

# COMMISSION ON URBAN PLANNING

## ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2005 – SEPTEMBER 2007

### Background

The Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) Commission on Urban Planning (CUP) started its work in 1999.

During the years to follow the CUP built a network of urban planners coming from a large number of cities around the Baltic Sea. Between 1999-2002 six seminars were arranged, mostly exchanging best practice planning examples and professional experiences between the participants.

The main activities of the UBC Commission on Urban Planning (CUP) during the period between October 2005 and September 2007 have taken place with the ending of the Alliance of Baltic Cities (ABC) project and preparing and providing the cooperation within the CUP after the project.

### ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE ABC PROJECT

#### Producing the Malmö seminar report

The report from the Malmö seminar became also a Summary Report from all our six common seminars. This report has been presented to the BSR in Rostock November 2005.

The seminar in Malmö was held October 5th-9th 2005 with 52 colleagues from 8 countries participating. As this seminar also was a so called annual meeting for the UBC CUP, the Commission invited one participant from each of the cities in Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Lithuania using economic support from the UBC organisation (approximately 5000 €).

As scheduled in the ABC project programme the report from the Gdynia seminar, held in April 2005, was presented at the Malmö seminar.

#### Organising the Baltic Academy of City Planning

In addition to the ABC project activities, the Commission worked for preparing an application of a next project called the Baltic Academy of City Planning. An application to the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) – 8<sup>th</sup> round – was produced and accepted by all 30 participating cities (including in Russia). Unfortunately the Commission's application was rejected by the Interreg III B Steering committee.

#### Ending the ABC project

The ABC project was ended with a seminar in Riga in April 2006. This seminar was arranged mostly by the UBC CUP steering committee. At this seminar the Commission worked on for-

ulating an operative program for our continuation of the ABC project and also included in the seminar some lectures and discussions on sustainable city planning.

The ABC project has resulted in a steady network of city planners around the Baltic. For each person that participated in the seminar the benefit has been an improved knowledge of other cities, a greater experience in working with colleagues from other countries and the knowledge achieved by working together and “learning by doing”. Also, the lectures have given a good basic understanding of planning legislation, local issues, and common and relevant planning topics in most UBC member countries and among a good spread of UBC member cities.

Each seminar host city benefited by receiving a great amount of work input into their local planning problems. Inviting local stakeholders to participate in the seminars often proved successful for the continuation of planning work in the host city.

For each of the seminars a report was been produced presenting the host city, some local issues and the results of the workshops. These reports were distributed widely. Each seminar host city presented at the final seminar the results that had been achieved since their own seminar. Several of the cities could show physical changes and small scale investments carried out as the result of the ABC seminar taking place in their city. These ‘footprints’ are described in the ABC final report.

#### COMMISSION ON URBAN PLANNING SEMINARS 2006 -2007

##### UBC CUP&ABC seminar in Riga, Latvia, April 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> 2006

The Riga seminar was in the aftermath of the ABC-project. During this seminar one of the most burning questions in urban planning of today was “how to achieve sustainability when working with practical and actual urban planning situations?” The seminar included lectures about sustainability in urban planning context.

For three days 36 participants - architects and planners from 8 countries around the Baltic sea discussed issues on long-term architectural development, and they evaluated proposals for the architectural development of the panorama concept for the left bank of the Daugava River. The results of the seminar were integrated in the Daugava River Left Bank Silhouette Concept Project that was submitted for public debate summer 2006.

A week after the Riga seminar, the ABC Project Leader Mr Lars Brattberg was hospitalized and on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006 he passed away. Lars was for many years a valued member of the CUP steering committee and a driving force within the CUP. He managed to involve a great number of cities and colleagues to the CUP network. His sudden death also left the rest of the CUP steering committee confused since much information about the Commission’s finances and agreements were in Lars’s hands. He is greatly missed.

##### UBC CUP seminar in Rostock, Germany, September 20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006

The Rostock seminar concentrated in Brownfield Regeneration. Some 25 urban planners from 8 countries participated in the seminar. The seminar lectures were about Sustainability in Brownfield Regeneration, and the workshops concentrated on the site of the Rostock Museum and its possibilities to enlarge, on the former “Neptunwerft”-shipyard area and the possibilities to create new use for the old industrial arean and on a former fishermen’s and leather maker’s shore on the river Warnow. The appreciated “ABC-method” was applied also during this

seminar, though the lacking of outside financing was visible in the amount of the seminar participants. The seminar participants supported strongly the idea of the Commission continuing to work using the seminars and workshops as the method of cooperation.

UBC CUP seminar in Vilnius, Lithuania, April 19<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup>, 2007

The Vilnius seminar concentrated in two of the most common and interesting questions in urban planning of today: how to create attractive public space and how to achieve involvement and public participation when working with urban planning. The seminar keynote speeches included interesting examples of public participation in urban planning cases, and experiencing public spaces in urban environment. The workshops involved all the 40 participants and concentrated about renewing an old culturally and historically valuable housing area called Zverynas and involving the local inhabitants in the renewal process, as well as creating possibilities of activities on the River Neris bank on the business city side. Public participation and information were seen as vital issues in modern urban planning.

### ACTION PLAN 2008 - 2009

Among the CUP cities a clear interest to continue the cooperation and also to develop it further has been expressed. New partners to the cooperation are also of interest and welcome.

A new project was discussed already at the Viljandi seminar in 2004. An Interreg IIIB application was set up and made for a project called "Baltic Academy of City Planning". Unfortunately the BaltAcad was not among those few projects that were approved in the last call of the Interreg program period, which ended 2006. The UBC CUP has nevertheless continued its work by arranging three more seminars, in Riga and in Rostock during 2006 and in Vilnius 2007. During these seminars the future of the CUP has been discussed and the CUP Steering Group has been given the task to outline a proposal for activities during the next coming years.

"Sustainable Baltic Cities"

In the coming years, the goal of the Commission will be to increase the capability for us as urban planners to find ways and methods that can promote a development towards sustainable cities that also at the same time will develop them as attractive cities.

- Create attractive cities and regions through sustainability.
- Define the elements of sustainability in the context of urban planning. (Economical, Ecological and Social sustainability)
- Develop the ways we are working with sustainability in urban planning.
- Evaluate the situation of today for the partner cities and find out what is needed in that specific city to be "sustainable and attractive"

Most probably there still is not enough knowledge among the UBC planners what "sustainable development" really is, and there is a wide spread in the opinions of what it could be. The Commission on Urban Planning should therefore keep on with the task of increasing the knowledge level and the professional skills among the UBC CUP group within the field of sustainable urban development. The methods to be used could be combinations of following elements of activities:

- Lectures on "burning questions of today" from well qualified persons – "the best ones"
- Presentations of "Best practice examples" in the field of sustainable urban development.
- Workshops, dealing with qualified planning situations.

- The lectures and examples should be dealing with all three dimensions of sustainability – Economy / Ecology / Social factors.

#### Possible seminar themes

- Democratic planning processes for sustainable city development
- Using new tools for Visualisation, as Google Earth or/and Microsoft Virtual as an example of modern tool for public participation
- How to put the citizens in focus – “Europe for Citizens”
- How to create attractiveness through sustainability
- What are the elements (factors) of attractiveness for a city
- Quality of life – what requirements for that can be made possible by urban planning, and how
- Social aspects on urban planning
  - Integration
  - Segregation
  - Safety and security in public space – and in other parts of the society
- Making new attractive sustainable areas out of brown field areas
- Sustainability as a way to attractiveness and competitiveness for cities.
- The effects on/from climate change.
- Economic sustainability in city (urban) planning - how will that influence planning results and processes.

It is possible for the Commission to also have additional partners of other kind than only the UBC cities. These could be Universities, national institutions, other European cities etc. It is important that the partners in a future project are actively participating because of joint interests, not only because they are members of a certain organisation, like UBC.

A Commission on Urban Planning seminar will be arranged in Kotka October 2007 on the theme of City Identity. The Commission has already agreed to arrange seminars in Aarhus in April 2008 and in Turku during the autumn of 2008, while also preparing a future project on Urban Sustainability.

Sirpa Kallio

Project Manager, Chairman of the Commission on Urban Planning

City of Helsinki Economic and Planning Centre

P.O Box 20, 00099 City of Helsinki

Finland

tel. +358 9 310 36124

sirpa.kallio@hel.fi