



## UBC Planning Cities Commission

### Activity Report October 2013 – September 2015

#### Meetings

##### **Seminar in Örebro, 18-21.May 2014, “From a Traffic corridor and a wasteland to a lively city”**

The seminar in Örebro was the 29<sup>th</sup> seminar in the history of the Commission on Urban Planning/Planning Cities Commission. It was a joint seminar with the commission on Environment and the commission on Transport.

Örebro is a city that shares the same challenges as many other member cities. There are barriers that separate the cities in different parts, both physically and mentally. The theme of the seminar in Örebro was about developing the central part of the city from a traffic corridor and wasteland to a lively city. It was about giving the central “spine” of the city a new face and to use land in a more efficient way. The question discussed was how the area along the traffic corridor can develop in order to represent the rest of the city and tell you about qualities the city can offer.

The main focus of the seminar was the workshop. Furthermore there were lectures connected to the theme held by traffic planners and architects from Sweden. During the seminar the participants were also introduced to the Smart Cities concept.

At the end of the seminar there was a presentation of the workshop results for the participants, local politicians, senior officials and media.

##### **Seminar in Riga, 14-17. September 2014, “Urban streams”**

The seminar in Riga was a joint seminar with the commission on Environment.

Riga is the largest city in the UBC network. It’s the capital of Latvia and located at the banks of the River Daugava 10 kilometers behind the Baltic Sea cost line.

The theme of the seminar was water as an important resource for the urban environment, looking at its recreational, aesthetic and ecological potential in the city. During the seminar participants had the possibility to hear lectures about climate change, tools for storm water management and to get acquainted with examples of best practices regarding different aspects of city-water relationship from Riga, Malmo and London.

The participants were given the possibility to acquire hands-on experience and offer solutions for three different territories in Riga: Kīleveina channel, Zunda channel and Islands.

Each of the territories posed different challenges regarding their scale and location in the city. Small scale water stream Kīleveina channel is heavily polluted by industries that for century have been growing on its banks. Middle sized Zunda channel nowadays works as a divider between island Kīpsala and mainland although in the past it has been the main driver force for the development of both territories. The islands – Lucavsala and Zaķusala are very valuable resource located just 1,5 km away from the city centre. Because of high flood risk there has always been very limited possibilities

of building on them yet now the Riga City Council has made a decision to sell the land for development.

The teams explored project sites by feet, by bikes or by boats trying to find genius loci of place and during one day workshop creating visions for the future development of these territories. The ideas included both practical proposals for example need to clear the water, develop public spaces along the waterfront and diversify functions located on the banks of streams as well as need to make important strategic decisions – to sell or not to sell the land.

The ideas elaborated by groups of participants were presented at the end the seminar to authorities of Riga City Council City Development Department whose responsibility will be to introduce wider audience with the results of seminar.

### **Seminar in Gdansk, 18-21 October 2015, “Developing sea cost – local and city-wide perspective”**

From the program:

The West Costal Belt is a key area for the city of Gdansk to keep contact with the water. After the World War II this area functioned as recreational facilities for residents of Gdansk and low standard tourism center. The landscape consisted of vast areas of allotments, old accommodation facilities in poor technical condition, and neglected coastal forest. Some enclaves were used for military purposes. In the 70's of the twentieth century only two modern hotels were built, which, however, did not constitute a breakthrough in the settlement. There were - happily - completed boarding houses at Haller Avenue. The spatial policy was to reserve this area for tourism development but nothing really significant happened.

The breakthrough came in the 90's XX c., when the city with an enormous effort has removed allotment gardens and created a 40 hectares Reagan park of city range value. Attractive and highly frequented park, caused a revival of this part of the city; new park promotes the integration of people (both: citizens and tourists). Along with the beach, pier, seaside promenade and cycle path it is a well-functioning system of public spaces and desirable neighborhood for new residents seeking comfort, prestige and contact with the nature. In recent years, the West Costal Belt has become a very attractive location for developers offering seaside apartments in a high standard and with an adequate to place price. In this area, creating new hotels and catering facilities, especially in the old historical fishing village of Brzezno and Jelitkowo.

During the seminar we will focus on Gdansk city costal zone - its value in a local and city - wide or even metropolitan perspective. In some way we will be a part of a current discussion:

- what is the costal zone role in the city structure?
- how does it influence city identity?
- what functions are required in this area?
- for whom it should be devoted - tourists, citizens, local communities?
- how to create a place offering attractive activities all over the year (not only in a short summer season)?
- how to keep balance between slow life in a sleepy village and
- vibrant tourist resort?
- to what extend we can intensify development?

A report from the seminar will follow in 2017.

## **About the Planning Cities Commission**

The Planning Cities Commission is a network of professional planners, researchers, architects, engineers and sociologists around the Baltic Sea Region.

The Planning Cities Commission wants to

- keep the Baltic Sea Region cities on the map of Europe and the world by supporting local planners' professional skills and sharing knowledge
- supports city servants in their work of building better cities, increase awareness of urban planning, architecture and construction
- improve quality of life in cities in the Baltic Sea Region
- improve economic development in cities by initiating dialogue between city residents, private (commercial& industrial) and public sectors
- improve sustainable development in the Baltic Sea cities

Urban planning and construction that reflects the socio-economic, cultural and political life of the cities is a tool to achieve these goals.

## **The Steering Group**

The members are Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga, Marek Karzyński from Gdynia, Tomas Strömberg from Umeå and Niels-Peter Mohr from Aarhus (Chairman).

## **Action Plan**

The Commission will organize a seminar in Gdańsk in October, and attend 3-4 UBC meetings including the General Conference. At the seminar in Gdańsk the new steering group and the Communication Officer will be elected/appointed. In December preparing of the seminar in Söderhamn in the spring 2016 will start. Hopefully we will manage to find a host city for the autumn seminar.

The Commission will organize a seminar in Söderhamn in the spring and another seminar somewhere in the Autumn. Besides this the communication officer and the chairman (or another member of the Steering group) will attend other UBC meeting building up the new structure.

Niels-Peter Mohr  
Chairman of the Commission

1 October 2015