

ACTIVITY REPORT

PLANNING CITIES

October 2015 – September 2017

1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Steering Group

The members are Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga, Marek Karzyński – in 2016 replaced by Paulina Szweczyk from Gdynia, Tomas Strömberg from Umeå and Niels-Peter Mohr from Aarhus (Chairman).

Thanks to Marek for working in the steering group for more than a decade.

Secretary: City of Aarhus, Denmark

Commission 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. WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS SINCE OCTOBER 2015

Seminar in Gdansk, Poland, October 18-21, 2015 (seminar no. 31)

“Developing sea cost – local and city-wide perspective”

Ca. 50 participants inclusive locals

From the program:

“The West Coastal 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 com-fort, 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 coastal zone - its value in a local and city - wide or even metropolitan perspective. In some ways, we will be a part of a current discussion:

- what is the coastal zone role in the city structure?
- how does it influence city identity?
- what functions are required in this area?
- for whom should it 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?

Outcome

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

On the last day, the workshop groups presented their ideas to the local politicians, colleagues', the press and local NGO's. The general recommendations were to take better care of the coastal zone and the villages, and in the same time provide better and affordable housing for locals rather than holiday flats etc.

Seminar in Söderhamn, Sweden, May 22-25, 2016

“New Times – New Dynamics “

Ca. 35 participants inclusive locals

From the program:

“The experience of approaching Söderhamn by car on the E4 or train at the railway station/Travel Centre does not reflect upon the 17th century town or the archipelago only 15 kilometers away. The area is poorly used and new visitors have problems with orientation and finding the way to the town centre and other local destinations.

We want to change this by it making it easier and more attractive to walk between the station, the town centre and the inner archipelago. We want to develop these areas, add new qualities and create a more attractive entrance to the town. We want to have a richer environment and develop an approach passage with a spatial continuance. Another aspect is to promote commuting by public transports, and minimize the impact on our environment.

We are only in the beginning of this planning process. With your help, we can bring forth new ideas for development, to help us add a new layer to our 400-year-old town.

Söderhamn is one out of 290 municipalities in Sweden. With 26,000 inhabitants Söderhamn represents a typical small Swedish municipality.

The Swedish economical landscape has changed dramatically over the last 25 years. Larger metropolitan areas as Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö are growing rapidly. Smaller municipalities like Söderhamn, in a region dominated by rural landscape, shrink in development.

Söderhamn has also transformed from industrial based production into more diversified economics. These days, Swedish planning focus on growing population, capacity in infrastructure and the massive need of housing.

A parallel process is an on-going regionalization. Regional commuting is increasing and made available by investments in public transportation and roads and a change in business structure. This has changed peoples' every-day lives. Commuting to work for two hours per day is not unusual.

The challenge for Söderhamn is to be attractive for people and investors through accessibility, attractive housing and a strong local identity: New Times – New Dynamics. This is the theme of our seminar!

We want to focus on a strategic area which starts with the Portal of Söderhamn at the motorway and the Travel Centre, continues through the town centre and further on to Söderhamn by the Sea (the inner bay in Stugsund) and the archipelago.”

Outcome

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

On the last day, the workshop groups presented their ideas to the local politicians, colleagues', the press and local NGO's. The general recommendation was to re-organize the station area to a more welcoming place (“turn it around”), improve the connection to the central city and develop a high quality – affordable - housing area at the workshop area in the archipelago south east of the inner city – also with good connections to the city center.

Seminar in Klaipėda, Lithuania, October 16–19, 2016

“Rediscovering water in the city: public realm strategies on the waterfront”

Participants: ca. 45 inclusive locals.

From the program:

“Klaipėda is a diverse city with a rich multicultural history and the only seaport in Lithuania. Among other regions of Lithuania Klaipėda distinguishes itself with maritime business tradition, a unique natural landscape and the fact, that it is a major Lithuanian transport junction connecting central Europe and Scandinavia. The exceptional geographical location (the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon adjacency), also steadily improving economic situation (seaport cargo is approx. 40 million tons per year, successful operations of Klaipėda business companies and Free economic zone) are the main engines of the city development. In 2015 “Forbes” magazine, released in Latvia, nominated Klaipėda as the best business region in the Baltic States.

Nevertheless, in the last decades the city population is decreasing due to natural demographic changes, which have been exacerbated by the suburbanization (moving to suburban areas), inner (to

other regions of the country, especially to the capital Vilnius) and international migration. This trend leads to the main priority of Klaipėda city development – maintaining and recovering population and attracting new citizens to the city. Since it is not possible to control demographic processes directly, municipality has the main objectives to stabilize the city demographic development and increase the attractiveness of the city by creating a high-quality urban environment, reconstructing and developing the public spaces, promoting attractive housing construction in the central part of Klaipėda city.

In relation to these important issues, we suggest to discuss the topics such as development of the city's urban and recreational public spaces on the waterfront. In particular analyzing two situations:

- Danė river approaches in the central part of the city and Baltic Sea coastal strip at Melnragė I settlement. The first situation is in the intensely urbanized area in the heart of the most valuable historical parts of the city (the old town and the new town), featuring the variety of service facilities and public spaces. Complex development of this part of the city is complicated due to the conversion territories marked in the city's master plan, which are still intensively used for the production.
- The second situation, opposite to the first one, is located in the natural context and conveys the tasks of sustainable development of abundant visited recreation areas. In this case, the vitality of the depends not only on its qualitative installation, but also on the broader perception of anthropogenic context (Klaipėda port entrance channel, Melnragės settlement), as well as associated shore and environmental Baltic Sea coast management issues”

Outcome

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

On the last day, the workshop groups presented their ideas to the local politicians, colleagues', the press and local NGO's. The general recommendation was to open and develop the inner harbourfront more to the benefit of the inhabitant and to develop the land behind the coastline to the north for more people and less harbour development.

JOINT JOHANN & UBC Workshop in Rostock, Germany, May 14-17, 2017

"From a growing to a great city"

Ca. 75 participant inclusive locals

From the program:

“The Hanseatic City of Rostock celebrates its 800th anniversary in 2018. This anniversary is a reason to look back with pride on what we have been accomplished, but also a good opportunity to look ahead. Rostock was successfully converted from a GDR-socialist model city to a modern European city within a prosperous Baltic Sea Region. The regiopolis region Rostock intends to keep on offering its inhabitants the highest possible quality of life. What needs to be done to become a “frontrunner” of wealth and balanced growth within the Baltic Sea Region? How can the needed urban mixture function - structure - process be shaped? What major and small-scale objectives do we set for Rostock's long-term and short-term future? What groundworks must be placed how and where? What is the historical city harbor's role, what impulses do we hope to get from our commitment for small-scale cruise ships in historical city harbors of the South Baltic Sea Region?

There is a particularly favorable constellation for the three joint workshops of three international networks. On the one hand side we can - funded by the EU - make an approach to vitalizing and developing Rostock's historical city harbor by promoting small-scale cruise ship tourism. The Interreg

project JOHANN network comprising of partners from Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, Greifswald, Szczecin, Gdynia, Kaliningrad, Kalmar and Karlskrona has already started to work on this.

The UBC is associated project partner here. Accordingly, we invite to Rostock both Union of the Baltic Cities commissions, „smart & prospering cities“ and „planning cities“. Both commissions share best practices and tools and provide a network of experts for consultation and cooperation. The “smart & prospering cities” commission focuses on talents and urban marketing here, the commission “planning cities” works on implementing the urban architecture guidelines of the modern European city in the Baltic Sea Region context.

What happens in Rostock does not only aim to simple experience exchange or ceremonial meetings. Substantive goals and working methods of the three networks are interwoven via special workshop methodology. On three spatial levels

- Meso: Entire city
- Macro: Inner City and City Harbour
- Micro: City Harbour Core Area

6 workshop teams will discuss new development concepts and elaborate long-term or short-term recommendations for action. Rostock shall be conceptually prepared for a quantum leap to a Baltic Sea Region regiopolis. Accordingly, the colleagues from Rostock hope for a cross-sectorial alliance of experts from various disciplines that exceed professional and national borders. The free view on Rostock’s numerous chances and opportunities combined with “best practice” insider knowledge of professional planners, business developers as well as project managers, tourism experts or e.g. navigators that goes along with everyday life experiences from so many different Baltic Sea cities promises a highly innovative working atmosphere and feasible recommendations.

So everybody will be able to transcend boundaries of profession and hometown in Rostock for 3 days, enjoying transdisciplinary working, having a good time in Rostock.

In addition, we will experience external qualification and inspiration. Two formerly leading experts in their field of expertise were involved here, namely Prof. Lucyna Nyka from University Gdansk (Dean of the Faculty of Architecture) and Morten King-Grubert, Senior Strategy Adviser, Tendensor International from Copenhagen. Prof. Lucyna Nyka will hold a lecture on „urban potential of old harbor - water landscapes on an inner city edge“. Morten King-Grubert speaks on the topic: Talent management and place promotion. Gunnar Platz, *Planco Consulting* will introduce the concept of how to settle and promote small-scale cruise ship business in the South Baltic Sea Region.

And - last but not least - we look forward to the principles of urban and community development deviated from the UN Habitat III-Initiative that will be explained to and discussed with us by Michael Susdarkis (Paris). Michael Susdarkis represents the INTA. INTA is a global membership association where public and private policymakers and urban practitioners come together. “

Outcome

Economists, heritage protectors, planners and anthropologists from all over the Baltic Sea region had a joint experience, worked hard in the workshops, shared and exchanged ideas and made new contacts.

On the last day, the workshop groups presented their ideas to the local politicians, colleagues', the press and local NGO's. The general recommendation was to bridge the heavy traffic corridor between the inner city and the inner harbour and develop the harbour area with a mixed use of housing, offices and culture.

Oskarshamn, Sweden, October 1-4, 2017.

“Social sustainability: public life in streets and places”

Due to too less participant, the seminar was cancelled.

3. PROJECTS

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

4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The above-mentioned seminar in Rostock was a joint seminar with the Smart and Prospering Cities Commission and the BSR JOHANN project.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

The Planning Cities Commission don't have a communication officer. From time to time the chairman write 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 2018-2019

The Commission will continue to organize 1-2 workshop/seminars together with different host cities around the Balti Sea. At the moment, we don't have any fixed appointment for 2018 and 2019, but we are in a dialog with Oskarshamn, Gdynia and Kaunas.

At the general conference 2017 our chairman Niels-Peter Mohr will look for interested host cities who are ready to “sign in”.

Niels-Peter Mohr
Chairman of Planning Cities
September 24th, 2017