

2nd PLENARY SESSION ADDRESSES

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Mayor of Umeå, 1st Vice-President of UBC

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“How can culture support city development?”

Marie-Louise Rönmark

Mayor of Umeå, 1st Vice-President of UBC

Dear friends, let me start with a confession – let me reveal my best secret behind city development.

The secret is..... invest in culture!

Why do I believe so strongly in culture as the prime driving force for city development and for economic growth?

The reason is simple. I have walked the talk of culture investments for more than 20 years – and I have seen the results!

Year by year I have seen how culture investments have increased the city force of attraction. How this attraction during 2 decades has brought more than 25.000 new citizens and a prosperous economic growth to my city. This would be nothing to boast about if I was talking about a region of rapid urbanization. But I´m not. The economic growth in Umeå is in fact a remarkable achievement in a region that is characterized by constantly declining population.

Why do 38.000 students chose a university in the far north in a declining region?

Why do private companies make heavy, long term investments in Umeå, when they can choose Stockholm and other hot spots?

Why do private families invest their fortune to build their new homes in Umeå?

Honestly, I don´t know the answer from each and every student and investor, but I know that we have invested in culture for decades. And I do have a theory why it works. Let me explain this theory.

We have set 5 goals in Umeå to encourage city development in the frame of the Capital of Culture.

The first goal is: EMPOWERMENT OF THE CITIZENS

It´s about each and everyone in the city. The smallest children. The elderly and everyone in between. We believe our citizens will be empowered and grow by participation – we call it cocreation – they will grow by new experiences and by meeting new people in new context. There is no development without people – and there is more development when people get empowered.

The second goal is: EMPOWERMENT OF THE CULTURE

We believe that Culture is the driving force for development and economic growth. Capital of Culture will certainly empower the workers of culture, the institutions, the NGO´s – yes, everyone involved in culture. By having cocreation as our strategy we count on many, many more to become involved in culture. Capital of culture offers new European and international networks, new cross boarder cooperation and a lot of new meetings. Capital of culture also offers new paying audience and other complementary sources of financing culture, making culture an even stronger force for city development.

The third goal is: EMPOWERMENT OF THE CITY

The deadline of 2014 speeds up several city development projects, as well as private investments in new hotels, restaurants , shopping centres (among them an IKEA store). The honor of being European Capital of Culture make us strive even harder to create beauty and sustainability as oxygen in all of the city planning. The Art Campus with a critical mass of the high ranked Institute of Design, the new School of Architecture, the School of Fine Arts, a new Museum for Contemporary Art, a centre for Creative Business and a spectacular facilities for virtual reality will become an engine for new thinking in city planning.

The fourth goal is: EMPOWERMENT OF THE NORTHERN REGION

We will take the opportunity to gather forces from the four northern counties of Sweden to create win-win-cooperation in the frame of Capital of Culture. The year 2014 and the years before and after offers a playground to strengthen regional development by joining forces. We believe culture and creative business will be encouraged as well as tourism for the whole region.

The fifth and last goal is: EMPOWERMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Whether we like it or not the new world is global. We can choose to stay blind to this fact or we can choose to navigate to use the new opportunities and become winners in international trade and cooperation. Capital of Culture will increase our global networks, it will create a lot of forums for exercising skills for international cooperation and it will open our minds to new possibilities.

All together empowerment of the citizens, empowerment of the culture, empowerment of the city, empowerment of the northern region and finally empowerment of international relations will support city development and economic growth for the region!

What is culture doing with us as human beings? Culture is playing the strings of all of our senses. Culture provokes us – amuse us – surprise us – nourish our senses, give energy and creates new thoughts in our minds. Culture also creates meeting places and dialogue between people. Culture awakes our curiosity. And once we become curios – we open up for creative thoughts. Culture fills the air with creative oxygen. And from a creative soil grows innovations. And innovations creates economic growth. This is my theory: the culture connection consists of: curiosity – creativity – innovations – and economic growth.

The City of Umeå invests in European Capital of Culture for 2014. We will share this year with our very close colleagues in Riga in this friendly country of Latvia. In Umeå we expect the return on investment to 4 times in the short term and at least double, which means 8 times payback in medium long term. The City of Lille in France, who was the Capital of Culture 2004 has reported the return on public culture investment to become between 8 and 10 times some years later. In the real long term perspective for the year 2050 Umeå expects the payback to become even higher. Yes our master planning in Umeå has the horizon of 2050!

Some of you might think that I'm talking about dreams, but not facts? Do you think so? Well, let me refer to some of the facts that was reported during the European Commission conference held in 2010 to celebrate "25 years of European Capitals of Culture".

There is also an official European Commission study from 2010 on the contribution of culture to local and regional economic development. This study put culture in the context of European cohesion policy and of the work of the European structural funds. The study showcases a large number of case studies which help to underline the value of investing in the cultural and creative sectors. The study illustrates the links between culture investments and specific regional development objectives and the overall EU strategy for growth and jobs.

The most reliable statistics of Capital of Cultures concern the impact on tourism. On average the number of visitors has increased with 12 % in the Capitals of Culture. Similarly, the prospect of Capital of Culture often leads to an increase and improvement in the hotel stock.

One of the conclusions is that investment in culture improves the "brand" of the city and increases the international visibility. For example the Capital of Culture 2009 - Linz in Austria - had a result of 25.000 media reports.

To become a winner in a globalized world it is important to develop the skill to navigate and to cocreate with international partners – just like we exercise in the UBC and in our commissions. Stavanger in Norway, Capital of Culture in 2008, reported coproductions, collaborations and exchange with 54 different countries. Sibiu in Romania - Capital of Culture in 2007 - reported exchange with 73 official international delegations.

But not only are international relations important for city development. Also collaboration with neighbours in the region in the same country is of great importance. Culture cooperation can combine core competence of the closest counties to make 1+1 become 3 or more.

For example I made a study trip to “Essen for the Ruhr” 3 weeks ago. Essen was the Capital of Culture in 2010. They told me how they brought 53 mayors of the region in to a framework for culture investments. Culture became a door opener for discussions on joint development strategies for the region. Culture cooperation often leads to the creation of new organisations, structures and networks.

Let me just add some final conclusions from the 25 years of Capital of Culture. Cities should inspire and learn from each other in working with culture investments, but they should not copy! Each city must stay authentic and build on their own strengths, draw on their past, recognising all their communities, while looking to the future. There is not one unique legacy, nor one single way to be successful. Each city must decide on what constitutes success for them.

Maybe some of you start to think that I have a point in connecting culture with city development and economic growth, but that the problem is lack of money to invest? Let me finally reveal an encouraging conclusion from many previous Capitals of Culture. True artistic creativity does not necessarily entail massive amounts of funding. On the contrary, generous funding can sometimes even undermine innovativeness. My last conclusion is that the most successful investors in culture are cities which embed culture as part of an overall long term strategy for development.

Dear friends, let me quote Richard Florida on city development:

The key to economic growth lies not just in the ability to attract the creative class, but to translate that underlying advantage into creative economic outcomes in the form of new ideas, new high-tech businesses and regional growth. Richard Florida

Florida is, as many of you know, a professor in economic development at the university of Toronto and he created the concept that there is a creative class.

In Umeå we have a huge creative class and with cultural capital 2014 we are encouraging and refining this creativity to become social and economic growth. In this quote there is a chain of thought that I, for more than 20 years, have seen to become a reality in my city - Umeå. A creative class with curiosity and creativity create innovations that lead to economic growth for the city and the region.

Thank you!

“How can we be relevant for smaller cities?”

Urve Tiidus

Former Mayor of Kuressaare, UBC Vice-President, Member of the Parliament of Estonia

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen!

Honourable President, dear mayors and guests!

Dear host, the city of Liepāja! I am glad to be in this town. One reason for this good emotion is the family history. The great grandfather of my children graduated from the maritime school here and became a courageous seaman and captain later. The year then was 1910.

This year the Union of the Baltic Cities celebrates its 20th birthday and asking itself and its members how an association of cities can contribute to the competitiveness of small-size cities in the situation where the world developments provide increasingly more advantages to the cities of bigger size and higher capacity. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this question with some responses commencing from a personal perspective.

There is a golden rule of communication – surprise them. As life is very much about breaking the rules, so some old and well known things will be served in a bit different sauce.

Cities have throughout centuries carried the role of advancing communication between people, first as market places, then as centres for cultural development and large scale manufacturing development. Cities have not lost this role, although technology development allows almost no physical proximity to communicate with each other.

As a paradox, we witness the situation where, in spite of the high level of technology enabled communication, people keep moving to densely populated cities and there seems to be no alternative to such a development. Or is there? There are numbers of small-size cities in the world, where people do not rush to for fortune seeking. How to support the aspirations of these cities?

The Union of the Baltic Cities brings together 105 members and of those a little less than a half are cities with the population between 1300 and 50000. Among them is also my home town Kuressaare on one of the biggest Baltic island Saaremaa or Ösel as mainly known to Scandinavians.

We, gathered in this room today, know that regardless of size, there always is scarcity in time or financial resources for each city to invent its own bicycle. To do so would really not be very wise. That's where organisations like UBC lend a helping hand to spread state-of-the-art know-how, be it information, experience or practices in any sphere of city life. This is what UBC has been doing, is doing and will be doing.

There always is a question of timing. Should some good solutions be made accessible to the member cities sooner, in order to secure the advancement of the competitiveness of the whole region? Yes, I think so.

No man is an island, goes the saying. We can without any doubt claim that also no city is an island, standing all alone. In the turbulent times like these, more than ever, the Union of the Baltic Cities is needed to create the perception of cohesion.

Small cities are in a particular need for the feeling of belonging together with bigger and stronger cities. And not for pragmatic reasons only, for gaining information and practices.

Comparing oneself to others creates development advantages to those with respective ambitions. This is like sports, examples inspire and motivate. And importantly, free of charge!

Some facts can just give you a good feeling, for example the statistics showing that small cities make a safer living environment and budgetary allocations per capita for advancing safety are less than in big cities.

Of course, there are examples of an opposite nature as well.

How to meet the expectations of citizens on the quality of services when these expectations are comparable to those in the cities with higher living standards and the economic capacity as well as the living standard in your own city are lower.

Forcing for development and seeking for better solutions for the people of one's city is certainly one of the essential impacts of UBC on small cities.

When asking people around Europe if they know what stands behind the letters UBC, many can not give the answer. No wonder, actually.

There are a lot organisations and associations Europe-wide.

Well, the acronym UBC is definitely not as hot as the acronym EFSF (European Financial Stability Facility) right now. This fact actually speaks in favour of UBC as a modern media makes negative connotations better known than the positive ones.

The Union of the Baltic Cities is definitely a positive organisation that has taken the leadership in advancing cooperation between cities that located on the shores of same sea but had, using the sports language, a different starting line 20 years ago. Although, the finishing line is constantly moving further and further for our cities, I can assure you that my own city Kuressaare would not be what it is today, without good cooperation partners around the Baltic Sea. Among such I can name Turku, Visby as our co-members in UBC.

There is an additional value, created by this organisation.

Next to formal working meetings, there are informal discussions, exchange of information and moments filled with culture that we should not underestimate in the creation of the highly valued feeling of belonging together.

I can well remember the spontaneous song competition of city delegations in Kuressaare, fantastic jazz-moments with the President Per Bødker Andersen at the piano, the fascinating opera aria in the Trelleborg castle where the chef who had prepared dinner, stepped from the kitchen to the stage and was singing like Pavarotti. That kind of emotions tie people together.

Although the cities are competitors in the Baltic Sea Region both at domestic and international level, the part we share, is bigger.

And the shared work has been done in commissions, publishing a joint calendar of culture events, writing articles and very important! lobbying in Brussels.

This all has been done in a solid manner, without fussing around or the spotlights flashing. Still, flashing spotlights wouldn't harm either as this organisation is worth it. Too much modesty is not a virtue these days.

Much water has flown into the sea since the birth of UBC. Still, we have to ask what the future years will look like for both the organisation and the cities joined by the organisation.

I would like to point out some trends influencing also the cities at the Baltic Sea Region.

Firstly, cities here are relatively small. The total population of the 105 member cities is 15.7 million. In comparison, Tokyo, the biggest city in the world and its suburbs are a home for 39 million inhabitants. The role of cities is increasing.

Two centuries ago, only 3% of the world population lived in cities. At the beginning of the 21st century, every second person in the world lives in cities. In 20 years, when your children grow up, 60% of the world population will be urban population.

It has even been suggested that it will be less costly to build and maintain urban infrastructure if all the people of the world lived in cities. This idea belongs in the sphere of fiction and let it remain just a dream. The life-experienced people know that not all forecasts have the habit of becoming a reality. But we can't deny the fact that the increasing role of key players belongs with cities where there are more young people, more workforce, higher level of education, faster economic turnover.

The future of many cities in our region shows low birth rate, high ageing rate, growing social expenditures, endless technology development possibilities for managing life in cities but also a headache where to find resources to finance it all.

Naturally, it is important to stand for the interests of the Baltic Sea Region in Brussels, particularly today, when a new financial period is being prepared. What UBC can certainly contribute more to, is the comprehensive marketing of our cities.

Therefore, the Communications Strategy under preparation, is a document of high importance. If you are not a part of a social network, you do not exist. This is a viewpoint of the young generation and also UBC has to pay a serious attention to it.

I find the interactive map of UBC cities, opening of which allows choosing travel destinations, tourism events and holiday places, comparable data and statistics on life in cities, very exciting.

Yes, managing it takes effort and money but if it helps bringing visitors and investors to our cities, the effort has not been wasted. With the help of such web-based marketing platform on UBC homepage, it is possible to build up a virtual megapolis of the Baltic Sea cities and to give a deeper insight in the character and attractiveness of our cities.

In case, this platform would develop into an arena of exchanging ideas on the future of cities, the coming 20 years will turn into an even bigger success for UBC.

Allow me, on my behalf to wish every success to the organisation as a whole and its every single member! I have enjoyed cooperating with you and the possibility to learn from you and your cities. UBC has a birthday this autumn. Those, at the age of 20, have a lot of advantages, as we know. It gives the right to be ambitious and successful and to create the future according to one's wishes. As Liepāja is

a well known maritime college city for more than a century, I have a special birthday toast (loan from Irish) for you all :

There are good ships,
and there are wood ships,
The ships that sail the sea.
But the best ships, are friendships,
And may they always be.
Congratulations, UBC!

“How to involve young people more in the UBC work?”

Pavels Jurs

Director of Liepāja Youth Centre

Dear UBC members, Mr. President and muster!

Firstly, I wish to thank you for your visiting and I hope you will have a good time in my city Liepāja. We are living in the changeable time, the borders between UBC are open and we have our freedom, freedom to travel, freedom to exchange our experience and develop our knowledge.

We are different, but at the same time we are common. Today we have common challenge to make Baltic Sea Region (BSR) more attractive, more beneficial for investment, better for ourselves.

BSR is like a platform where we can change our experience and knowledge; this is a space for possibilities to everyone. This region had common history and common future. Today with our work we create the future and BSR is a good tool to do this.

The youngsters can be as resource for society or can be just a problem; our mission is promoting youth individual growth. The Commission on Youth Issues works to realize these values. We are promoting knowledge and experience exchange.

In the same time the Commission on Youth Issues has a challenge to involve youngsters and encourage them. From this point we (Commission on Youth Issues) need a support from UBC member municipalities.

Municipalities should support the involving process to the work in Commission on Youth Issues. Each local municipality is like an expert and knows better than us what youngsters need and Commission on Youth Issues can be a great toll to realize youth ideas.

We need a clear vision of Youth Issues at the local level and ensure representation in the Commission work.

I am sure that together we can involve youth in the UBC Commission on Youth Issues beginning from each UBC member municipality as well as giving the political support to youth organizations which want to take part in the Commission work.

Thank you for your attention, I wish you all the best and have a good and productive time.

“On the implementation of the UBC Strategy”

Mikko Lohikoski

Director for External Affairs of Turku, UBC Strategy Coordinator

Chairman, dear colleagues and friends!

The theme of our General Conference is “Building on the past – heading for the future”. When planning for the future, it is quite natural to take stock - to remind ourselves – about the road we have travelled since 20 September 1991, when the Union of Baltic Cities was founded in Gdańsk.

We can say that a truly historical change has happened in these 20 years. This region, which for centuries was a natural area of trade and exchange, was bitterly divided by an Iron Curtain - preventing links between human beings, cities, countries. In a historically short period, we have been able to overcome this division, restore and promote cooperation and to achieve deeper integration. True, much remains to be done – very much – but it would be a big mistake to forget or belittle what positive change has taken place.

I say this because there seems sometime to be a tendency to take things for granted, as if progress would come by itself. Money and wealth are not generated in the cash dispenser, milk is not produced in the local shop and human rights, social progress are not “just happening”. There have been people with foresight, with vision, courage and energy to grasp the moment and to fight for their ideals. The change in our region, as well as the birth of UBC are result of this work. Therefore, we have to thank today such people as Anders Engström, Michael Bouteiller, Uffe Ellemenn-Jensen and many many others, who deserve our appreciation and respect.

But just as these leaders were able to see forward to grasp the moment after the fall of the Wall, we – in order to be true to their heritage and leadership - must not look back but forward. As our President Per Bødker Andersen writes in his foreword to this Conference programme, reference to the past should be a stepping stone to the future.

The question we have to ask ourselves is simple: Are the aims and principles of our organisation still valid, after 20 years? And what about the structures, methods and practices – the internal culture of UBC? Do we need change and if so, what kind of change and at what speed? It is even justified to ask ourselves if we need a regional organisation like UBC today, when electronic communication over borders is part of our everyday life.

I assume that you have answered positively to the last question by being members and participating here. But the next question is what our role should be and what kind of structure we need to best achieve our goals? We have to bear in mind that there is nothing holy in structures, organisational forms: they are just tools to serve the achievement of goals and therefore can always be modified, when need be.

The Executive Board in its meeting yesterday confirmed the formation of a Task force which shall – during the coming year – study all these issues and recommend changes where necessary. This Task force, originally proposed by the Swedish member cities, is a forum to raise and debate all issues connected with our future. Each country can nominate one member and one alternative member. Its success depends, however, on the input of all member cities. We encourage each one of you to share your ideas, proposals and suggestions with the Task force and to participate in the process. Our goal

should be to shape UBC, its processes, structures, culture so that we serve in the best possible way our cities – and our citizens.

As the appointed chairman of this task force, I will do my best to make this a transparent renewal process, aiming at making our organisation more unified, stronger, goal-oriented and effective.

At the same as the Task force is working, and in parallel to it, the implementation of the UBC Strategy 2010-2015 must, and will, continue. What is written in the Strategy has been decided upon and needs implementation.

In Kristiansand two years ago we stated, that we are, once again, at a crossroads. This is illustrated, among others, by the new European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the first macro-regional strategy in Europe, but certainly not the last one. How can we utilise the possibilities offered by the strategy and the will to cooperate, expressed by so many stakeholders?

We set for ourselves the key tasks to be implemented until 2015. The common denominator in all of these tasks was to redefine our role as an organisation in the new situation, to meet the requirements of today and challenges of tomorrow. Change is the only permanent phenomena in today's world, and thus we must also change with times – preferably also ahead of times.

I would sum up these tasks in our strategy with two main concepts: Firstly internally, better, more efficient mobilisation of our internal resources, and secondly the external dimension, closer cooperation with partner organisations, other key stakeholders as well as more effective advocacy work.

It is fair to ask what we have achieved in the last two years, which constitute a third of the strategy period.

Concerning better mobilisation of our internal resources, I would like to raise a few processes which are under way, and especially the preparation of a new communication and marketing strategy, for which we have engaged an outside expert organisation, Tendensor Ltd from Sweden. We have set an ambitious time table for its formulation: The new Executive Board will receive the draft in time to discuss it in its first ordinary meeting in February 2012.

The second very important process launched by us is the formulation and development of guidelines and recommendations for expert exchange between cities. The Executive Board meeting on 4 October 2011 decided on the details of this process, based on the proposal of the City of Jyväskylä and its Mayor Markku Andersson. It was felt that if we can develop an functioning system of expert exchange between cities, we can do a great service to our common cause. There is so much we can learn from each others!

We often use to say that UBC is an organisation with small resources. As an example, we mention that the General Secretariat currently only comprises of three fulltime persons. However, saing that we have small resources is only partially true – because actually we have plenty of resources, much of which have not yet been fully mobilised.

Let me clarify: If we only see UBC as a specific structure, yes we have limited resources. But if we see UBC as a community of over 100 cities, their populations, their resources, the situation is completely different.

I want to take an example. When preparing the UBC Strategy for Communication and Marketing, we noted that UBC is not very widely known in broader circles – in our own cities, in national governments, in Brussels. Our communication tools are limited – bulletin, publications and internet

pages. But if we can mobilise the communication tools of our member cities, we can reach dramatically wider audiences. And this we must do, in order to “reach out” and make our voice better heard on national and the European levels.

Another resource we must utilise is the representative offices of our cities and regions in Brussels. These should be convened together to discuss how to organise the UBC promotion work vis-à-vis the European institutions.

One of the key issues we have discussed in the Executive Board and with the Commissions is how to streamline our organisational structures, how to allocate resources in such a way that they best serve the interests of our cities. We decided in Kristiansand, when adopting unanimously our Strategy, to “formulate common criteria for evaluation of the work of various Commissions ... the amount of financial support to Commissions will be based on this evaluation”. Unfortunately, we have not yet done this and this task must be high on the agenda of the new Executive Board working plan.

Another important task which we have not yet implemented is organising an Urban Forum, bringing together Mayors and political decision makers from local authorities on bi-annual basis, alternating with the General Conferences.

The Finnish UBC member cities, meeting in Jyväskylä in September 2011, proposed to the new UBC Executive Board to prepare a work programme and time-table for its future work. We hope to speed up the implementation of our common strategy and renewal process. It is our joint task and duty.

Concerning closer cooperation with partner organisations, we are in process of discussing more structured links with relevant networks such as BaltMet – the Executive Board already agreed in Karlstad how to proceed with them – Baltic Development Forum and BSSSC, representing the regional level. It is important that these discussions will lead to formalised protocols of cooperation and that we can through closer cooperation get the local and regional voice of BSR better heard where decisions concerning us are made.

Some colleagues have – in my opinion justly – criticised the speed of strategy implementation. I think they are right, and we have to speed it up. I think we all agree that we have to change, renew ourselves, as the world around us is changing rapidly, so must we, too.

But at the same time we must ensure that we move forward in such a way that all of our member cities are participating in this renewal process and that we do not create unnecessary tensions or divisions within our ranks. There has always been a good atmosphere in UBC – often called the UBC family atmosphere – which makes it easy to find friend, to speak out, even if you are not a professional conference shark or fluid in English. Let us preserve this family atmosphere, while we streamline our processes.

We must also remember that the strategy work is basically not a technical work but it requires that we make choices. For example – when we develop our communication strategy, we must define what kind of organisation we are and want to be, what is our “unique selling proposal”, to whom do we want to reach out etc. In other words, we must define ourselves and what we want.

The same applies to structures. We have to ensure that small and big cities feel their interests are served, that each gets value for money when participating in UBC. It is not easy as the needs of cities are not the same. But with imagination, I am confident that it can be done. One possibility is also to create within UBC special working groups or caucuses for cities with similar interests – for example for larger cities facing challenges which are not actual for smaller cities.

At the end, I want to raise two issues which in my opinion require special attention: Our role in the implementation of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy, and the role of St. Petersburg and Russian partners in BSR cooperation.

UBC has from the very beginning actively supported the EUSBSR and participated in its processes. We have endorsed some flagship projects. Still, my feeling is that we have not yet found our role – as organisation – in this Strategy. And if we are still looking for it, maybe also others have the same problem? This would mean that there are unused resources which should be mobilised for our common goals. This may be an issue we should discuss between ourselves – and with the European Commission.

Colin Wolfe, who has been at the centre of the EUSBSR preparation and implementation, recently stated that good relations with Russia are “absolutely crucial” to the success of the EU strategy. Igor Lonski, vice chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, representing our founding member city of St. Petersburg, already outlined their keen interest in this cooperation and mentioned, among others, the “Turku process” coordinated by the cities of Turku, St. Petersburg and Hamburg, with the support of the European Commission/DG REGIO. The UBC is well placed – actually, best placed among BSR organisation - to promote this cooperation with Russian cities, especially St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad, and thus to make an important contribution to achieving our strategic goals.

To sum up my key messages, we need

- better mobilisation of our internal resources, including those of member cities
- closer coordination and cooperation with key partners and stakeholders
- better policy formulation capacity to promote our interests
- broader and more intensive cooperation with St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad.

Thank you!

“Nature Concert Hall Idea”

Silvija Nora Kalnins

Nature Concert Hall Board Chair

Challenges in sustainable development – the Nature Concert Hall case study

One of the greatest challenges of municipalities wishing to take a sustainable approach to development is that measures which are sustainable frequently pose a greater immediate, short-term cost to the municipality (and hence its inhabitants). Although this short-term cost is significantly lower than the long-term gain (and costs to be incurred in the future if a non-sustainable approach is chosen), the pressures of public opinion can undermine a municipality's effort for introducing a sustainable approach.

Since public opinion plays such an important role in municipal decision-making, the development of this opinion is essential in order to make change. The Nature Concert Hall is a method for public awareness raising which has been tested and practiced in more than 12 municipalities in Latvia over 6 years and shows that it is possible, through specially targeted, interactive and multi-disciplinary approach to attract many thousands of people from different backgrounds, to change perception on the importance of sustainable development and to motivate to introduce change.

In 2007, the Nature Concert Hall concept received the Latvian Environmental Science Award for an innovative way of presenting environmental science in Latvia.

In February 2009, the Nature Concert Hall music from the *Phylloscopus collybita* concert received the Latvian Music Award for the best instrumental album in 2008.

The Nature Concert Hall album *Graphis scripta* was awarded the Latvian Music Award for best concert film in February 2010.

Nature concert hall (n.) 1. the symbiosis of nature, music, science, visual art and poetry; 2. an interactive informative event on nature; 3. an event that occurs in the summer in a previously undiscovered niche in nature; 4. an ambience event conducted in the open-air.

What is the Nature Concert Hall (Dabas koncertzāle)?

Dabas koncertzāle is the Latvian word for Nature's Concert Hall which has evolved from the year 2006 to stand for a concert conducted in nature to bring people closer to the understanding of that nature, its inhabitants and how to care for it. The idea stemmed from the need musicians playing ambience music had to break out of the traditional concert venues and the need for scientists to bring their fascinating knowledge to the public. The beneficiaries of this idea are the audience who are privileged to experience a form of music which seeks to include the natural surroundings as one of its players – through lights, sounds and the public's deeper understanding and appreciation created through this event.

It's no coincidence that the first Dabas koncertzāle took place in the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve. Globally, biosphere reserves are places where the economic activities of people are conducted alongside and nature protection activities. In biosphere reserves the vision is to protect nature not through strict regulations and prohibitions but with the responsible behaviour of inhabitants and visitors towards the land, where we live and towards the generations to follow. The mission of the Dabas koncertzāle is

also to remind us that people and nature are part of one whole.

Traditionally, each year a specific species is selected as the year's mascot or hero. The first Dabas koncertzāle was a success in 2006 when the topic was bugs and specifically the *Osmoderma eremita* which was selected the bug of the year 2006 by the Latvian Entomologist Society. In 2007 the topic of birds was chosen and the main 'hero' the chiff chaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, who is the main character of the DVD/CD "Diary of the days and the nights of the chiff chaff". The concert in 2008 featured the caddisfly species *Hydropsyche instabilis* and looked at water quality issues and in 2009 the feature hero was the lichen *Graphis scripta* and issues on forest management and air quality. In the summer of 2010 the concert's focus was on geology and specifically travertine. The 2011 concerts' focus was issues related to the Baltic Sea and one of its inhabitants, the bladderwrack *Fucus vesiculosus* which is a home to many fish for spawning. These two concerts assembled more than 11,000 people in total in two locations where hands-on activities, music and poetry were enjoyed with a view of the spectacular and unique Baltic Sea.

Dabas Koncertzāle combines several disciplines to raise the public's awareness on the importance of different species in our environment and our responsibility to take care to maintain biodiversity. The Dabas Koncertzāle brings together science, music, poetry and visual images. In the six years it has been conducted, it has evolved to provide a stimulating method for educating the public on nature issues, increasing their interest to take personal, concrete actions in being part of its protection.

For municipalities, this event provides the opportunity to showcase a natural landscape, area or species which allows the inhabitants and guests to that municipality to look at this spot (creature) in a different light. This personal affiliation with a particular species heightens the responsibility that persons feel toward that particular site or creatures, which increase their interest in learning how to protect (maintain) it.

The Nature Concerthall, due to its multi-disciplinary and sustainable approach, attracts audiences of all ages and interests, which provides added benefits:

- increases the integration of society (nationalities among one another, and active involvement of a broad scale from the youngest to most elderly populations);
- promotes social interaction and involvement of persons in the protection of recognized or newly-discovered local cultural-natural values;
- increases interest in the symbiosis of human and economic development in a sustainable way (deeper understanding of pressures on environment developed from economic activity, growing interest in eco-tourism
- facilitates interest of public in sustainable approach to economic development and its effects on nature, which, in the long-term, provides support to the municipal decision-makers in implementation of environmental measures.

Panel discussion after second plenary session

Thomas Andreén

I understand how we can share each other inside the organisation. We are a group here, we are members, but what can we do outside? I am thinking globally. Countries face maybe nearly the same situation that it was 20 years ago. One example could be North Africa. Do we have some strategy for that? Number two was the cohesion policy. Next week I will be taking part in the Open Days in Brussels. Very important – do we have some strategy together for the cohesion policy? The last question is about youth. What kind of strategy in the future can we have together with youth? It's both a question for this organisation, but also a question for some of the persons in the panel here.

Mikko Lohikoski

I think that youth is a crucial issue. We should find ways and means to see the youth more directly not at the general conferences, but somehow in all our work included. Maybe the solution is to have youth commission representative in the Executive Board, but I am not quite sure that it is the only one. We need something more innovative, creative ways. We hope for example that you would give us your ideas about how organisation should function. We can see in the society the old way of functioning of e.g. political parties. They used to organise meetings, and so on. But people are no more interested only to sit in the meetings, but they need fresh ways of expressing themselves. Maybe you can be part of this process when we renew our thinking and our structures. There is also another idea. How can we create more common thinking or profile or cooperation in the BSR. Kind of mutual links. We have been discussing this exchange program, but maybe within the field of youth we could do more. I was working many years in Strasbourg in the Council of Europe. One of the greatest things in my opinion in that organisation the European Human Rights was that they created youth centre in Strasbourg and then in Budapest, where representatives of youth organisations and NGOs and future leaders came together for 1-2-3 week courses, met each others, created links. I think maybe we would need something in the BSR, some kind of point where our youngsters could come together, have capacity building, have their own training courses, etc. Because that would be a unique possibility to know each other in this region. I propose that we would consider creating such a centre.

Pavels Jurs

Thank you for your question. In the Commission on Youth Issues we should organise more open meetings. Last year we organised in Liepāja an open meeting and we had participants from Belarus, and even from Africa. But they had a question. We want to be like a member of the commission, but we can't. So why we should go, if we can't be a member completely. Of course it's not only one reason. I see that we have a good experience and we organise common projects, because one thing is a meeting, but second thing is a common action. From that perspective we need more financial support to cover necessary co-financing, if we speak about the projects. But in the same time our priority is to involve more youngsters not only from the UBC member cities. Maybe we should change some rules to involve youngsters more.

Marie-Louise Rönnmark

The youngsters are the future. Everybody says like that. Parallely with the UBC General Conference in Kristiansand there was a youth conference. We had one common meeting.

We have to have more confidence for the future. Because if we are looking 500 years back, Hansa was a network of 200 cities the Baltic Sea Region. One of the questions they were dealing was talking about the pollution and water. How to cooperate for having good water in the future. 500 years later we are discussing the same discussion. Having the same questions. I think it's necessary to have confidence, move on with all those questions. There are a lot of good examples in the cities. We have to work together with the commissions, being more strategic as the Board, and pay it back to the cities.

There is a lot of cakes to make for the future. And the recipe is to move on with networking. The topic questions are social, economic and ecological when we talk about the Baltic Sea. We have all these questions on the agenda. So if we are not making practical questions in the agenda, we could be losers. That's why we are still networking in UBC, because this is one of the best ways of developing our region.

Pavels Jurs

It's actually hard to describe the youth field, because this field is everywhere. We started to cooperate with other commissions and maybe it's one of the ways how we can more connect the youth and UBC. But at the same time methods how to work with the youth are totally different. For example we can't organise the seminar like this one with the youngsters. This is a reason why we organise two different events – youth conference and the General Conference. At the same time we linked those events and you can use this possibility to speak with the youngsters when we have the common meeting. But I want to invite you to be more active. And I hope, as I told in my presentation, it's just one of the ways if youngsters can be part of the Board. I am sure that we will be looking for the new ways. I think that we will have a good future, we just have to work more and cooperate more.

Urve Tiidus

I would like to comment on the whole day and on the conference today. I want to say that we live in a century of communication, which means we talk and we have to talk more, and we shall be talking more all the time, otherwise we wouldn't know what other people think and what we think. This is important. But the things will start moving and the world will change for better, if somebody says "Let's do it, this is right for every field". So I heard good ideas today, but I also heard this "Come on, let's do it, let's change with the times" and this is an important thing. And I especially would like to thank you for this presentation "Nature Concert Hall". There was one little thing which is very important when we speak about the youth and the future of UBC. There were children behind microscopes in the forests looking at the miniature world. Children are curious. The idea of education is to keep this curious feeling about life. If we can do this, then everything will be better.

Marie-Louise Rönmark

I can also give another example about young people and curiosity. Before the Olympic games in Vancouver we started up through Internet together with youngsters from Vancouver and our neighbouring city Örnsköldsvik in Sweden to blog various ideas from the heart of young people. All together 2.500 young people. After that we set up an ice hockey musical with the real match. Around the arena there was a symphony orchestra and a choir. When the match was finished, they were singing, performing ideas and thoughts from the young people. You can imagine the elderly people sitting round the arena. Some of them were crying because of what they felt. All these thoughts from the young people from Canada and Sweden were almost the same. They wanted to fulfil their dreams, to be seen as they are as persons. We can use culture as a way of building new bridges in the UBC different countries and cities.

Mikko Lohikoski

I think there are number of issues which we really can not solve alone with the dirty Baltic Sea. We all are facing problems. We have common problems, maybe common dreams and all these. We can only solve them through exchange and cooperation. So we need cooperation. And UBC is the structure which provides that possibility. But it lives only as long as we make our input into this. UBC is us, member cities. Let's put our work there. The more we put in, the more we get out. That's in life, and that's in UBC also.

Uldis Grava

I believe that with those remarks we can close this session.

Thanks to the speakers this afternoon, this morning and also to you, an interested audience, who remained with us today. I would like also to express thanks to the UBC Board for choosing Liepāja as a place of this conference and to give Liepāja chance to expose itself to its international neighbours.

When the II World War ended, almost third of Liepāja housing was ruined from heavy bombings. Then we had 50 years of occupation, when the town was closed, forbidden city for the outside travellers. And even obligatory monument of Lenin had to be guarded by an armoured vehicle just to make sure that people of Liepāja wouldn't show their reaction to it. It had a very interesting chain around it with a warning sign "Do not approach the monument. We shoot without warning".

Today the people of Liepāja are free and enjoy the fruits of democracy and free enterprise. Thank you for allowing us to join the rest of the Baltic Sea community, to be a vital part of this region. Thank you!

Per Bødker Andersen

I wanted to thank you Mr Grava as well, for leading us through some very good presentations of different options and projects from different cities of UBC. We are discussing matters of common interests, but we are also trying to find new ways and we would like to share it with each other. And that is maybe the most interesting thing which Mikko said, the more you participate, the more you get out of it. Instead of buying expensive consultant companies, we could say – we invest in ourselves, using each other. And we get the results for free. To the cities and to the different organisations of the cities. I think it's a speciality of the Baltic area, that we can do it. I am quite sure, that is one of the things that urged the European Commission to find that region to be the macroregion, to be number one.

I would also like to add that we are going to meet the youngsters tomorrow. They have their conference parallel to our one. I have one thought that might be for consideration. We seem to be discussing how we should involve youth in a traditional way of thinking. They do not do it any longer. They facebook or they twitter. We should be very careful to try to make a very good solution for the youngsters. Because that would be our solution. I think we should be listening to their suggestions, because that is the future way we should work also in the organisation of UBC. New ways of communication, new ways of doing things might be the revitalisation of the work in the commissions, of the work of the UBC as well. So therefore thank you for your handshake. The youngsters will be there, and we shall be there, but I think we shall be more listening in the future. So tell us all tomorrow when we meet, how you would like the common cooperation to be developed.

Lars Malmberg on behalf of UBC Honorary President Anders Engström at the festive dinner on the occasion of 20th anniversary of UBC foundation

Mr President, dear UBC friends,

It is my pleasure, even if it is also a bit sad, to speak to you tonight on behalf of Anders Engström, your former President for 10 years.

He is not able to take part in this meeting, he was actually told by his doctor not to make the trip. I know he is very sad about this because UBC is close to his heart and he remembers the times with you with great joy.

Anders Engström became Mayor of Kalmar in 1989 and among the first steps he took was to visit Kalmar's sister city Gdańsk and he made friends with Mayor Jacek Starościak and other Polish politicians. These were the days of great turbulence at the Baltic Sea, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the start of the freedom movements in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

In the discussions with Starościak the idea came up to build a network around the Baltic Sea. At a hotel room meeting during an EU-conference on Regional Planning in Rovaniemi this was settled and Piotr Krzyżanowski and I were given the task to write the first statutes for the Union of Baltic Cities.

An important partner in the following talks was Mayor Michael Bouteiller in Lübeck who Anders had learnt to know at the Hanseatic Days in Kalmar 1987. Lübeck was a driving force in that movement.

In the discussions we were truly sure that if we succeeded to make an interesting organisation we could have as many as 100 members, it was seen as a Utopia at that time but you have passed that magic number some ten years ago.

We had five major ideas, first we would have a board that included a representative from each country in the BSR, second we would work in commissions over a number of topics and third we would have a membership fee. The fee would have different levels due to the size of the city and in the beginning also west and east. Fourth, the office would be located in Gdańsk and fifth, the language ought to be Baltic English.

Anders Engström asked Mr Starościak to take the lead but he kindly asked Anders who first declared that his English is too bad but then Mr Starościak said that Lech Wałęsa is leading Poland and he does not speak English.

The first meeting in Gdańsk on 19-20 September 1991 was a success where 42 cities took part and the statutes could be taken, the board and commissions were elected and the only difficult question I remember was the language where the Germans declared that the languages around the sea would be used rather than a foreign one, but this was not accepted.

The first board meeting was held in Lübeck and I remember the preparations very well as Anders English at the time was not so good and he wanted to have everything ready in beforehand. We sat on the ferry to Travemünde and prepared in detail. Anders has a music ear for languages and he developed his skills very quickly.

A small language anecdote from the first meeting in Lübeck is from a lunch where I shared a tablecorner with a member from Kaliningrad and one from Gdańsk. I spoke to the Russian in English, he spoke to the Pole in Russian and the Pole spoke to me in German. Quite a thrilling experience and convinced me that a common language was not so bad..

When Anders became President he took on a journey to the new members and one of the first cities he visited was our host city today, Liepāja.

In these very days, a number of new organisations saw their first days. I made a study at SAMS, Copenhagen Business School in 2001 and found over 100 organisations, but could easily find the four important ones, UBC was out first and then followed the Baltic Sea States, CBSS, the regions, BSSSC and the chambers, BCCA.

Among other important events that were created were of course the Hanse Business Days and Baltic Development Forum and of course institutions like Helcom.

I think the UBC came out fine due to the strong links between the cities, the relative down to earth questions and the membership fee. We were members, not only visitors to annual conferences. I also think that the commissions of UBC were more sustainable than the task forces set up by BSSSC for example.

One important step was also to have a permanent office even as I know there has been some questions around this issue when the other organisations moved their offices around. But I think that the work of Paweł Żaboklicki and his team has been a stable force for nearly 20 years now. My best congratulations Paweł, Anna and Anna!

When Finland and Sweden joined the EU in 1995 it gave us new possibilities to work in a broader sense and as the other countries applied for partnership a new era was opened for the Baltic Sea. The battle with the continent to accept that neighbours could work together over water was finally accepted, first with Öresund and later other Regions like South Baltic. In this case it was excellent to work together with the BSSSC using Hamburg/Schleswig/Holsteins Hanse Office in Brussels with its networks.

Another important step was the EU-program “Northern Dimension” where the States realized that it was necessary and useful to cooperate with UBC where the local knowledge was to be found. The EU-programmes for the Baltic Sea made it possible for a number of connections concerning everything from Harbours to Democracy. We also tried, in vain, to make a stronger co-operation between the three big ones

The Baltic Sea finally became a real European Inland Sea when Poland and the Baltic States became members in 2004. A long dream had come true.

I was chairman of the Telecom Commission 1991-1999, together with Viktors Bults from Riga as my co-driver, and telecom was one of the real practical problems at the time when west systems would meet the old-fashioned systems of the east. I remember that we had lively discussions, should we use a Swedish system, a Polish system, an American Satellite System but finally Kalmar learnt how to use Internet and I proposed it for UBC as well. I heard afterwards that some people thought I was crazy, of course.

When this was solved we changed into a Commission for Communication that worked up to 1999 and then became a part of the Presidents office with newsletters and publications. Another of my

tasks was to represent UBC in the important project “Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 (VASAB) where it was mainly thought for state officials and planners but UBC was strong enough to be considered a part in the discussions. The final meeting was in Wismar 2001.

There are other Commissions which I think have made fantastic achievements and I would chose one, others not forgotten, and that is the Environment Commission led by Turku and their fantastic bulletins.

In 2001 Anders left the Presidency and he followed your work intensively since then from his new platform as head of the International Unit in the city of Kalmar.

I will end up by wishing UBC, from Anders and myself, many more unforgettable moments and successes and I have learnt from my last ten years working with the Chinese that they look upon the Baltic Sea Region as one of the hot spots in the World. Let us keep it that way, spending our money on learning from each other and be at the R&D front, quoting Commissioner Esko Aho from a conference in Tartu 2008: Never cut down on Research and Education. It is like eating your own seed potatoes.

Finally Mr President,

the work in BSR also led Anders Engström to Africa, he was asked by the Swedish International Agency (SIDA) to help LVRLAC, a project around the Victoria Lake, to teach them how it is possible for countries with different cultures and languages to work together.

And as he would have said today, we have done it, we can co-operate even in difficult times, best greetings to all of you, Homo Balticus.