

**Sandro Parrinello**

University of Florence  
sandro.parrinello@unifi.it

Why an urban route? This was the question many people asked me when I proposed the case study of Gdańsk as part of the project. An urban cultural route can be imagined because cities are not only functional spaces, results of geopolitical or social processes, but also palimpsests of memory and stratifications of historical, architectural and social meanings. The spatial component, understood here not as relational space but as a dimension of route extension, plays a significant role in this. Imagine that ideally, any route, which by nature is defined by a departure and an arrival, is potentially infinite by the connections it activates along the way. It is natural to ask how influential the spatial component is. Space is a fundamental route attribute, but it is not the only element that defines it. A route is not simply a physical layout but can also exist as a conceptual and symbolic construction organised around cultural, narrative or experiential relationships.

While firmly rooted in a spatial context, an urban route has the capacity to transcend its geographical dimension and manifest itself through thematic, historical, or symbolic connections. It can take on an immaterial form, linked to narrative rather than physical continuity, as seen in literary itineraries that connect distant or imaginary places through storytelling and shared memory. In other instances, routes are developed in the digital realm, where the journey experience unfolds through virtual platforms that connect fragments of cultural heritage without necessitating physical movement. Even in the urban context, a route may not adhere to a fixed path but emerge from the relationships between elements that share a common value, as in the case of thematic routes that traverse the city without following a linear axis but interweaving spaces according to a conceptual logic.

Therefore, the existence of a route, does not depend exclusively on its materiality but on the ability to construct a path through connections of meaning, which may develop in physical space, in the virtual dimension, or in the narrative structure of a cultural experience.

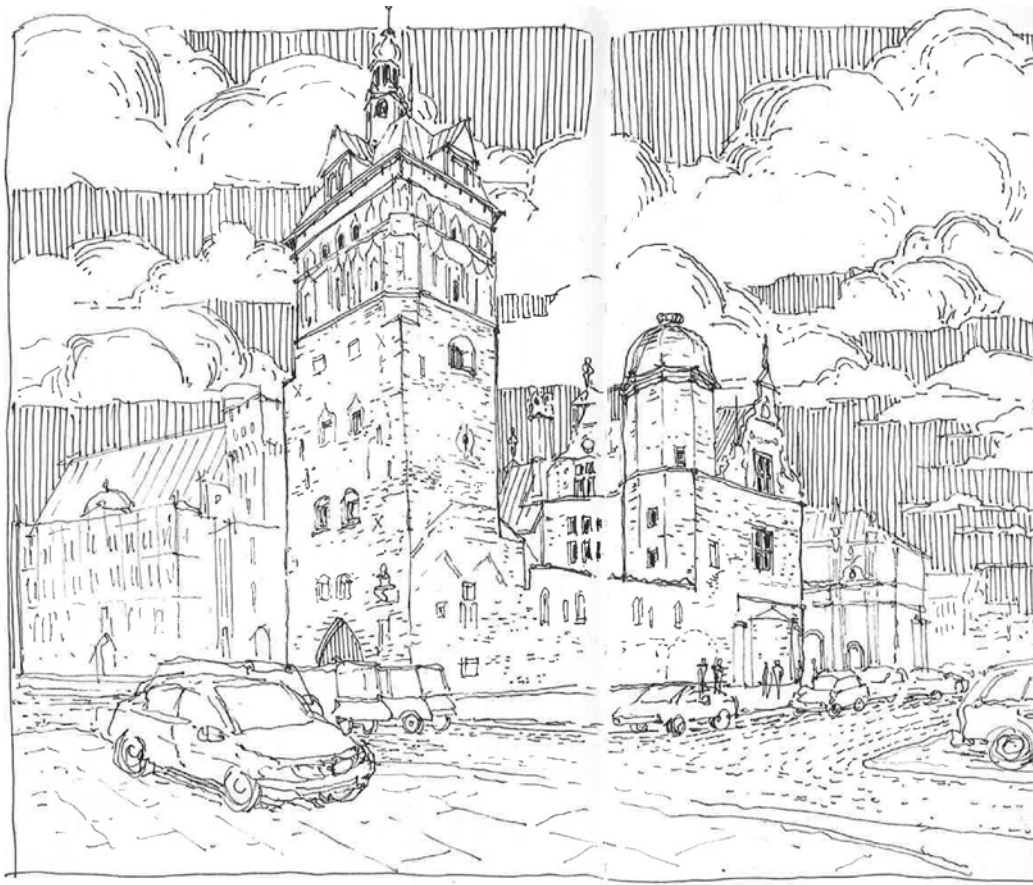
This is necessary to ensure that certain places have a shared meaning, arising from a repetition of subjective and collective experiences since a route exists not only in its materiality but also in the experience and awareness of those who travel it. Therefore, the route must possess traceability, whether physical, digital, or symbolic. This means that there must be a way through which the route can be followed, documented, or retraced, ensuring that the route and its value over time can be recognised.

*Side page, Fig. 01*  
**Drawing of the Prison Tower in Danzica**

The sketch evokes the sequence of monuments formed by the Golden Gate, the Prison Tower, and the High Gate, announcing the passage into the fortified body of the city. In these architectures, military and civic identities merge, giving shape to some of the most emblematic images of the historical landscape of Gdańsk. (Drawing credit: Sandro Parrinello)



**Fig. 02**  
**Neptune's Fountain**  
The drawing portrays Neptune's Fountain as the symbolic heart of Gdansk, where the sea god rises at the centre of the square, anchoring the surrounding façades and evoking the city's deep connection with the sea, trade, and its layered history. (Drawing credit: Francesca Picchio)



The emergence of an urban cultural route is grounded in the historical stratification that characterises cities, resulting from centuries of transformations that have left visible traces in the urban fabric. This overlapping of epochs and architectural languages makes constructing narrative routes linking places and memories possible, providing an interpretative key to the city as an evolving palimpsest.

The possibility of identifying a cultural route is linked to urban identity and memory, as the city space is not a mere container of buildings but a repository of collective and individual histories. Through the construction of itineraries, the relationships between places and their evolution can be highlighted, giving the city a narrative dimension beyond structures' mere materiality.

A further element enabling the construction of a cultural route is the presence of thematic connections between the different points of interest. The selection and organisation of such points based on a specific theme, which may relate to art, architecture, historical memory or social and economic change, makes it possible to structure the route coherently and meaningfully. This thematic organisation highlights the interaction between space and meaning: the city is not a neutral set of streets and buildings, but a complex semiotic system in which each urban element takes on a symbolic and communicative value. The interpretation of these signs is made possible by constructing itineraries that facilitate reading the city as a text.



*Fig. 03*

**Prison tower**

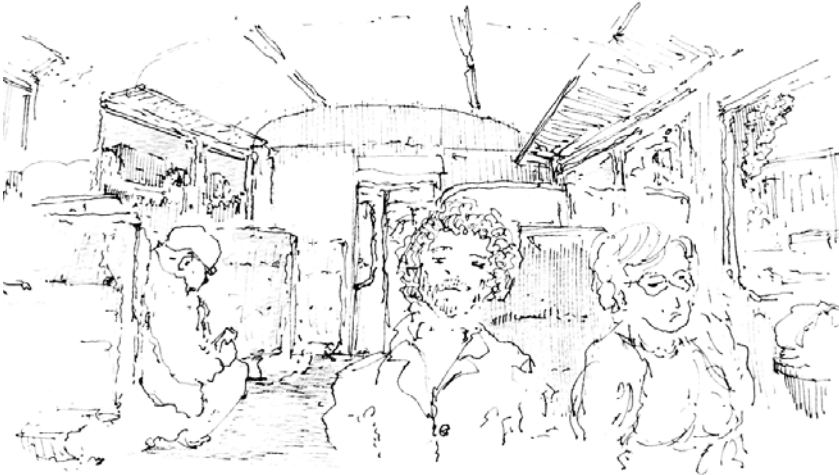
The drawing highlights the Prison Tower as one of Gdańsk's most distinctive landmarks, positioned along the city's main axis together with the High Gate, the Golden Gate and the Green Gate, marking a sequence of thresholds that narrate the urban structure and the layered history of the city. (Drawing credit: Francesca Picchio)



*Figs. 04, 05*

**Sketches made with colleagues during an excursion to Sopot**

The train journey, from the station platforms to the interiors of the carriages, gradually revealed the many layers of the Polish landscape, where movement, infrastructure, and atmosphere intertwined in a continuously shifting visual narrative. (Drawing credit: Sandro Parrinello)



*Fig. 06*

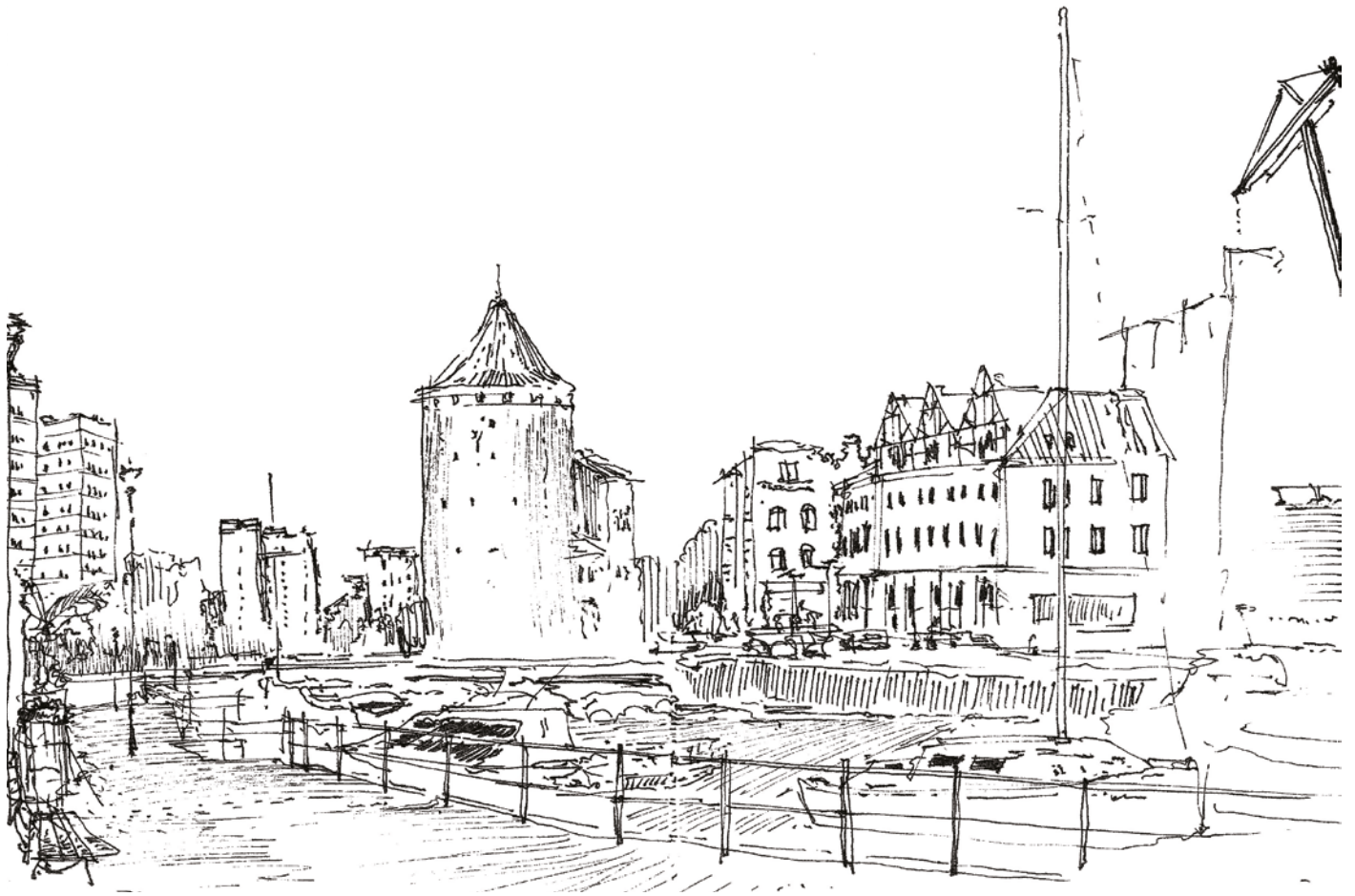
**Malbork castle**

The drawing reveals the interior of Malbork Castle, where vast brick halls, vaulted ceilings and austere geometries reflect the power and discipline of the Teutonic Order, creating a space that is both monumental and deeply atmospheric. (Drawing credit: Francesca Picchio)

**Długa street**

In a sketch drawn from the roof of the Golden Gate, Długa Street guides the viewer's gaze along its axis toward the cathedral's bell tower and clock tower, establishing a harmonious relationship between perspective and historical context. (Drawing credit: Francesca Picchio)



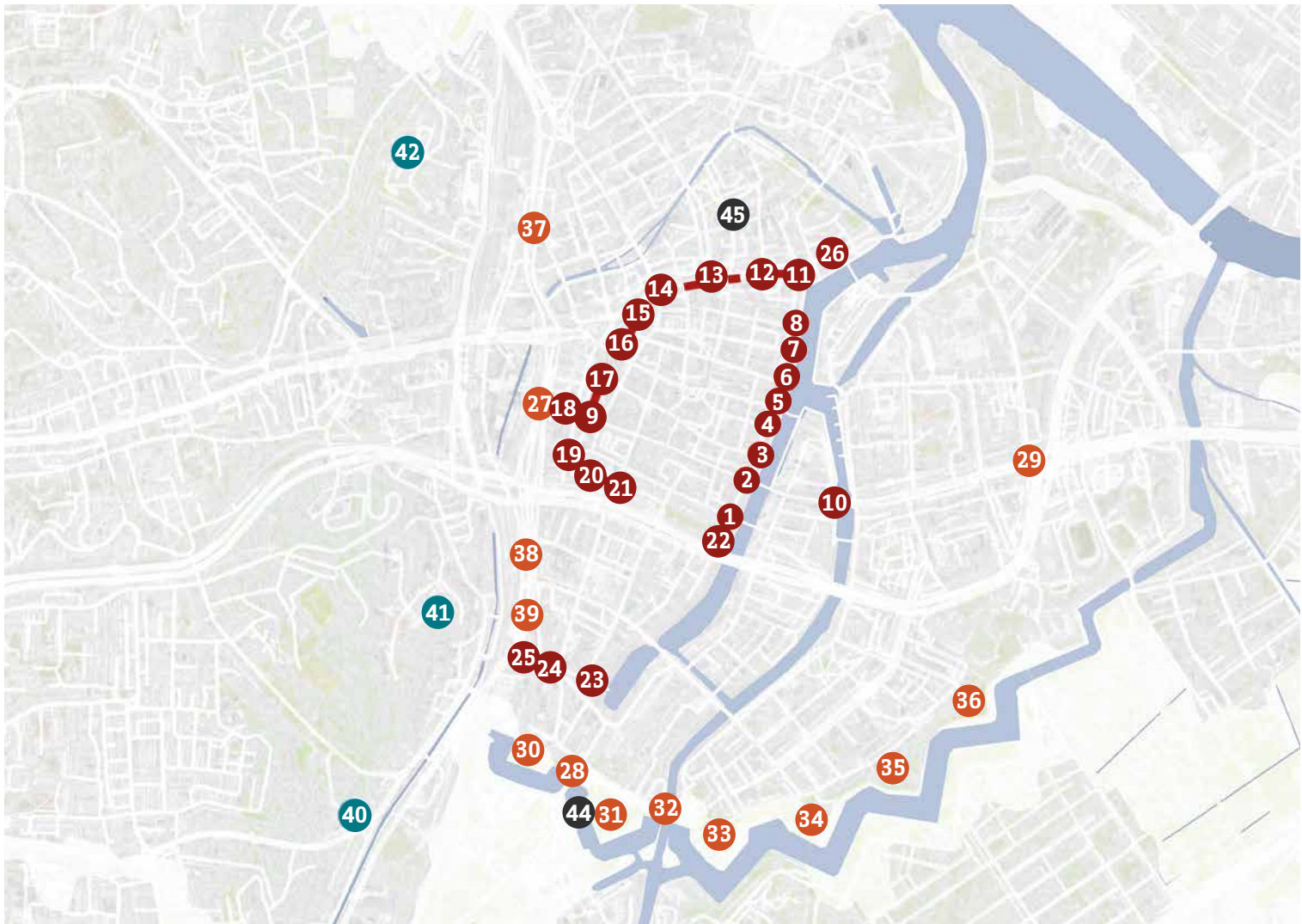
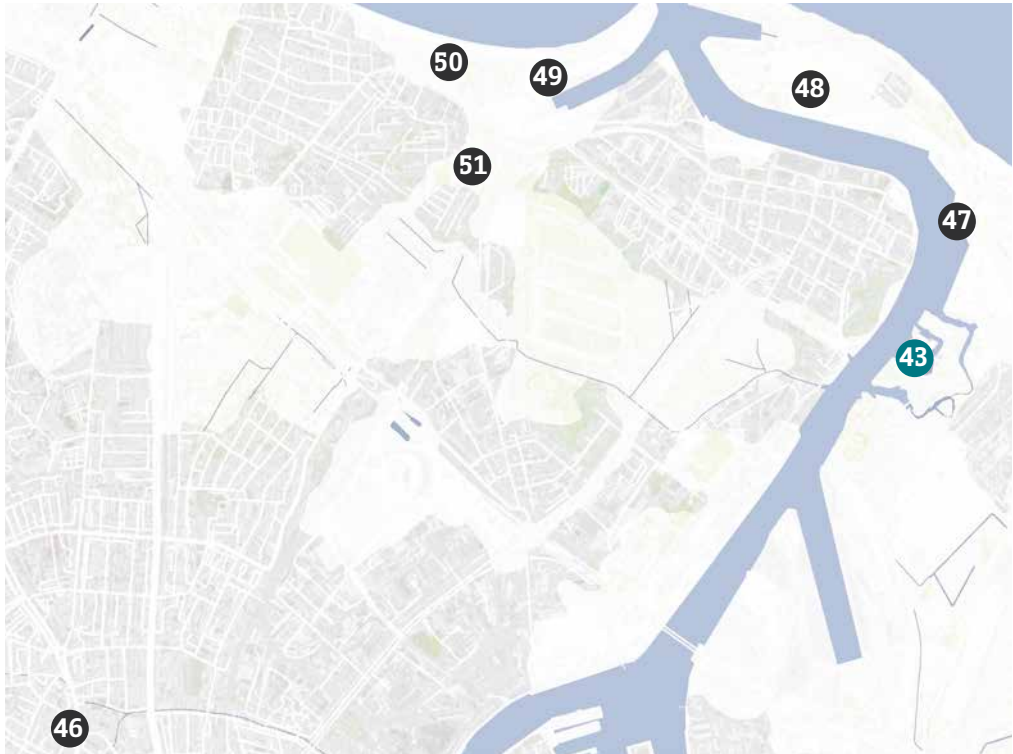
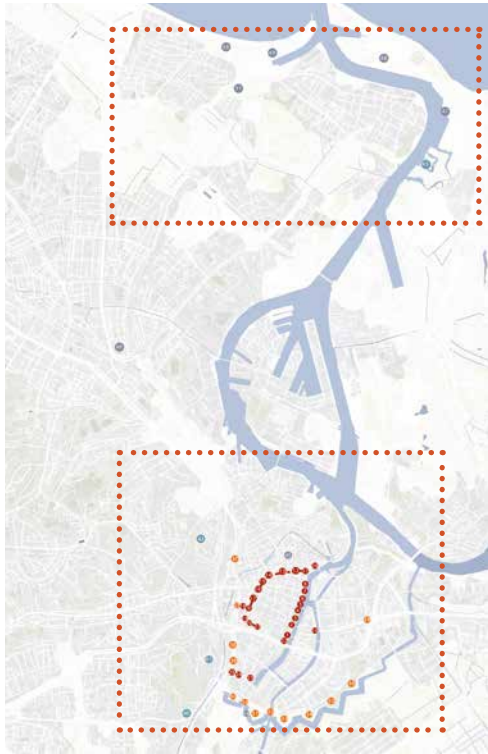


Another fundamental aspect of urban cultural routes is their function in rediscovering and enhancing the urban heritage, particularly those places that have been forgotten or neglected over time despite their historical and cultural relevance. Including these spaces in a structured itinerary allows them to be re-read within a broader narrative, favouring their recovery and accessibility to citizens and visitors. In this sense, the cultural route takes on an interpretative and operational value, contributing to the protection and conscious enjoyment of heritage.

Simultaneously, the experiential and participative dimension of an urban cultural route represents a crucial element. The route is not a mere path between points of interest but an immersive experience that engages the visitor in an active learning process. The walk becomes part of the discovery, encouraging direct interaction with the urban context and stimulating a deeper perception of the crossed spaces. Constructing an urban cultural route allows the city to be read and interpreted through a cultural and narrative key, creating connections between space, time, and memory. Historical stratification, urban identity, thematic coherence, symbolic interpretation of space, heritage valorization, and experientiality are all elements that contribute to defining the identifiability and function in the context of the use and understanding of the urban landscape.



**Fig. 07**  
**Walking along the City's Edge**  
 The drawing depicts the waterfront in central Gdańsk, illustrating a continuous promenade that extends between gates and towers along the river. This route defines the boundary of the historic core and provides access to the stratified harbour landscape. (Drawing credit: Sandro Parrinello)



**EARLIEST FORTIFICATIONS OF THE CITY**  
14th-15th Medieval Period

**EARLY MODERN FORTIFICATIONS**  
16th Century and first half of 17th Century

**EXTERNAL FORTIFICATIONS**  
Second half of 17th and 18th Centuries

**FORTIFICATIONS**  
19th and 20th Centuries

## EARLIEST FORTIFICATIONS OF THE CITY 14th-15th Medieval Period

- 1\_Cow's Gate, *Brama Krowia* (PL), *Kuhtor Gate* (DE), 54.346978, 18.654943
- 2\_Cog Gate (now Green Gate), *Brama Kogi (teraz Brama Zielona)* (PL), *Koggentor (jetzt Grünes Tor) Gate* (DE), 54.347887, 18.656278
- 3\_Chlebnicka Gate, *Brama Chlebnicka* (PL), *Brothänkentor Gate* (DE), 54.348849, 18.656211
- 4\_St. Mary's Gate, *Brama Mariacka* (PL), *Frauentor Gate* (DE), 54.349445, 18.656758
- 5\_Holy Spirit Gate, *Brama Świętego Ducha* (PL), *Heilige Geist Tor Gate* (DE), 54.349929, 18.657081
- 6\_Crane Gate, *Brama Żuraw / Żuraw* (PL), *Krantor Gate* (DE), 54.350517, 18.657427
- 7\_St. John's Gate, *Brama Świętojańska* (PL), *Johannistor Gate* (DE), 54.351536, 18.657838
- 8\_Straganiarska Gate, *Brama Straganiarska* (PL), *Häkertor Gate* (DE), 54.347363, 18.659858
- 9\_Golden Gate, *Złota Brama* (PL), *Goldenes Tor (Langgasser Tor) Gate* (DE), 54.353146, 18.653596
- 10\_Stągiewna Gate / Tower, *Brama, Stągiewna (Stągwie Mleczne)* (PL), *Milchkannentor Tower* (DE), 54.347363, 18.659858
- 11\_Swan Tower, *Baszta Łabędź* (PL), *Schwanturm Tower* (DE), 54.353426, 18.658007
- 12\_Eastern part of northern Walls, *Wschodnia część północnego muru obronnego* (PL), *Östliche Teil der nördlichen Verteidigungsmauer Walls* (DE), 54.353422, 18.656781
- 13\_Western part of northern Walls, *Zachodnia część północnego muru obronnego* (PL), *Westlicher Teil der nördlichen Verteidigungsmauer Walls* (DE), 54.353146, 18.653596
- 14\_Jacek Tower, *Baszta Jacek* (PL), *Kiek in de Kók Turm* Tower (DE), 54.352894, 18.651248
- 15\_Tower on the Behind/under Walls *Baszta na Podmurzu* (PL), *Turm an den Hintermauern* (DE).
- 16\_Latarniana Tower, *Baszta Latarniana* (PL), *Wehrturm in der Laternengasse* Tower (DE), 54.351637, 18.649661
- 17\_Straw Tower, *Baszta Słomiana* (PL), *Strohturm Tower* (DE), 54.352460, 18.650819
- 18\_Torture House and Prison Tower, *Zespół przedbramia Ulicy Długiej (Katownia i Wieża Więzienna)* (PL), *Langerstraßentorkomplex (Peinkammer und Stockturm) Tower* (DE), 54.349926, 18.647039
- 19\_Corner Tower, *Baszta Narożna* (PL), *Eckturm am Stadthof Tower* (DE), 54.348715, 18.647332
- 20\_Western part of the southern Wall, *Zachodnia część południowego muru obronnego* (PL), *Westlicher Teil der südlichen Verteidigungsmauer Walls* (DE), 54.348281, 18.648391
- 21\_Schultz Tower, *Baszta Schultzza* (PL), *Schultz Turm Tower* (DE), 54.352465, 18.650829
- 22\_Tower of Anchors, *Baszta Kotwiczników* (PL), *Ankerschmiedeturm Tower* (DE), 54.346446, 18.654427
- 23\_Pod Zręb Tower, *Baszta pod Zrębem / Baszta* (PL), *Atutowa Trumpfturm Tower* (DE), 54.342475, 18.648276
- 24\_White Tower, *Baszta Biała* (PL), *Weißer Turm Tower* (DE), 54.342933, 18.646512
- 25\_New Tower, *Baszta Nowa* (PL), *Neuer Turm Tower* (DE), 54.342996, 18.645449
- 26\_Remains of the walls of the Teutonic castle, *Relikty murów zamku krzyżackiego* (PL), *Relikte der Mauern der Deutschordensburg Walls* (DE), 54.353809, 18.659735

## EARLY MODERN FORTIFICATIONS 16th Century and first half of 17th Century

- 27\_High Gate, *Brama Wyzymna* (PL), *Hohes Tor Gate* (DE), 54.339827, 18.663039
- 28\_Lowland Gate *Brama Nizinna* (PL), *Leeges Tor Gate* (DE), 54.340373, 18.647538
- 29\_Żuławy Gate (Long Gardens Gate), *Brama Żuławska (Brama Długich Ogródów) Langgarter Tor Gate* (DE), 54.348627, 18.668999
- 30\_St Gertrude Bastion, *Bastion św. Gertrudy* (PL), *Gertrude Bastion* (DE), 54.340770, 18.645558
- 31\_Aurochs Bastion Bastion *Żubr* (PL), *Aurochs Bastion Maidloch Bastion* (DE), 54.339172, 18.649459
- 32\_Stone Sluice (Main Sluice), *Śluza Kamienna (Główna Śluza)* (PL), *Steinschleuze (Hauptschleuze)* (DE), 54.339172, 18.649459
- 33\_Wolf Bastion, *Bastion Wilk* (PL), *Wolf Bastion* (DE), 54.338256, 18.654124
- 34\_Wyskok Bastion, *Bastion Wyskok* (PL), *Aussprung Bastion Bastion* (DE), 54.338821, 18.658688
- 35\_Bear Bastion, *Bastion Miś* (PL), *Bären Bastion* (DE), 54.339827, 18.663039
- 36\_Królik Bastion, *Bastion Królik* (PL), *Kaninchen Bastion* (DE), 54.342195, 18.666019
- 37\_St. Elizabeth's Bastion, *Bastion Św. Elżbiety* (PL), *Elisabeth Bastion* (DE), 54.356815, 18.646750
- 38\_Cat Bastion, *Bastion Kot* (PL), *Katze Bastion* (DE), 54.345927, 18.645517
- 39\_Wiebe Bastion, *Bastion Wibego* (PL), *Wieben Bastion* (DE), 54.342961, 18.645466

## EXTERNAL FORTIFICATIONS

### Second half of 17th and 18th Centuries

- 40\_Jesuit Rampart, *Szaniec Jezuicki* (PL), *Jesuiten Schanze* (DE), 54.343821, 18.645620
- 41\_Fortification of Bishops Hill *Fortyfikacje Biskupiej Górki* (PL), *Bishops Berg* (DE), 54.341721, 18.638885
- 42\_Fortifications of Gradowa Hill (Grodzisko) *Zespół fortyfikacji Grodziska* (PL), *Hagels Berg Fortification* (DE), 54.355306, 18.637739
- 43\_Wisłoujście Fortress Complex, *Zespół fortyfikacji Wisłoujścia* (PL), *Weichselmünde Fortification* (DE), 54.395896, 18.679863

## FORTIFICATIONS

### 19th and 20th Centuries

- 44\_Fortifications of Railway Gate, *Brama Kolejowa* (PL), *Bahntor* (DE), 54.339667, 18.648472
- 45\_Osiek Shelter, *Schron na Osieku* (PL), *Luftschutzbunker in Osiek Shelter* (DE), 54.354574, 18.654656
- 46\_Hospital Shelter, *Schron szpitala na ulicy Klinicznej* (PL), *Luftschutzbunker des Krankenhauses in der Kliniczna Strasse* (DE), 54.376488, 18.625982
- 47\_Seagulls Rampart, *Mewi Szaniec* (PL), *Möwen Schanze* (DE), 54.400802, 18.682687
- 48\_Westerplatte Peninsula Fortification *Zespół fortyfikacji Westerplatte* (PL), *Befestigung der Westerplatte* (DE), 54.406758, 18.666949
- 49\_Port Battery *Bateria Portowa* (PL), *Port Batterie* (DE), 54.407527, 18.651132
- 50\_Beach Battery *Bateria Plażowa* (PL), *Strand Batterie* (DE), 54.407653, 18.644741
- 51\_Village Battery *Bateria Wiejska* (PL), *Dorfbatterie* (DE), 54.402538, 18.645103