

ACTIVITY REPORT

PLANNING CITIES COMMISSION

OCTOBER 2017 –SEPTEMBER 2019

1. General description

Chairmanship

Steering Group:

The members are Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga, Paulina Szewczyk from Gdynia, Tomas Strömberg from Umeå, Christian Hegardt from Visby (Sweden), Björn Grönholm from Turku and Niels-Peter Mohr from Aarhus (Chairman), in October 2018 replaced by Paulina Szewczyk from Gdynia (Chair).

Thank you Niels-Peter for working as the chairman.

Secretary: City of Gdynia, Poland

Aims & goals

The Planning Cities Commission is a network of professional planners 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.

2. Meetings/seminars/conferences

The annual Cities Planning Cities Commission Seminar in **Oskarshamn**, Sweden, **the 1st-4th October 2017** was cancelled by the city government.

The annual seminar "Urban Transition Zones - Sustainable urban transformation in the context of a small historic city" was held in **Visby** on **21–24 October 2018**, in cooperation with Region Gotland.

Ca. 40 participants from UBC cities together with ten local planners.

From the program

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„Visby is located on the northwest coast of Gotland, the largest island in the Baltic Sea, about 100 km from the Swedish mainland. As a former Viking site, Visby became the main trade hub for the Hanseatic League in the Baltic Sea between the 12th and the 14th century. Its 13th-century city wall, medieval church ruins, warehouses and wealthy merchant homes from the same period make it the best preserved fortified commercial trade town in Northern Europe. The Hanseatic town of Visby is a

UNESCO World Heritage site since 1995. The majority of Visby’s 23000 inhabitants live in the modern city districts that have evolved since the city expanded beyond the historic town from the late 19th century onwards. Today, the tourism industry is rapidly growing, while expanding connections to the mainland also give better opportunities for people to move to, live and work in Visby.

The theme of the seminar is:

Urban Transition Zones - Sustainable urban transformation in the context of a small historic city

The main aim of the seminar and workshop is to reflect and give suggestions on the development of two areas, the Inner Harbour and the East Centre, in direct proximity to the historic town and the medieval city wall.

The participants will discuss:

- How to create and develop urban space for seasonal flexibility.
- How to create and develop urban space in the transitional area between the historic town centre and the modern city.

Proposals for the two workshop areas will be developed and presented to local politicians, colleagues and the press by the end of the seminar.”

Outcome

The topic of the seminar was *“Urban Transition Zones - Sustainable urban transformation in the context of a small historic city”* and the main aim of the seminar and workshop was to reflect and give suggestions on the development of two areas close to the historic town and the medieval city wall, the Inner Harbour and the East Centre. One important challenge for the city is how to create urban space for seasonal flexibility and better connect the historic town centre with the modern city.

Region Gotland introduced the workshop sites with presentations from Christian Hegardt, city architect and Elene Negussie, World Heritage site manager. A sunny afternoon in Visby was spent with guided tour by bus and walks to the workshop areas.

Next Day Alexander Ståhle, landscape architect, researcher and CEO for the urban design studio *Spacescape* in Stockholm reflected on activity-based planning and the trends that affect small cities in his key note lecture titled *Closer Together – the future of small towns*.

Planners from all over the Baltic Sea region had a joint experience, worked hard in the workshops, shared and exchanged ideas known from their cities and countries and made new contacts.

The general recommendations were:

- To protect and expose the historical silhouette of the city from the sea by arranging the city light and new features on the wavebraker.

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- To protect and expose the historical city wall by arranging the park along, new buildings in the eastern center in the first line should let admire it from them - be for example terrace buildings with public access where possible.
- To consider mixed use functions in both workshop areas – also to consider students living in the harbour area and to consider replacing parking lots by the housing areas to let the eastern center be livable all day long.
- To create/improve public spaces taking into consideration pedestrian connections to the main aims (bus stop, the entrance to the old city, etc.), strengthening the identity of those places, adding some public activities in the both areas and to search for different kind of common spaces – public, semi-public, semi private.

The workshop results were presented to invited guests, politicians and media representatives.

27th-30th October, the annual Cities Planning Cities Commission „GREENING THE CITIES – URBAN OPEN GREEN AREAS” will be held in **Gdynia**. The registration is open till 25th September.

3. Projects

The Planning Cities Commission don't make projects besides the workshops/seminars.

4. Cooperation with other organisations

13-14 June 2019, the steering group met Stockholm Environmental Institute/CASCADE Project and SCC Advisory Board in Gdynia.

During the seminar in Gdynia we plan to let SEI make a short workshop on the Barriers and Obstacles to climate risk assessment and implementation to gather data from BSR local authorities for CASCADE Project which UBC is also a partner of.

UBC Planning Cities Commission represented by Steering group member - Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga took part in VASAB conference „Competitiveness of Small & Medium Sized Cities in the Baltic Sea Region” 04th June 2019.

5. Communications

The Planning Cities Commission don't have a communication officer. From time to time the chairman/chair writes articles to different magazines about our work.

6. Other activities

The Planning Cities Commission don't make activities besides the workshops/seminars.

7. Action plan 2019-2021

The Commission will continue to organize 1-2 workshop/seminars together with different host cities around the Baltic Sea.



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At the moment, we are in dialog with the city of Turku and we are going to organize the seminar in 24th – 27th May 2020.

At the general conference 2019 our chair Paulina Szewczyk will look for interested host cities who are ready to “sign in”.

Paulina Szewczyk, Chair of Planning Cities Commission, September 16th, 2019