had been part of Prussia (and Germany) from the late 18th century until 1945. At the end of the Second World War the German inhabitants were expelled; the town was subsequently repopulated by Poles who were often refugees themselves, originating from the regions that Poland was forced to cede to the Soviet Union. In addition, in previous epochs the town was not unambiguously Polish: it was founded by Germans in the 13th century and subordinate to the Polish crown from the 15th to the 18th centuries, whose inhabitants were mostly German and possessed a high degree of political autonomy under a German-speaking elite. Against this background, the unspecific historicity of the rebuilt town responded to the perplexity of constructing an all-encompassing image of Elbląg's past.

Elbląg's reconstruction is also the story of a committed woman who seized the moment: Maria Lubocka-Hoffmann, who was the head conservationist of Elbląg Voivodeship from 1975 to 1999, became a driving force in the promotion of a house-by-house approach, rather than the simplified neo-historical panel plan with system-built houses that had been decided on by the local authority

in 1979. The town's reconstruction similarly shows the opportunities for increasing civic participation: from 1983 the local Jaszczur Association challenged the principles of the socialist economy and coordinated private individuals who were to become small-scale investors in owner-occupied houses.<sup>1</sup>

These activities show that in Elbląg, as in many other postmodern projects in Poland, the lines between regime and opposition were blurred. Lubocka-Hoffmann was a member of the communist party, *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* (PZPR, Polish Unified Workers' Party) that ruled the country until 1989, as were many of her supporters in Elbląg and in the central government in Warsaw who eventually, somewhat pragmatically, approved the rebuilding. But their approach was neither typical nor characteristic of Party ideology and, particularly in the beginning, met with strong resistance from the Party establishment. While it was obviously influenced by the general spirit of hope and renewal connected with the Solidarity trade union movement – Gdańsk, the centre of Solidarity protests, was only 60 kilometres away – Lubocka-Hoffmann and the other supporters of the rebuilding were not political activists. Likewise, the project was only indirectly affected by political events. It began several years before the foundation of Solidarity in 1980 and gained momentum even after the protests were violently crushed with the declaration of martial law under General Wojciech Jaruzelski in 1981.

Elbląg exemplifies several local specificities that played out in the Polish variant of postmodernism. One was the agency of certain portions of the state apparatus – in this case the conservation authority and the local planning

department. Another was the influence of the Polish school of historic conservation and the traditionally high esteem it carried in the Polish context compared to other socialist countries. The latter is particularly noteworthy, as the postmodern 'reinvention of the small town' in Elbląg and other Polish cities extended beyond the traditional domains of protection of monuments and harnessed new concepts such as atmosphere, ambience, and immaterial heritage. And finally, the influx of private funds generated by a fledgling market economy guaranteed the viability of a long-term construction project in the midst of a slumping socialist economy.

### Rebuilding Through the Back Door

The unusual design of Elbląg Old Town appeared somewhat through the 'back door' – not by means of a single decree, but through a series of decisions taken over the course of more than a decade. Throughout the postwar period, the proposals for Elbląg were similar to those for war-destroyed cities all over Europe at the time. They relied on standardised modern architecture, functional separation, the primacy of automotive traffic, and the complete redesign of historic layouts and structures.

Proposals for functionalist redesign included, for example, the two 'Sketches for a Conception of a Detail Plan for the Old Town of Elbląg' (1958, by Wiesław Anders, Szczepan Baum, and others for Miastoprojekt Gdańsk,

which foresaw four eleven-storey buildings next to the cathedral, or the 'First Stage of a Detail Plan for the Old Town of Elbląg' (1962, by Szczepan Baum), which proposed the construction of two department stores near Stary Rynek (Old Market) and repetitive five-storey blocks around them. At the same time these plans were prepared, the remaining ruins of the historic houses were removed and the cellars filled in. Also the 'General Plan of Elbląg Town' (1966–67, worked out by the Voivodeship Planning Office) and the 'Detail Plan for the Spatial Use of the City Centre and Old Town of Elbląg' (1967, worked out by the municipal Elbląg Planning Office) would have entailed the eradication of the historic street plan and a rebuilding with serial modernist blocks, sports facilities, parking, and greenery (Lubocka-Hoffmann 1998: 15–16).

However, these plans were never implemented (**Figure 2**) and no reconstruction occurred. With the exception of the Gothic Katedra świętego Mikołaja (St. Nicholas Cathedral) (**Figure 3**) and a few houses on Wigilijna/Świętego Ducha Street, which were all rebuilt in the 1950s in their pre-war shape, Elbląg's Old Town remained a large void. Evidence suggests that the decades-long neglect was due not only to bureaucratic inefficiency and a weak socialist economy but also to a lack of what Lubocka-Hoffmann call 'emotional incentive' (Lubocka-Hoffmann 1998: 17). In contrast to the old towns of Poznań or Warsaw, cities that had been part of Poland before the war, the formerly



**Figure 2:** The same view in 1975. The Brama Targowa (Market Gate) is visible in the top left corner (Barton 1975: photograph no. 111 by A. Wołosewicz).



**Figure 3:** The rebuilt St Nicholas Cathedral in 1975 (Barton 1975: photograph no. 114 by A. Wołosewicz).

German Elbląg was seen as belonging to a foreign culture, one to which the current inhabitants did not feel personal attachment and whose original form they had little motivation to recover.

However, in the following decades, the character of the Elbląg rebuilding also remained poised between recovery and reinvention. Likewise, some of the architects who had promoted prefabricated blocks and functionalist urbanism in the 1960s and 1970s eventually developed postmodern design and mixed-use environments in the 1980s. These include the master planners Wiesław Anders and Ryszard Semka (1925–2016). Anders was a professor at Gdańsk Politechnika and the dean of the architecture department from 1971 to 1978. His colleague Semka (1925–2016) and the third master planner, Baum (1931–2014), were also affiliated with this university. As part of their appointment, they carried out design work in their university-based architecture office, ZAPA (Zespół Autorskich Pracowni Architektonicznych), at the time a rather common way for university teachers to remain in practice. Both Anders and Baum worked on functionalist tabula-rasa plans for Elbląg. In addition, in the 1960s Baum designed the controversial plan for Malbork near Gdańsk (begun 1969), in which a medieval old town destroyed in the Second World War was rebuilt as a sequence of repetitive low-rise slabs. He later designed the Gdańsk-Niedźwiednik estate (1979–83), consisting of tower blocks with postmodern elements, and, after the end of the socialist regime, the flamboyantly neo-historical Hotel Hanza in Gdańsk (1994–99).

To understand the apparently paradoxical situation in which a group of functionalist architects ended up

spearheading postmodern neo-historicism, one has to take a closer look at both the socio-political context and the nature of the postmodern architecture that they designed. Their earlier functionalist proposals for Elbląg had already shown little of the heroism found elsewhere in war-destroyed Europe. In Elbląg, modernist architecture was not presented as superior to the historical houses it was meant to replace. There was no debate about visionary design or innovative planning. Rather, the repetitive slab block plans appear to have resulted from pragmatism and a painful awareness of the technological constraints and limited resources under the socialist economy. At the same time, the tabula-rasa plans from the very beginning contained at least some elements that suggested historical awareness. The 1958 plan by Baum, Semka, and others included the historical reconstruction of the aforementioned houses on Wigilijna/Świętego Ducha Street that were later rebuilt (**Figure 4**). Also, the plan to build school buildings on the ruins of the late medieval castle in the southern portion of the Old Town was dropped in the late 1960s for conservationist reasons (Lubocka-Hoffmann 1998: 16).

Against this background, it eventually became possible to 'squeeze postmodernism out of architects' such as Baum and Semka, as Lubocka-Hoffmann, looking back, described her influence. In her language, postmodernism meant neither false nor tawdry, but rather honest and more sensitive to the surroundings than the 'dreary' and 'embarrassing' functionalist plans (Lubocka-Hoffmann 2018). This seems to be more than just a personal statement, as the striving for a 'deeper truth' was an important



**Figure 4:** Left to right: The buildings at Świętego Ducha 21, 20, and 19, rebuilt in the 1980s, with the entrance of the Ścieżka Kościelna (Church Alley). The cathedral is in the background. Photo by Florian Urban, 2018.

theme in postmodern neo-historicism in Poland, evident, for example, in church architecture of the 1980s (Urban 2020). It points to an inclusive potential of postmodern design, which in the context of the Elbląg rebuilding became particularly significant.

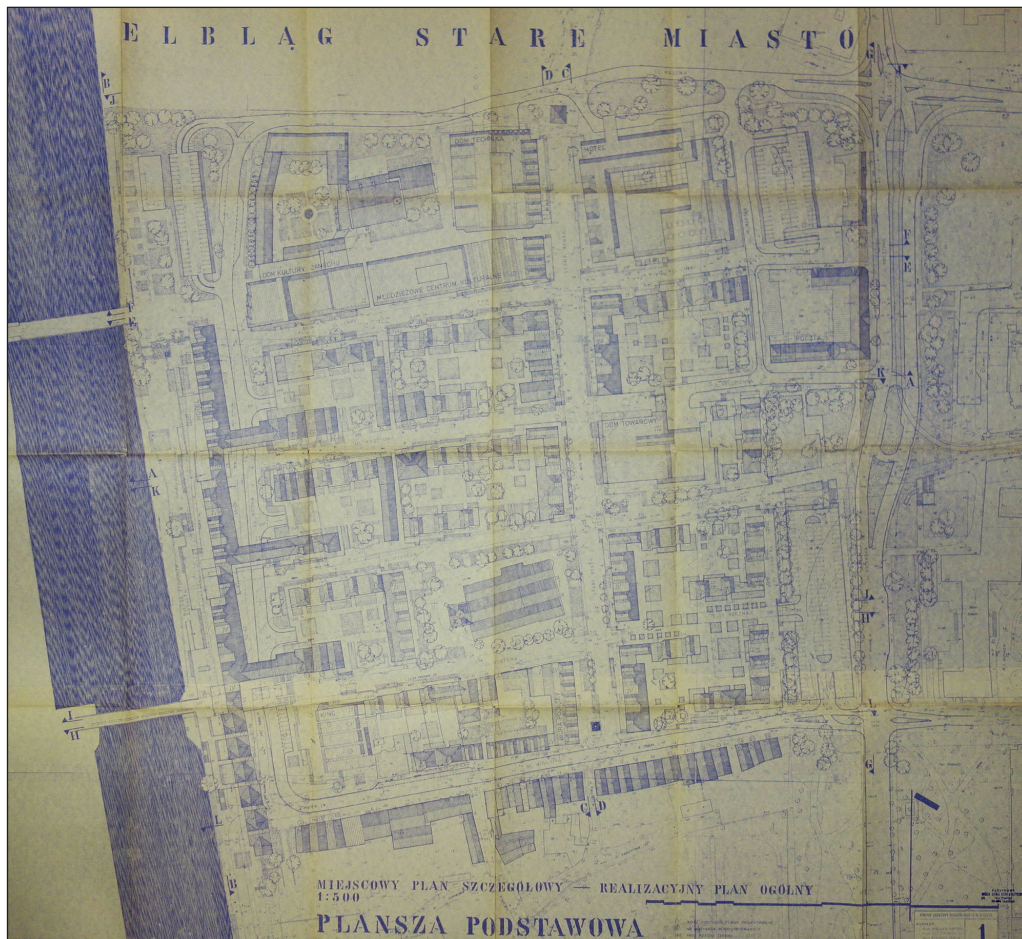
#### The Unrealised Neo-Historical Panel Plan

The turning point towards historically inspired architecture was the 'Project for the Construction of the Old Town of Elbląg', which in the following text is referred to as the 'neo-historical panel plan' (Figure 5) (Anders, Baum, and Semka 1978). Strictly speaking, it was a series of plans for street layout, design of some buildings, zoning, and traffic. The project was passed by the city administration in 1978. The national journal *Architektura* reported on the preparations in 1976 and published a good portion of the plans in 1980 (Anders 1976; Anders, Baum, and Semka 1980).

Work on the neo-historical panel plan began in the mid-1970s, when Anders, about 15 years after his tower block proposal, stated the significance of the 'historical development ... of urban ensembles and architectural form' (Anders 1975b: 8). In the beginning, the expressed

commitment to historical form was largely rhetorical, as the projects to which they were applied continued to be based on serial construction methods and simplified plans. But in the long run, they proved to be influential, as repeated modifications would eventually lead to an abandonment of industrialised panel construction. The first drafts of the neo-historical panel plan were already based on ground-floor commercial use, and thus on a new principle of mixed-use developments different from the modernist housing complexes that were strictly separated by function.

This changing attitude towards history was not particular to Anders. Rather, it reflected the changing discourse at the time, which, despite censorship, was increasingly apparent: a widespread disappointment with the products of modernist industrialised construction and a growing awareness of the loss of historical environments.<sup>2</sup> These aspects were also noticeable in Western Europe, but they had a particular significance in Poland, where the destruction caused by the Second World War was more substantial than elsewhere, and where prefabricated panel construction was far more prevalent.



**Figure 5:** The neo-historical panel plan (Anders, Baum, and Semka 1978b: plan 1).

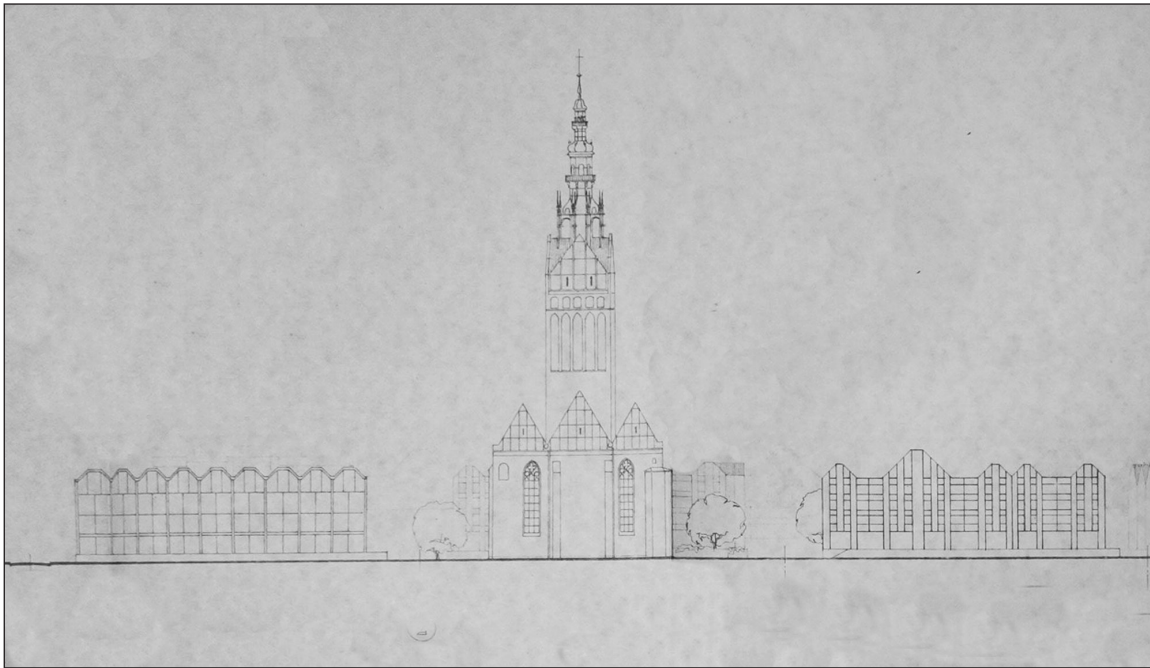
The new stage of planning began with a seminar in 1974–75 at Gdańsk Politechnika under Anders' direction, in which about 15 architects and engineers participated. The spatial planning team included Baum and Semka; among the three representatives of the Elbląg municipality was the director of the Municipal Office for Spatial Planning, Jacek Bocheński, who ten years later would supervise the house-by-house reconstruction (Anders 1974). The team's basic theses on the reconstruction point to the future, stressing 'contemporary technological possibilities' and 'contemporary use' but at the same time 'historic development' and 'humane residences' (Anders 1975a: 8).

A series of plans that took up the results of this seminar were commissioned by the Elbląg municipality (Anders 1975: 8). Over the following years Anders, Baum, Semka, and others worked out the details of design, programme, development, conservationist principles, and infrastructure. The result was Anders, Baum, and Semka's neo-historical panel plan (Anders, Baum, and Semka 1978a; see also Bruszewski et al. 1980).

The neo-historical panel plan was somewhat indebted to the destroyed pre-war town, but called for prefabrication and serial elements. It foresaw the reconstruction of a sample of about 25 (mostly corner) buildings according to their historical shape. These historical copies focused on the 16th and 17th centuries, when Elbląg was not only a wealthy merchant city subordinate to the Polish crown and a member of the Hanseatic League, but a serious competitor to nearby Gdańsk. The other structures were

to be carried out in large-panel technology, harmonising with the reconstructed ones through roofline and building dimensions (**Figure 6**). The original grid plan, laid out when the town was founded in the 13th century, was to reappear again, and buildings were designed for mixed use.

In the end, the historical block structure was only to be partially rebuilt. Unlike the closed blocks that were characteristic for the town from its medieval origins until 1945, most blocks were now open on one side, and the continuous street front was interrupted. The pre-war town's consistent distinction between streets and block interiors was thus blurred – an aspect that ended up being implemented, because the blocks that were eventually built, with a few exceptions, were also partially open. Another intrusion into the historical plan was the structures planned for Wodna Street, where L-shaped buildings were to span across the street, connecting a row of houses on the riverfront with another one on the next block. The panel buildings were mostly four-storey houses with pitched roofs. Their protruding and receding façades would have only loosely reproduced the spaces of the historical corridor streets. Flats were to be built according to repetitive patterns and tended to be small. For example, the two-bedroom flats designed according to the 'north-south system' were approximately 60 square metres (**Figure 7**) (Anders, Baum, and Semka 1978a). The zoning of the neo-historical panel plan aligned with the principles of inner-city regeneration



**Figure 6:** Façades on Stary Rynek, west side (Anders, Baum, and Semka 1978b: plan 10).

found in Western Europe at the time. It envisaged about 600 flats as well as specialised shops, services, and tradesmen's workshops, as well as cultural functions and tourist infrastructure. Other uses included a 'Culture House', a 'Youth Culture House', a cinema, and a 'Technology House' (Anders, Baum, and Semka 1978b: Plans 1 and 3).

In September 1978, the neo-historical panel plan was passed by the Elbląg municipality following conservationist and party approval (Bocheński 1979). In spring of 1979, it was signed off by the mayor, Zdzisław Wąs (Wąs 1979).<sup>3</sup> The project was even awarded a prize by the Polish Ministry of Administration, Spatial Planning and Environmental Protection, which suggests that at a national level it was deemed largely uncontroversial, or at least appropriate for the historical context.

Construction nonetheless did not begin. Some sources attribute this to Lubocka-Hoffmann's hesitation in giving the panel buildings the conservationist approval necessary for any project in the historic city centre (Groth 2005: 44). Others see the economic crisis as similarly influential, as the town was hard-pressed to come up with the resources for such an ambitious project (Korzeń 1989: 23). Lubocka-Hoffmann, looking back, describes her role in 'expressing some objections' to the municipal administration in the spring of 1979 regarding the relationship between old and new architecture and the construction of two car parks (Lubocka-Hoffmann 1998: 21). She also points out that resistance developed gradually after 1980 (Lubocka-Hoffmann 1989: 34). It is likely that her own objections also developed slowly, because in 1979, she had still assessed the panel plan as being 'extraordinary from a conservationist and urbanistic point of view', especially compared to the previous tabula-rasa plans (Lubocka-Hoffmann 1979; see also Bocheński 1979). Over the following years she would nonetheless become one of the most vociferous critics of the neo-historical panel plan and a driving force in the individually built house-by-house reconstruction that was eventually carried out.

Likewise, Jacek Bocheński, the director of the Voivodeship Office of Spatial Planning, first commended the neo-historical panel plan and later supported the individualised buildings (Bocheński 1979).

### Postmodernism from the Spirit of Historic Conservation

Elbląg's postmodern 'retroversion' received significant input from an expanded definition of historic conservation that allowed for a comparatively high degree of adaptation and interpretation. Particularly influential was the move by Lubocka-Hoffmann that in the long run would break the gridlock of insufficient resources and growing objections to the neo-historical panel plan: the start of archaeological research in the Old Town. Arguing from a strictly conservationist viewpoint, Lubocka-Hoffmann focused on protecting what were effectively the only historical remains: the cellars of the old houses, which often dated back to the Middle Ages. They had been filled with rubble in the 1950s, but were otherwise well preserved. In 1979 Lubocka-Hoffmann invited researchers under archaeologist Tadeusz Nawroński (1945–94), who until 1983 converted the cellars of Old Town Elbląg into the country's largest medieval archaeological site (**Figure 8**). The fact that the houses were extraordinarily well documented – including the medieval inhabitants' names, professions, and social statuses – gave the project further prominence (Groth 2005: 49). In the following years, interest in the town's history increased and spawned a variety of events and publications. These included Elbląg '86, an international archaeological conference, which presented results from the excavations, as well as other events in the context of the town's 750th anniversary celebrations in 1987 (Komitet Organizacyjny Obchodów 750lecia Elbląga 1984; Czachowski and Nawroński 1993; Baum and Semka 1992).

In the long run, the most significant outcome of this research was the legitimisation of individualised

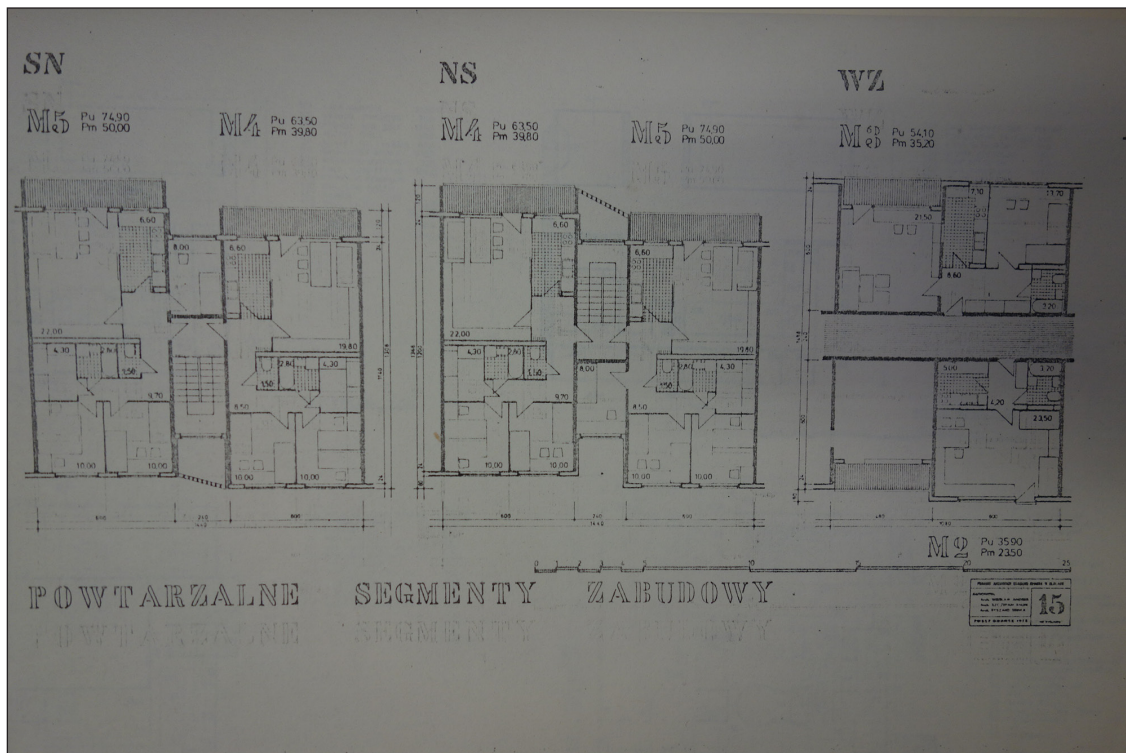


Figure 7: Repetitive plans for flats envisaged by the neo-historical panel plan (Anders, Baum, and Semka 1978a).



Figure 8: An excavated cellar on Stary Rynek, 1980s. Archive of the Urząd Miasta, Elbląg, File I-D Wigilijna 24, 25, 26.

house-by-house reconstruction. At the time of the excavations, Lubocka-Hoffmann worked out 'conservationist guidelines,' published in 1983, which in fact superseded the neo-historical panel plan. The guidelines asked for creative design using 'individual, contemporary forms' that did not disturb the historic scale and the 'atmosphere of the old Elbląg'. A 'historical repertoire' of architectural forms was specifically allowed (although not

specified), but there should be no illusion of historical reconstruction. At the same time, the guidelines mandated traditional, high-quality materials such as brick, wood, and plaster. Building heights were to be individual, following historical typologies, and the plans were to include one-storey rear buildings and the historical *przedproża* (stoops). Elements such as windows could be serially produced, but there should be variations



that related to the variety found in historic buildings (Figure 9).

Next to these new buildings the approximately 30 historically rebuilt houses already mentioned in the neo-historical panel plan of 1978 were retained. They were samples from every stylistic epoch between the 15th and 18th centuries. Most reconstructed buildings

were 16th- and 17th-century Mannerist designs dating from the town's economic heyday, such as the building at Mostowa 17 (Figure 10), which originally dates from 1620, and was rebuilt in the late 1980s (Figures 11, 12), and the building at Mostowa 4, originally from 1595, which served as an inspiration for the adjacent, postmodern buildings designed in the 1980s (Figures 13–15).

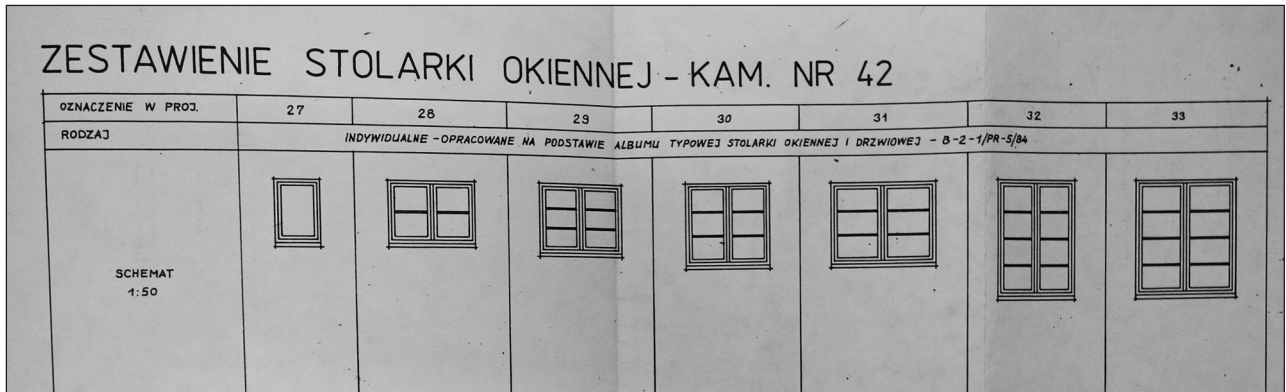


Figure 9: Janusz Różański, window types for the building on Świętego Ducha 19 (previously Wigilijna 42) (Pracownia Konserwacji Zabytków 1985).



Figure 10: Mostowa/Brückstraße 17 (left), built c. 1620, and adjacent buildings Mostowa 16–12, view from around 1930 (Barton 1975: photograph no. 177).



**Figure 11:** The same view as in Figure 10, in 2018. Only the building Mostowa 17 (left), as well as the adjacent buildings Mostowa 18 and 19 (not visible on the picture; see Figure 12) were rebuilt according to the historical model. Photo by Florian Urban, 2018.

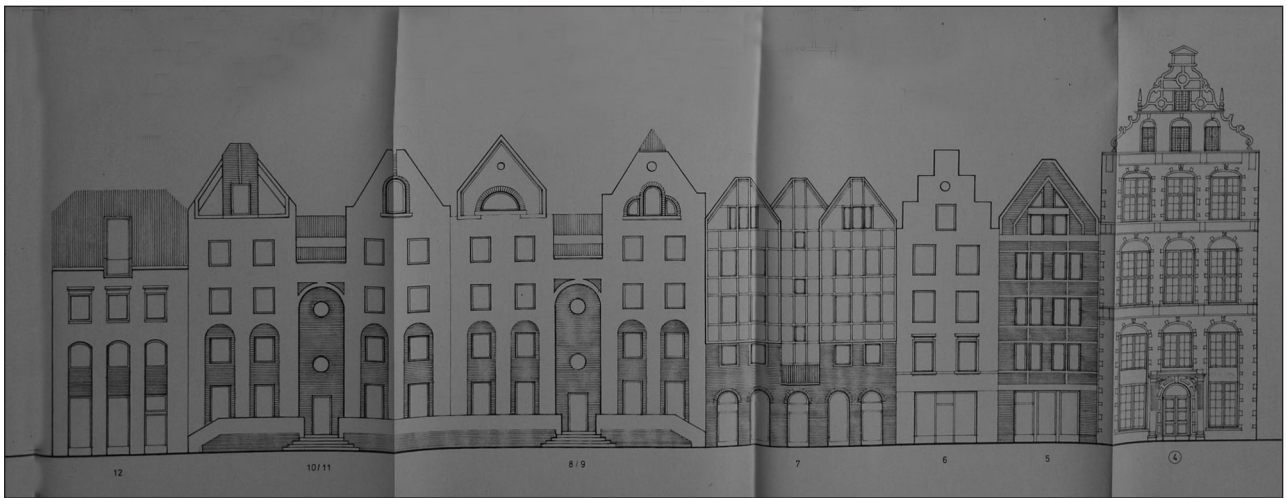
As a result of the conservationist guidelines of 1983, the neo-historical panel plan eventually morphed into a new project – the postmodernist reconstruction of individual buildings.

Lubocka-Hoffmann had no illusions about the authenticity of the new buildings that would derive from her guidelines. She was well aware that her plan would not have been approved by any of the classical conservation theorists in whose spirit she was educated, from John Ruskin's principle of non-interference to Georg Dehio's motto 'conserve, don't rebuild' (Lubocka-Hoffmann 2018). She argued with the 1964 Venice Charter, but at the same time it was clear that, strictly speaking, there was

no longer an 'urban ensemble' that could be conserved along the lines of the Venice Charter. Neither could she mention memory and personal attachment, as none of Elbląg's current Polish residents had recollections of the German pre-war era (see Skolimowska 2013: 332). She could only argue for reconstruction along the lines of the Polish Head Conservationist Jan Zachwatowicz's famous dictum, used as the justification for rebuilding Warsaw's Old Town, that the destruction of cultural values should never be accepted (Zachwatowicz 1946: 48). Her merit was that she took Zachwatowicz's argument and stripped it of its national/patriotic content. In Elbląg, the goal was not to reinstate cultural heritage as a sign of Polish resistance



**Figure 12:** Drawings for façades at Mostowa 13–19 (Baum and Semka 1986).



**Figure 13:** Façades of the buildings at Mostowa 4–11, December 1983 (Baum and Semka 1983).



**Figure 14:** Drawings for façades of the buildings at Mostowa 4–11 (Baum and Semka 1986).

against Nazi Germany's wilful destruction, as it had been in Warsaw Old Town. Rather, visual historicity was set as a guideline for urban development.

Yet Lubocka-Hoffmann was able to defend the post-modern rebuilding through a strictly conservationist argumentation: the centuries-old cellars were significant monuments, and an effective way to preserve them was to build up each of them with an individual building of the size and shape of the destroyed structure

(Lubocka-Hoffmann 2018). This approach aligned with the Dresden Declaration 'On the Reconstruction of Monuments Destroyed by War', which was signed at the 1982 ICOMOS meeting, and which sanctioned full-scale reconstruction whenever it was justified by 'social development' (ICOMOS 1982).<sup>4</sup> Lubocka-Hoffmann and her supporters thus used conservation in the service of the future. Although in line with the ideas on typological continuity and historical urban form of contemporaneous



**Figure 15:** Mostowa 4–11, begun 1986. Photo by Florian Urban, 2018.

architects such as Aldo Rossi or Rob Krier, postmodern Elbląg grew from the buried remains of its own past.

### Postmodernism from the Spirit of the Polish School of Conservation

This postmodernism from the spirit of historic conservation gained momentum from precedents of the Polish conservation school which accounted for the traditionally high prestige of historic conservation in the People's Republic of Poland, in comparison, for example, to the Soviet Union or East Germany. This Polish conservation school pre-empted postmodernism in the sense that it accepted and promoted historically inspired reconstructions that were only to some degree similar to the original buildings destroyed in the Second World War. Even the most 'authentic' examples of such post-war rebuilding were not exact historical copies – including the previously mentioned Old Town in Warsaw (rebuilt between 1945 and 1963 after a design by Jan Zachwatowicz, Józef Sigalin, and others, and the world's only rebuilt old town to be declared a UNESCO World Heritage site) or the Old Market Square in Poznań (rebuilt between 1946 and 1956 after a design by Zbigniew Zieliński and others).

These reconstructions often used stylistic modifications to reinforce the message of resistance and cultural continuity. (Kochanowski et al. 2003; Tomaszewski 2005). The most famous example is St John's Cathedral in Warsaw's Old Town (begun c. 1390, destroyed 1944, rebuilt between 1945 and 1956 according to plans by Jan Zachwatowicz, Maria Piechotka, and Kazimierz Piechotka), which was rebuilt in a 'pure' Gothic style devoid of the copious 18th- and 19th-century modifications that were part of the

building before its destruction by the German occupiers (Leśniakowska 2005: 12). Similar ideas underpinned the reconstruction of the Old Market Square in Poznań, where it was connected to an idea of medieval and Baroque 'Polish' as opposed to 19th-century 'German' architecture, a strategy also applied in the historic core of Gdańsk (KJ 1949; Friedrich 2015). Such politically motivated conservation and reconstruction of the post-war era determines the aspect of many Polish cities to date (Rymaszewski 2000; Bartetzky 2012).

In contrast to these cautiously designed examples of built historiography, the postmodern rebuilding of Elbląg promised a new liberty. The reconstruction of some 16th- and 17th-century façades notwithstanding, the city was not architecturally 'polonised' nor was German culture prominently stressed. Rather, the rebuilding allowed for a historical experience without the details of an uncomfortable past.

None of those involved in the rebuilding referenced the political context, and most likely they did not intend to make a political statement. But the design happened at a time when designers no longer saw the need to consciously reject connections with the German period. In the decades following the 1970 Treaty of Warsaw, in which West Germany officially renounced claims to the Elbląg area (East Germany had already made a similar declaration in 1950), the attitude of Elbląg's residents towards their town's German history had also gradually changed. The official rhetoric – that Elbląg had been thoroughly Polish in a distant past and was therefore only 'regained' in 1945 – became less and less prominent. At the same time, an entire generation of Poles born and raised in

Elbląg had come to be completely at ease with their town's Polishness, and had no reservations in showing an interest in its German history. Also, contacts between former German and current Polish inhabitants of Elbląg increased after tourist visa requirements were liberalised for West Germans and eliminated for East Germans in the 1970s. The protagonists of the rebuilding were also aware that their work was observed by West German associations of former Elbląg residents, and many felt an implicit obligation to show them that they were doing a good job despite not having any memories of wartime destruction (Lubocka-Hoffmann 2018). In this context, postmodern architecture, which could be seen as both historical and ahistorical, was particularly convenient, as it helped avoid the perception of the city's past as traumatic, which had been a liability for contemporary designers.

Elbląg's postmodernism that arose from the spirit of historic conservation thus relied on a number of favourable factors. First, there was a political system in place in which, unlike in some other socialist countries, the head conservationist's right to approve or reject construction plans in the Old Town was not challenged or overruled by Party officials. Under this system, Lubocka-Hoffmann's conservation authority had a sizeable budget that she could use to make the house-by-house reconstruction financially attractive, as she was able to pay for the foundations. Second, there was a changing zeitgeist: a new enthusiasm for historical environments and an increasing criticism of industrialised construction, both of which gained further prominence during the political protests. And last, but not least, Lubocka-Hoffmann, in her thirties at the time and the only woman in her position, was a strong personality with the skills to effectively negotiate with architects and politicians superior to her in rank and age, and thus to eventually supersede the neo-historical panel plan.

### Momentum at the National Level

In addition to Lubocka-Hoffmann's influence, momentum was also created through decisions taken at the national level. In 1979 the Międzyresortowa Komisja do Spraw Rewaloryzacji Miast i Zespołów Staromiejskich (Interdepartmental Commission on Revalorisation of Cities and Old-Town Ensembles) met in Elbląg. Usually referred to as the 'Zin Commission', it was chaired by the well-known art history professor Wiktor Zin (1925–2007), who was general conservator of Poland from 1977 to 1981 and thus one of Zachwatowicz's successors. The Zin Commission awarded Elbląg the status of one among 15 Polish cities that qualified for *rewaloryzacja* ('revalorisation'), which could mean any type of physical or social regeneration measures. The commission had been set up in July 1978 by the Rada Ministrów (Council of Ministers, the pro-forma government of socialist Poland) in reaction to the catastrophic neglect of most historic city centres.

The idea was to make conservation and old town regeneration a priority across different areas of competency. Next to the Ministry of Culture, the Ministries of Spatial Planning and Construction were also represented in the commission. The Zin Commission provided opinions and sponsored several regeneration plans; promoting

tourism was also one of its goals (Stępkowski 1983). The Zin Commission favourably reviewed the neo-historical panel plan for Elbląg on various occasions. In January 1979, commission member Zdzisław Dziedziński called it 'one of the most interesting regeneration projects in the country' (Elbląg Municipality 1979). It was also the subject of a meeting of the commission in June 1979 (Elbląg Municipality 1979; Lubocka-Hoffmann 1998: 20). Official approval followed shortly after (Bocheński 1979).

Given economic shortages and paralyzing bureaucracy, the Zin Commission's influence was very limited, but it helped to give the Elbląg case nation-wide prominence. In any case, the commission's set-up under the tutelage of a prominent art historian shows that at least a portion of the Party establishment was sympathetic towards old-town conservation, and that this approach could include, as it did in Elbląg, large-scale reconstruction.

This does not mean that the Party was generally supportive. On the contrary, the influential First Party Secretary of the Elbląg Voivodeship, Antoni Połowniak, at some point accused Lubocka-Hoffmann of promoting 'bourgeois houses with English bulldogs at the door', as individually owned buildings obviously contradicted the principles of socialist urban development (Lubocka-Hoffmann 2018). He could only be convinced of the project after Lubocka-Hoffmann was able to secure the support of the Party's Central Committee in Warsaw.<sup>5</sup> Along similar lines, Mayor Wąs's successor, Norbert Berliński, was also at first doubtful of the house-by-house reconstruction but he eventually dropped his objections (Lubocka-Hoffmann 1998: 22; Lubocka-Hoffmann 2018).

The struggle over Elbląg's Old Town was thus not a fight between communists and the opposition, as Lubocka-Hoffmann and many of her supporters, including mayor Berliński and archaeologist Nawroński, were Party members, whereas some of the architects were not. Rather, the fight was between innovators and conformists of different political colours, and the former were eventually able to convince the latter of their cause. As will be shown, such innovation sprang from the influence of both design and economic reforms.

### Fledgling Market Capitalism

Next to conservation theory and certain national initiatives, the foremost influence on the postmodern redesign of Elbląg Old Town was the fledgling market economy, which had been gradually introduced in the early 1980s. A market economy with freely operating businesses was eventually established in December 1988 with the passing of the 'Wilczek Law' that effectively ended the socialist planned economy (Grala 2005: 91).

Private clients – mostly owner-occupiers – were not on the scene when the house-by-house construction was first discussed in the early 1980s. But over the years they became one of the driving forces, whose actions nonetheless continued to be tightly regulated by the municipality and conservation authority. The activities of the Jaszczur Association promoting privately financed construction have already been mentioned. Architect and scholar Ewa Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich went so far as to call the Jaszczur protagonists Włodzimierz Mielnicki, Henryk Bagiński and

Maurycy Fedyk the 'designers' of the Elbląg rebuilding project (Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich 2018: 25). While this estimation appears to be slightly exaggerated, they were certainly important in promoting a financially viable solution for the house-by-house rebuilding. But just as significant was the lack of alternatives. It soon became clear that Lubocka-Hoffmann's house-by-house reconstruction plan, which had been accepted by Mayor Berliński, could not be carried out by state firms operating with large-panel technology. Neither had the state-operated housing cooperatives the necessary resources to fund such a large construction programme. Hence, upon Voivode Zdzisław Olszewski's request, the Warsaw authorities eventually agreed to carry out the reconstruction through private capital.

Poland in the early 1980s was at a precarious stage in both political and economic terms. The protests spearheaded by the Solidarity trade union had been crushed in 1981. At the same time, the weakness of the socialist rulers became progressively more apparent as their ideological promises had been exhausted and popular support was waning. The economic situation remained dire, as supply of the most basic provisions was no longer guaranteed. In this context, state funding for a large-scale construction programme seemed utopian. On the other hand, private investment was not only diametrically opposed to the principles of socialist housing provision but also hard to imagine in a country where the overwhelming majority were employed by state firms, and where options for private business were limited.

Some claim that an April Fools' Day joke led the way out of the impasse. On 1 April 1983, journalist Andrzej Minkiewicz, of the local newspaper *Wiadomości Elbląskie*, summoned to the town hall those 'interested in building a private house in the Old Town' – obviously a joke under a regime where capitalism was still officially considered the enemy. The response, however, was overwhelming, and few wished to believe that the offer was not serious (Marek 2013). Whether encouraged by the hoax or not, interested private investors met over the following months, and eventually made it come true. Among the driving forces was the Jaszczur Association (Komitet Organizacyjny Obchodów, 1984). Its members included Bagiński and Fedyk, both local residents; Mielnicki, a school-teacher; Henryk Janicki, an employee of the Voivodeship administration; Wojciech Naganowski, the director of the Culture House 'Pegaz'; and Grzegorz Baranowski, a journalist (Miłośnik Elbląga 1998; Korzeń 1989: 20–27).

Also in 1983, Jacek Bocheński was appointed municipal manager of the rebuilding project and contact person for private clients, while his team member, Jolanta Wołodźko, facilitated communication with the architects the municipality, and the conservation authority. There were significant public subsidies, as the municipality and the conservation authority financed pipes and cables, as well as part of the construction costs (Korzeń 1989: 20–27).

While marking a clear break from socialist principles, the economic parameters of the rebuilding would also have been surprising in a capitalist context. The city gave some municipally owned plots in top locations to groups of future owner-occupiers almost for free. They only had to commit to working a certain number of hours on the

reconstruction of the historic cellars, and they had to use their private funds for the construction. These small-scale investors were typically what communists, with a derogatory undertone, referred to as *prywatniarze* (private entrepreneurs): local residents who made their living from the modest options that the socialist regime, since the early 1980s, had allowed for private business. Typically, this was a kiosk or a grocery shop, but in some cases, entrepreneurs had been using both formal and informal means to set up larger firms and accumulate moderate wealth. Others were temporarily working abroad for hard currency, which made a huge difference given that in 1985 the unofficial exchange rate allowed 30 dollars, less than an unskilled labourer's daily wage in France or West Germany, to be exchanged for 20,000 zlotys, an average Pole's monthly salary (Porter-Szücs 2014: 309).

While the 'investors' were mostly Elbląg residents, their engagement was still to a large extent driven by the prospect of financial gain and not predominantly by an idealistic commitment to the Old Town and its civic or conservationist commitment. Lubocka-Hoffmann remembers that there were 'speculators' who rapidly sold their flats after profiting from subsidies and increased values and who never had any intention of becoming owner-occupiers or participating in any form of community life (Lubocka-Hoffmann 2018). Nevertheless, their activities can hardly be compared to the practice of investment and return in a capitalist country. A legal framework for ownership rights to flats or entire urban buildings was only gradually developing. The first 'investors' had to advance funds for construction materials with no legal guarantee that the plot would eventually be given to them. All they received was a verbal promise from a public servant (Lubocka-Hoffmann 2018; Bocheński 2018). Ownership also meant something different in late socialist Poland. While the plots were eventually transferred to their name, technically the municipality remained the landowner. The private client was given the rights of an *użytkownik wieczysty* ('perpetual leaseholder') for 99 years and had to pay a small yearly fee to the municipality. This situation was similar to that of many flat 'owners' in socialist housing blocks. The rights to a particular plot or flat were nonetheless exclusive, and they could be bought, sold, and inherited, a model rather similar to ownership. Over the following decades, this model was gradually phased out and most perpetual leaseholders would become owners (Wiśniewska 2018).

While starting modestly and informally, the new policy had significant long-term effects. The Old Town was effectively privatised. This happened in parallel with the establishment of a private housing market, which in the following years would gradually replace the socialist system of state housing provision all over Poland. It also favoured the concentration of a new middle class in the city centre, a development which at the time was noticeable as well in capitalist Western Europe (Skolimowska 2013: 330).

In the following years, the significance of private investment continued to grow, and it became increasingly formal. In 1984 a portion of a block was given to the state firm Zakłady Mechaniczne – Zamech (Mechanical Works),



the block immediately north of the first stage, situated between Wigilijna (this part of the street was later renamed Świętego Ducha) and Mostowa. The third stage, begun in 1988, was the block between Wieżowa (previously Studzienna) and Garbary (previously Linki). Of the twenty-odd planned historical reconstructions only those on Mostowa 4 and Wigilijna 26 were completed by 1989. Two more were under construction, built by private clients (Lubocka-Hoffmann 1989: 34).

The three stages together comprised 113 buildings, of which 61 were single-family houses and the rest multi-family buildings with three to four flats per building. The flats, most of which were maisonettes, were usually between 85 and 110 square metres in area (that is, two- to three-bedroom flats) (Korzeń 1989: 24). Flat sizes were thus significantly larger than those in both the neo-historical panel plan and those normal for most peripheral tower blocks. Furthermore, 110 commercial spaces were included: bars and restaurants as well as shops and craftsmen's workshops.

The design of these buildings is exemplified in the block Stary Rynek 35–40 at the corner with Świętego

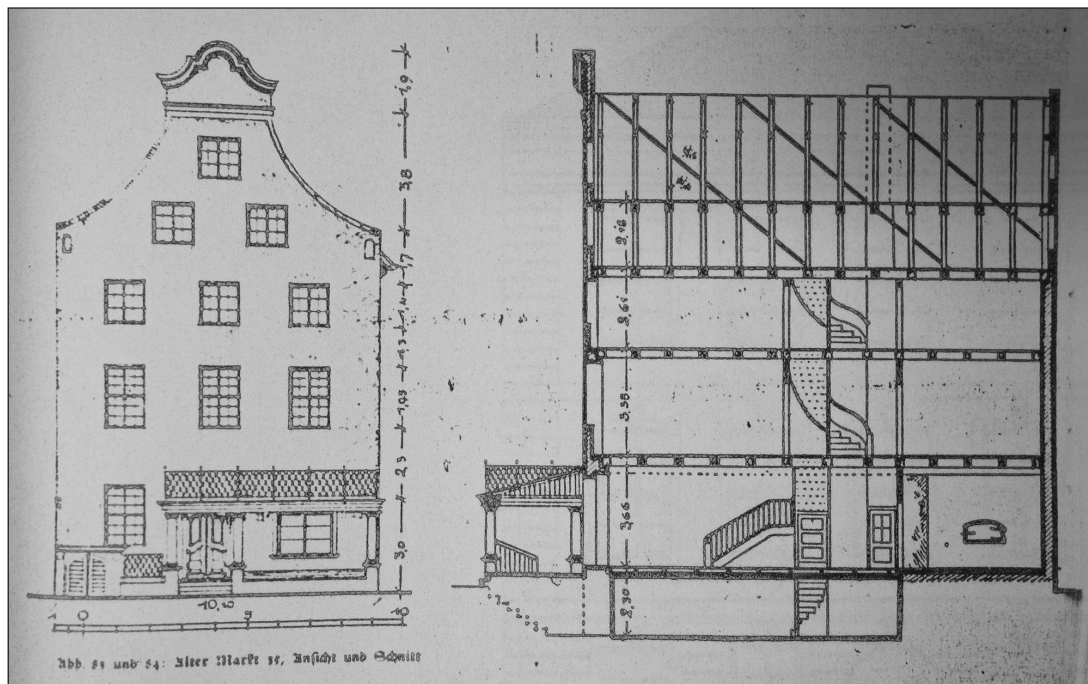
Ducha (part of the first stage, begun c. 1985, by Baum and Semka) (Figure 17). The pre-war buildings, with their late Renaissance façades, for example the corner building, number 38 (number 35 according to pre-war numbering), served as models for volume and typology (Figure 18), but were only very distant references for façade and ornamentation. Rather, the new buildings are clearly recognisable as having been designed in the 1980s. They have conspicuous flamboyant gables and crossing line ornaments, or, as in the third building from the left, unusual window framings and pediments. The gables in particular show the extent of creative variation over a regional theme. In this respect the buildings reflect ideas about regionalism that were also discussed in Poland at the time. They parallel Alvin Toffler's 1980 analysis of the post-industrial society, or Kenneth Frampton's and Alexander Lefavre and Liane Tzonis's idea of Critical Regionalism (Lefavre and Tzonis 1981; Frampton 1983; Toffler 1986; Kosinski 1981; Fauset 1999).

Another example is the set of blocks east of Stary Rynek, part of the third stage for which plans were worked out in 1985 (Figure 19). For these buildings Baum established

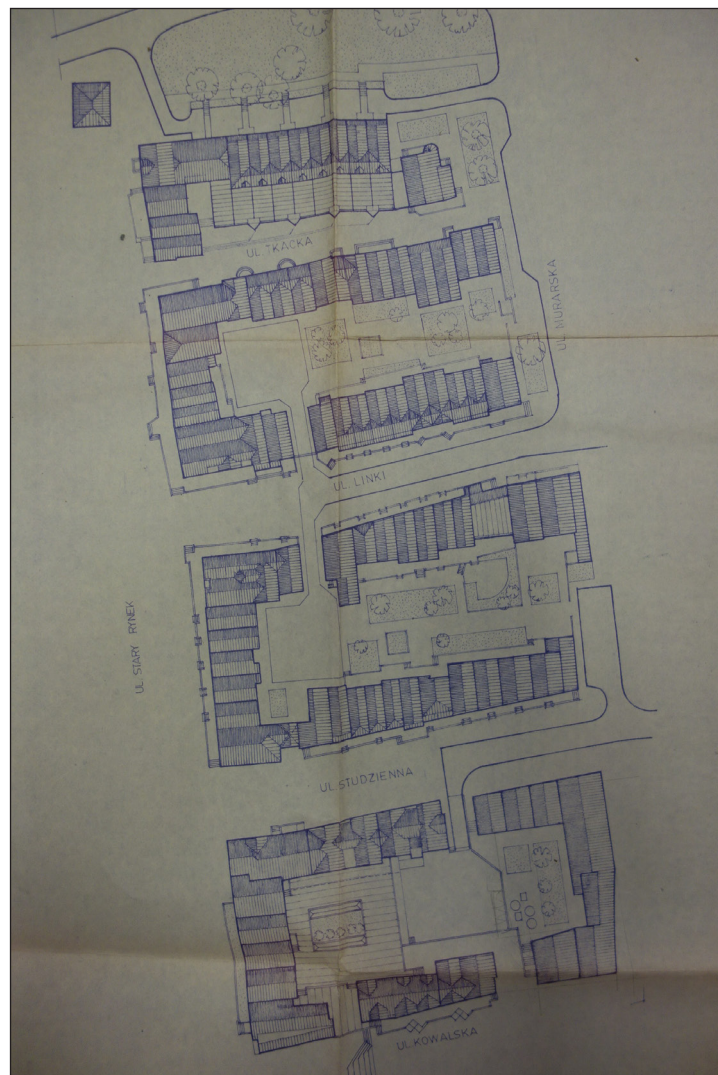


**Figure 17:** The buildings at Stary Rynek 35–40 and Świętego Ducha (c. 1985, by Szczepan Baum and Ryszard Semka), with the cathedral in the background. Photo by Florian Urban, 2018.





**Figure 18:** The house at Stary Rynek 35 (built around 1780) before its destruction. It stood at the corner of Stary Rynek and Świętego Ducha, on the site of the current buildings Stary Rynek 35–40 shown on Figure 17 (Anders 1975).



**Figure 19:** Plan for the rebuilding of the east side of Stary Rynek by Szczepan Baum, September 1985 (Baum 1985).

design principles which, like elsewhere in the Old Town, were aligned with the 1983 conservationist guidelines (Baum 1985). These include the situation on the block perimeter, the stoops, and the partition into individual buildings. Buildings should 'possess contemporary architectural detail, which is to harmonise with the historic character of the whole urban ensemble.' Existing foundations were to be used wherever possible (Baum 1985: 4–5). The construction included multi-family and single-family buildings.

How this looked in practice can be seen on the block between Kowalska and Wieżowa (formerly Studzienna), with the address Stary Rynek 17–22 (**Figure 20**). In the neo-historic panel plan, a department store was still planned for this area. Later plans from the mid-1980s included the establishment of a *skansen archeologiczny* (archaeological open-air museum) to exhibit the remains of the medieval cellars (Elbląg Municipality 1988). Eventually, the block was built up by the state firm Zamech between 1986 and 1990. Zamech built 15 flatted tenements, with two shops and the office of the engineers' association Naczelna Organizacja Techniczna (NOT) on the ground floor. They were perimeter-block buildings on a U-shaped plan, forming an interior square that for a long time was open towards the eastern side of the block (the gap was closed in the 2010s). All buildings were quite different from the pre-war houses (**Figure 21**), had five or six storeys and were contemporary

interpretations of the historic gable typology. The middle ones, Stary Rynek numbers 19, 20, and 21, had brick-faced and white-plastered façades. The first-floor windows featured brick-faced lintels, those on the second floor, round pediments. Most conspicuous were the white, open-work gable imitations. The other buildings on the block had ornamented brick-faced façades. There were various concessions to the demands of modern life. Most important were loggia balconies, which were ingeniously integrated into the rhythm of the historical façade. Small walls set off the building from the street and gave additional privacy to ground floor inhabitants.

Similar adjustments were made one block farther north. The buildings at Stary Rynek 5–10 (**Figure 22**) on the block between Garbary (formerly Linki) and Sukiennicza (formerly Tkacka) were not modelled on the pre-war houses but rather on contemporary interpretations of a historical typology. Comparison to the first drawings (**Figure 23**) shows that they resulted from a creative form-finding process. This is also evidenced by the buildings at Świętego Ducha 26–31, comparing Baum's and Semka's drawings from 1983 (**Figure 24**) with the houses that were built in the late 1980s (**Figure 25**).

From the beginning, the reconstruction was seen as an architectural rather than conservationist or planning endeavour. When the neo-historical panel plan was published in *Architektura* in 1980 it was highly commended. According to the journal's chief editor, Andrzej Bruszewski,



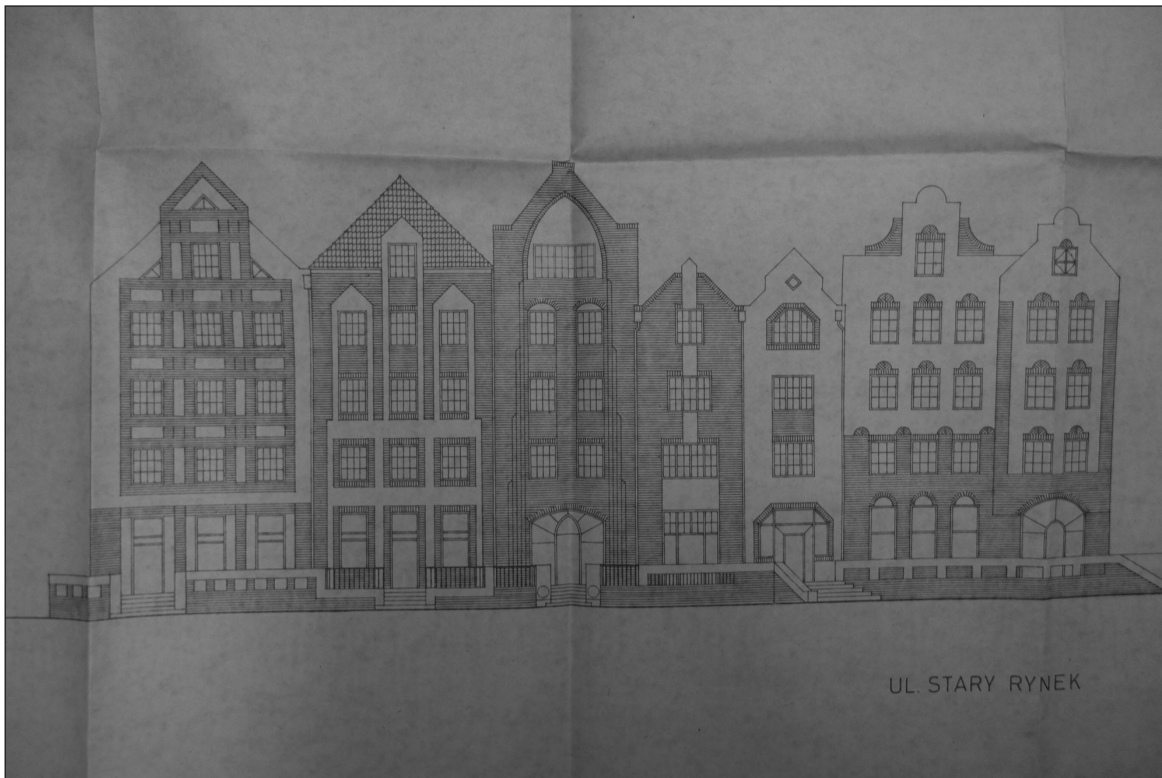
**Figure 20:** Stary Rynek 17 to 22, east side between Wieżowa (formerly Studzienna) and Kowalska (1986–1990, by Szczepan Baum and Ryszard Semka). Photo by Florian Urban, 2018.



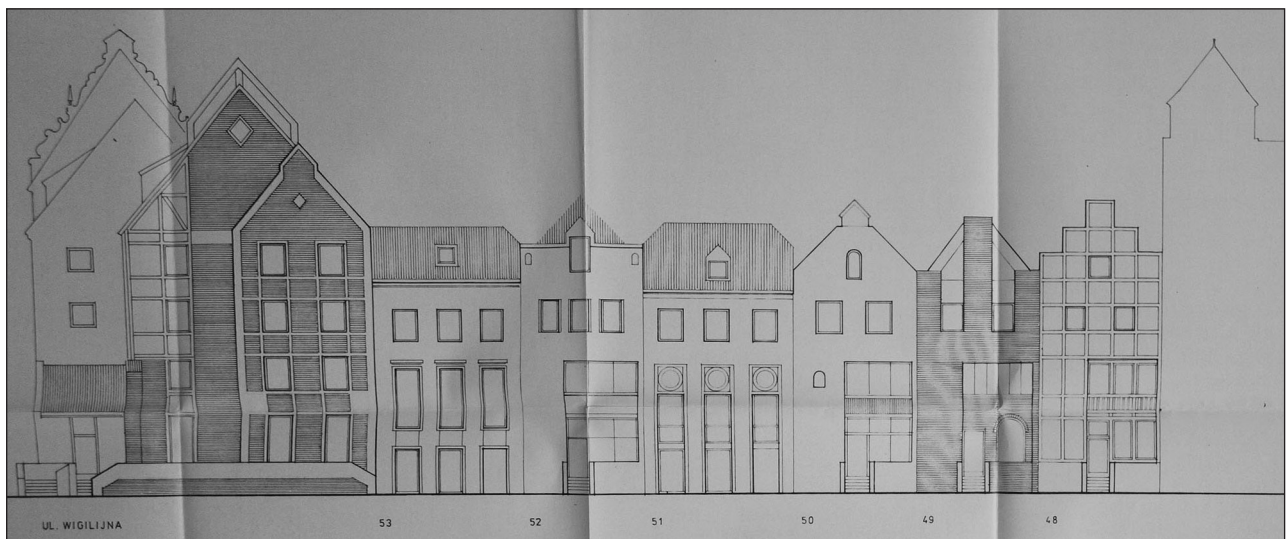
**Figure 21:** The same block in the 1930s, with the pre-war numbers Stary Rynek/Alter Markt 45, 46, and 47. The photograph shows the heterogeneity of pre-war Elbląg, where far from all houses corresponded to the image of a 'historic city.' Of those on the picture only number 46 was more than 60 years old at the time of its destruction. Numbers 45 and 48 are 19th-century buildings, while number 47 is a 1930s copy of the neighbouring Baroque house at number 46 (Barton 1975: photograph no. 646).



**Figure 22:** Stary Rynek 5–10, east side between Garbary (formerly Linki) and Sukiennicza (formerly Tkacka) in 2018, with the Brama Targowa (Market Gate) on the left. The picture evidences modifications from the 1985 drawings shown in Figure 23, such as the gable forms and protruding elements in the four buildings on the right. Photo by Florian Urban, 2018.



**Figure 23:** The same block of Stary Rynek 5–10. Drawing by Szczepan Baum (Baum 1985).



**Figure 24:** Szczepan Baum, Ryszard Semka, elevations of the buildings at Świętego Ducha 26–31 (in the 1980s Wigilijna 48–53, before the war Świętego Ducha/Heilig-Geist-Straße 50–56), December 1983 (Baum and Semka 1983).

the ‘most essential success of the plan lies in the fact that the historic urban grid was reconstituted but at the same time the principles of contemporary shaping of the city fabric were preserved’ (Bruszewski 1980: 44). Bruszewski concluded that an architectural era had come to a close, as the ‘rigorous adherence to the modernist “free building” doctrine’ was no longer necessary (Bruszewski 1980: 44). Likewise, early results of the house-for-house reconstruction were presented at the 1985 Architectural Biennale in Kraków (Gliński 1985: 67).

When the socialist regime ended in 1989, a course was set, and the plan continued in the following decades. By

the turn of the 21st century, about 200 houses, or one third of the Old Town, had been rebuilt, and by 2020 only three blocks, or less than a quarter, were still awaiting redevelopment. The stylistic differences between buildings erected in the 1980s and the 2000s are visible to an attentive eye. At the same time, all of them conspicuously differ from the few historic copies executed.

The rebuilding of Elbląg also influenced construction projects in the rest of Poland and abroad. It was emblematic of an approach that used municipally sponsored showcase architecture as a means of generating domestic and international recognition, boosting the local



**Figure 25:** The same buildings at Świętego Ducha 29–31 in 2018. Photo by Florian Urban, 2018.

economy, and supporting a growing middle class. In this context, Elbląg anticipated a wave of ‘historically conscious’ new designs in historic old towns. These include the late 20th- and early 21st-century designs in historic settings in Gdańsk and Głogów, as well as the interpretive rebuilding of long-disappeared historical ensembles in Frankfurt or Berlin.

### **Conclusion: Postmodernist Reconciliation**

In Elbląg’s Old Town, postmodern architecture was instrumental in successfully addressing the challenges of context and reconciliation of contradictory desires. Some of these were shared in many countries, such as the longing for tradition and local identity in light of progressive modernisation, and disappointment with the results of functionalist urbanism whose principles of rationalisation and modernisation otherwise continued to be upheld. Others were particular to Poland and the local context: a contested past in a town that had been German before

1945, an expanded view on historic conservation, and the constraints and opportunities of a socialist government in decline. In this respect Elbląg Old Town shows a variation of postmodern architecture different from that in Western Europe and North America, and thus illustrates the limitations of canonical definitions of postmodernism linked to irony, playfulness, and an advanced state of capitalism.

While eventually being financed by the market economy, the project was initiated by the state planning and conservation authorities. The state apparatus was still the most powerful actor in architecture and urban design, but it made increasing concessions to the fledgling market economy and gave growing leeway to individual decision-makers. In this respect, Elbląg’s new Old Town was an outcome of the transition period, where comprehensive state regulation had not yet given way to *laissez-faire* policies, where master planning was not yet affected by the real estate industry’s short-term interests, and old town development was not yet influenced by the growing heritage

industry. This changed significantly over the following decades. Currently, Elbląg is an increasingly popular centre of both domestic and international tourism (including by the children and grandchildren of former German residents) and the rebuilt old town is its most important attraction.

Elbląg Old Town was never intended to be a political project. And yet, in the context of the city's traumatic past, a historically inspired postmodernism was a convenient way to have one's cake and eat it, too. On the one hand, the new architecture suggested historical continuity through historical quotations and typological references to the pre-war city. On the other hand, it acknowledged breaks and upheavals in featuring a design that was conspicuously contemporary. It relieved the city from rebuilding 'German' buildings or engaging in politically motivated historiography. There was no claim of accuracy or authenticity and no nostalgic idealisation of the past. References to the German period or to the merits of the merchant classes, who had historically accounted for Elbląg's wealth, were neither neglected nor stressed but rather blended into a forward-looking approach centred on future development and post-functionalist planning principles such as small scale, mixed use, and multiple actors.

To a great extent, the rebuilding of Elbląg relied on new currents in historic conservation. These relied both on the Polish conservationist tradition and the wider international field, which is exemplified by the 1982 Declaration of Dresden. Conservation was no longer exclusively tied to artistically valuable historic monuments, but increasingly to immaterial values such as character and atmosphere. Most importantly, it was connected to the demands of the present rather than the preservation of the past.

In the context of Elbląg, postmodern design grew from this new spirit, and it gained both legitimacy and momentum from these roots. At the same time, it attests to the power of postmodern architecture to reconcile conflicting needs and mediate the relations of inhabitants with their built environment.

## Notes

All translations by the author.

- <sup>1</sup> The Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ziemi Elblaskiej 'Jaszczur' ('Lizard' Society of Friends of the Elbląg Land) was founded in 1981 by Włodzimierz Mielnicki, Henryk Bagiński, Maurycy Fedyk and others. The name refers to a medieval association of knights and noblemen.
- <sup>2</sup> Among the earliest published criticisms of modernist planning was the article by the 26-year-old architect Czesław Bielecki (Bielecki 1974; Bielecki 1978).
- <sup>3</sup> Andrzej Groth nonetheless claims that the approval was given a year earlier, in spring 1978 (Groth 2005: 44).
- <sup>4</sup> Polish representatives included the head of the Wrocław Museum of Architecture, Olgierd Czermer, and the general conservator of Poland, Bohdan Rymaszewski (Kolokwium Icomos 1983).
- <sup>5</sup> Through her friend Tadeusz Sawic at the Central Committee, Lubocka-Hoffmann managed to invite

Kazimierz Barcikowski, vice president of Rada Ministrów, and a delegation of high-ranking Party officials from Warsaw to Elbląg. When they came and praised the project, Połowniak obviously had to back down (Lubocka-Hoffmann 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Building plans are kept, for example, at the Archive of the Wojewódzki Urząd Ochrony Zabytków Elbląg, E/177 3–8.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Baum and Semka's studio, now privately operating under the name ZAPA Architects, designed the Town Hall on Stary Rynek (2009–10).

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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**How to cite this article:** Urban, F. 2020. Postmodern Reconciliation: Reinventing the Old Town of Elbląg. *Architectural Histories*, 8(1): 16, pp. 1–25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/ah.405>

**Published:** 21 October 2020

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