



## ACTIVITY REPORT

### PLANNING CITIES COMMISSION

NOVEMBER 2021 – OCTOBER 2023

#### 1. General description

##### Chairmanship

The Members of the Steering Committee:

Paulina Szewczyk from Gdynia (Chairperson), Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga (Vice Chairperson), Frida Brunner from Visby, Björn Grönholm from Turku.

##### Secretariat

City of Gdynia, City Planning Office, Hugo Kołłątaja 1, 81-332 Gdynia, Poland supported by UBC Secretariat, Wały Jagiellońskie 1, 80-853 Gdańsk.

##### Aims & goals

The Planning Cities Commission is a network of professional planners around the Baltic Sea Region.

The Planning Cities Commission aims to:

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

#### 2. Meetings/seminars/conferences

1) The UBC Smart and Prospering & Planning Cities Commissions and the City of Kiel held the Seminar “**District of the Future**” on 14-17 June 2022 in Kiel.

25 city planners and project developers from 13 UBC Member Cities took part

There were three challenges:

1. What can be done to get the identity of a District of the Future: Holtenau Ost?
2. What relationship should be created between the existing part of the city of Kiel and its new district - Holtenau Ost.
3. What are the concepts of development that could support the process of bringing life into the Holtenau Ost area?

##### Outcome

The dominating ideas were that the identity of Holtenau-Ost could be built on existing buildings, details and urban structures. Connections could be created in a sustainable and smart way, including water taxis/ferries. The area has a potential to become a new urban centre, a destination, 5-min city with mix-use, nice public spaces and greenery. The life is already there - activities like Waterkant Festival could remain and even be extended to bring more interest to that area. There is a chance to build a sustainable, all age community with smart technologies in Holtenau-Ost.



2) UBC Planning Cities Commission held the “**Energetic, Energy On-line Meeting**”, on 15 December 2022

Over 30 participants from UBC member cities attended.

During the meeting we discussed:

- What has changed in approach to architecture and urban planning in terms of energy production and consumption since 24 February 2022?
- Will the current Energy situation accelerate the changes in Energy production in the Baltic Sea Region? Are there any temporary solutions?
- How can we reduce electricity consumption in the city? Should we have dark streets, close swimming pools, reduce heating?
- What lesson, can we get from this crisis, what actions municipalities can do right now using this situation?

#### Outcome

**Wojciech Folejewski**, Chairman of the Board/CEO, OPEC District Heating Enterprise Ltd, Gdynia presented possibilities of increasing energy efficiency of heating in the Baltic Sea region. He focused on Poland, whose major challenge is the process of decarbonization, and Denmark, where green energy has been a top priority for decades.

**Niels-Peter Mohr Nielsen**, former Head of Strategic Planning, City of Aarhus and former Chairman of UBC Planning Cities Commission, a self-employed Danish urban planner who lives and works in Rostock, outlined the current situation in Denmark in terms of energy production and district heating, described the impact the situation in Ukraine had in this regard and how future cities and landscapes will look like as a result of that.

**Minna Heiniö**, Central Lighting Project Manager, City of Turku, talked about Light installation in times of reducing the energy consumption and presented the City Light Show in Turku. An estimate of the event's electricity consumption showed that if each visitor switched off a 10-watt lamp at home for one hour, it would be enough to compensate for this energy consumption. But the main purpose of the event was to rebuild social relations after the pandemic shutdown and to revitalise the city, which benefits culture, tourism and business.

The participants attended a short workshop held by **4cf The Future Literacy Company**. During the workshop, the main goals, threats and opportunities for the energy systems of the BSR cities were considered in the light of the world situation.

3) The **UBC Talks webinar** was held on 30th May to prepare better to the workshop during the Seminar to be held on 13-15 September 2023 in Turku, and look into the local approaches to the holistic revitalisation of urban waterfronts.

Almost 20 participants took part.

#### Outcome

**Anna-Leena Jokitalo**, Urban Planning Architect, **Turku** and **Paulina Szewczyk**, Deputy Director of City of **Gdynia**, City Planning Office presented the plans and project of transformation of space in the waterfronts areas accordingly in Turku and Gdynia.

**Evelina Ozola**, Riga City Chief Designer, **Riga** presented “Riga Street Design Manual” – a system of guidelines for streets, greenery, lighting, urban furniture etc. to be used for both existing and new streets for sustainable, safe urban environment.



**Henry Bertilson**, Head of Spatial Planning at **Umeå** Municipality in his presentation “Social sustainability as structuring pillar for urban development” addressed the subject of need for a holistic yet structured comprehensive approach and value-creating community planning.

4) The UBC Sustainable Cities & Planning Cities Commissions and the City of Turku held the Seminar “**Revitalizing urban space connected to the Sea**” on 13-15 September 2023 in Turku.

Almost 60 planning architects, climate and environmental experts from 19 cities took part.

The UBC Planning and Sustainable Cities Commission met to contribute significantly to visioning work by including the perspective, ideas and feedback from international experts and specialists from all around the Baltic Sea. Together they were to gather ideas and make suggestions to feed into the city’s work in the future for the development of the area of **Maritime Turku**.

### Outcome

For the first workshop area ARTUKAINEN the mixed land use were proposed on existing/former airport structures, fulfilled with the urban pattern created in human scale accompanied with the green corridors, natural stormwater solutions improving biodiversity and sustainable mobility transportation opportunities. The a main axis was proposed as a sequence of key public spaces, public transport hubs and iconic buildings.

The second workshop area THE INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT BETWEEN PANSIONTIEN AND POHJOISSALMI - part of the Turku waterfront - was studied by as many as three project groups. All of them worked according to the trend of planetary planning. The participants focused on climate responsibility, proposed solutions based, among others on the idea of a well-connected 15-minute city with housing for different communities, jobs needed to build the economic growth of the city and its inhabitants as well as social infrastructure and sustainable mobility were much considered and proposed. Environmental issues were strongly emphasized, biodiversity, energy production and stormwater management for a regenerative urban future.

The third workshop area was the sequence of public spaces VEISTÄMÖNAUKIO AND VARVINTORI, ARCHIPELAGO BOAT TOUR, BORENAUKIO. First step was removing the possibility of parking in these spaces, greening the space and create possibilities for better physical contact with the water: with river and stormwater as well. The new activities were proposed for their users to make them more attractive all year round for different age groups of users.

5) Joint UBC Planning Cities and Safe Cities Commission workshop to be held during the XVII UBC General Conference in Palanga „**Civil protection and urban planning. Building a resilient city**” on 24 October 2023.

We would like to discuss during the workshop:

- What and how can we do in our cities to get prepared for increasing number of hazards taking into account both civil protection and spatial planning perspective?
- How can we prepare to support future reconstruction of Ukraine ensuring its resilience and sustainability.
- How we can increase and strengthen the cooperation between city planners and civil protection specialists.

In the workshop the participants will have an opportunity to share their experiences during the discussion using the most effective methods for discussion like brainstorming, 635 Brainwriting, etc.



### 3. Projects

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

### 4. Cooperation with other organisations

The UBC Planning Cities Commission took an active part in the **9<sup>th</sup> VASAB Conference of Ministers** responsible for Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region, 1-2 June 2023, Wismar (Germany) and **Expert's Conference** on the updated VASAB Vision 1 June 2023 in Wismar.

During the 9<sup>th</sup> VASAB Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region endorsed VASAB Vision 2040 for the territorial development of the Baltic Sea Region.

The heads of national delegations and invited organisations, including Union of the Baltic Cities, gave the statements that included: key topics in the Vision 2040 and possible future actions how to make the vision a reality. The Union of the Baltic Cities' statement was given by Ms Paulina Szewczyk, Chairperson of the UBC Planning Cities Commission.

Chairperson of the UBC PCC took also part in the panel discussion at the **Expert Conference on the updated VASAB Vision 1 June 2023** in the session "Reflections on the VASAB Vision 2040 from spatial planning research and practice" and discussed about possibilities of implementing the vision and making it a reality from the point of view of urban planning practice.

### 5. Communications

The Planning Cities Commission doesn't have a communication officer. From time to time the chairperson writes articles to Baltic Cities Bulletin, different magazines, websides about our work.

### 6. Other activities

As the UBC Planning Cities Commission supports the UBC and strengthen the UBC cooperation in the field of city planning, the chairperson of the UBC Planning Cities Commission, Paulina Szewczyk, Gdynia, took part in the **CREST (Creative Repurposing of Educational Spaces for Innovative Student-centred Environments) project Multiplier event**, which was held in Gdańsk 7th November as well as on-line.

Chairperson of the UBC PCC made a presentation on how the results and experiences from the project can be transferred to the local level and be used to enhance the cooperation between local public authorities and higher education institutions. Cases from the UBC member cities: Umeå, Gotland, Riga and Karlskrona were presented.

### 7. Action plan 2023-2025

The Commission will continue to organize Seminars together with different host cities around the Baltic Sea. One Seminar will be organized in person and at least one virtually, per year.

At the moment, we are in dialog with the city of Gdańsk to organize the Seminar in September 2024 and we are also in the very early stages of planning the Seminar in Riga in 2025.

Paulina Szewczyk, Chairperson of Planning Cities Commission, September 17th, 2023