

XIV UBC General Conference Panel discussions 25.10.2017 – summaries

**Wednesday 25 October 13.30
13.30–15.00 UBC 25th Anniversary session**

A festive session devoted to the achievements of the UBC in the service of its cities and the region, as well as to the central role of cities in promoting European values and cooperation.

- Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC
- Bo Frank, Lord Mayor of Växjö
- Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the Committee of the Regions
- Piotr Grzelak, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk
- Jaana Simula, Cultural Chief at City of Pori, Chairperson of UBC Cultural Cities Commission
- Jørgen Kristiansen, Deputy Mayor of Kristiansand
- Krista Kampus, Senior Adviser and Head of the Sustainable Development Unit – Baltic 2030, CBSS

Moderator: Alan Atkisson

Panel discussion (20 min.):

Discussions were about the role of the UBC in shaping the Baltic Sea Region, what the situation today might be if the UBC had not existed, and about the ways to show solidarity.

The main argument in the discussion was that UBC has provided a platform for the cities to come together and learn from one another. In addition to these, UBC has enabled the cities to provide better services to their citizens through partnerships and made possible for the voice of the cities to be heard in the EU and on macro-regional levels.

Providing a platform for communication and cooperation is today increasingly important in order to strengthen solidarity, to tackle populism and extremism and to achieve a safe region to live in together. Solidarity is two-way communication and no single person has the wright answer to the problems that Europe is currently facing. We need to talk with and especially listen to one another and help each other out in this task.

Solidarity is also about rich countries helping poorer countries in Europe and globally, using the freedom of speech in a wise way, treating others with respect and equality, and finding tools for e.g. integrating refugees and immigrants to the cities and societies.

Alan A.: Today we are celebrating UBC's 25th anniversary. What do you think would be different about our region, if UBC did not exist (with reference to the movie "It's a Wonderful Life")? What is the essential role that the UBC plays in the quality of life, progress and sustainability of our region?

Piotr Grzelak, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk: For Poland, a scenario without the UBC could be a disaster. Poland might not be a member of the EU, without the previous cooperation with the UBC. Membership in the UBC has also helped being a member of the EU.

Per Schöldberg, Deputy Mayor, Växjö Municipality: UBC opened up people's minds to different cultures around the Baltic Sea Region and thus brought nations and people closer together, made communication between different types of people possible. We can be in touch with our colleagues in other cities with any problems or questions we might have, on a city level. This openness of communication contributes to a safer region for us to live in.

Krista Kampus, Senior Adviser and Head of the Sustainable Development Unit – Baltic 2030, CBSS: UBC has benefitted the cities on three levels: Providing better services to citizens through partnerships in the UBC, enabling the voice of the cities to be heard in EU and macro-regional levels, harmonizing cultures of governance and political processes that the cities in different countries have.

Jaana Simula, Cultural Chief at City of Pori, Chairperson of UBC Cultural Cities Commission: It's about everybody learning from each other.

Jørgen Kristiansen, Deputy Mayor of Kristiansand: After the iron curtain fell, the work that UBC has done has been about building down walls between people and nations, getting to know each other and to learn from each other.

Alan A.: At the end of this session, you will be formally adopting the Växjö Appeal, which is a united pledge, from the cities in the UBC, to tackle "Rising Populism and Euroscepticism." Part of the Appeal speaks of cities "showing solidarity" with moral rules and human rights. For each of you, what does showing solidarity look like in practice, at the city level?

Jørgen K.: Showing solidarity is to take our share of the refugees, rich countries helping poorer countries not only in Europe but also on a global level, using our freedom of speech in a wise way, treating others with respect and equality.

Alan A.: Respect is a practice. Cities are where we live and where we should show respect.

Piotr G.: In difficult situations, as in Europe now, we tend to think we should fight [the problem] and close our borders. Instead, we should focus on clever solidarity and find models and tools to integrate e.g. immigrants.

Per S.: Solidarity is not one-way but two-way communication. Nobody has the right answer at the moment. We need to talk and especially listen to one another and help each other out. That is the only way to get through these complex issues – that is solidarity.

Jaana S.: Solidarity is about the opportunity to educate yourself and learn, it is about enlightenment.

Per B.A.: (Adoption of the Appeal on Tackling Rising Populism and Euroscepticism.)

Wednesday 25 October 15.30

15:30–17:30 Leadership for the future – cities as leaders for glocal sustainable development (plenary session)

Keynote statements on leadership by cities in various fields of life by invited experts and mayors/city representatives. Interaction with the participants.

Panel 1 - Development of Cities and Region

Peter Schenk, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, EC Coordinator for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region "EUSBSR as driver for BSR development" (presentation)

Panelists - statement/ message 5 min each

- Gunars Ansins, Deputy Mayor of Liepaja
- Alessandro Cenderello, Managing Partner for EU Institutions, Ernst & Young
- Peter Schenk, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, EC Coordinator for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region "EUSBSR as driver for BSR development"
- Wolfgang Röttgers, Councillor, Kiel
- Anne Stenros, Design Director, City of Helsinki
- Mantas Jurgutis, Kaunas

Panel discussion and questions (20 min.):

Topic in this panel was Development of Cities and Region. The discussions focused on city design and the environment. Main conclusion was that environment should be an integral part in all strategic city planning. Special importance should also be placed on involving the ordinary citizens in the environmental work as private persons and collaboratively.

Question from the audience: Saara Estlander/Helcom, posed a question to Anne Stenros about the connection between design in the city context and the environment.

Anne Stenros has worked more on the strategic level and strategic design in creating Helsinki city strategy in order to open up the eyes towards the future, not in the actual physical city building etc. Environment has been involved all the way in Helsinki's discussions for the new city strategy but more as citizens' involvement as private persons and more collaboratively – this and the idea of civic city is an important emerging trend.

Question from the audience, Tonu Koru, Tallinn, posed a question to Wolfgang Röttgers about twin city ties between Tallinn and Kiel, on if the cooperation has been profitable and about plans for future cooperation:

Councillor Röttgers did not understand the question so there was no answer to this question.

Panel 2 - Environment and reuse of resources

Panelists - statement/ message 5 min each

- Carina Svensson, Chair of Environmental Board, Malmö
- Per Schöldberg, Deputy Mayor, Växjö Municipality
- Jyrki Myllyvirta, Mayor of Lahti
- Shirin Reuvers, Cities Manager, CDP

Panel discussion and questions (20 min.):

Topic in this panel was the cities' work in tackling climate change, the tools and means that are available to them, and UBC's role as a platform and facilitator in making the sustainable development goals (SDGs) a reality. Cities are where most people live their lives, which is why cities' actions are crucial in whether we achieve the vision of the SDGs. Issue of tackling climate change is a very complex one and UBC can provide the platform for the cities to discuss the matter together to come up with solutions and to help each other out.

The cities' climate work and all city decisions should be clearly linked to specific SDGs so that the connections are transparent and understandable to everyone. In combination with strategic planning, it is important to share practical tools and hands-on experience, which is what cities are good if not the best at. Written strategies and goals on sustainability can be quite abstract and should be edited into a form more easily comprehensible to the average person, such as computer games (see e.g. www.games4sustainability.com).

Cities should also be able to have data to support the SDGs: right indicators for each SDG are needed, as well as the means how cities can measure their SDG activities.

The topic of tackling populism and nationalism was also touched at the end of the session. The conclusion was that involving young children, hearing and learning from their thoughts and arguments, and teaching the young to be critical about the different information online and in social media are an important way to tackle extreme thinking.

Per Schöldberg from Växjö Municipality highlighted Agenda 2030, in which Malmö and Växjö both have very ambitious goals. The whole Växjö city budget is mirrored towards Agenda 2030. UBC is a great platform to inspire all its member cities around the Baltic Sea to develop and help each other out, because the task is a very complex one and, therefore, not a job for simply one or two specialists in a single city. UBC platform would be the perfect environment to develop the SDGs together. We can help each other out very much.

Carina Svensson/Malmö stated that all city decisions have to be linked to the specific SDGs so that the connections are transparent for everyone.

Shirin Reuvers/CDP argued that there has to be data available to support the SDGs – right indicators for each SDG need to be discovered, as well as the means how cities can contribute to them and how to measure this. CDP develops a platform together with the cities in order for the cities to be able to track their progress.

Alan A.: Global indicators are much too general. Cities can solve this problem because cities are the places where the action happens and data is available.

Question from the audience: Jaana Simula, Cultural Chief at City of Pori, Chairperson of UBC Cultural Cities Commission, about if there are (informative) games on how to teach people about how to act in a sustainable way.

Alan A.: In Poland there is the Centre of Systems Solutions that produces games that are appropriate for cities and on the regional level. The most recent game is on the SDGs.

Shirin Reuvers/CDP: City of Paris has put an online game together for its citizens, where you can play around with the activities you take, how much emissions you have reduced and how much closer to your goal you get – a great way to engage the community.

Per Schöldberg from Växjö Municipality stated that games are about storytelling, of making an easy access instead of reading a report with several hundred pages. There should be an environment with easy access for the average person, the ordinary citizen, whether young or old, to grip what sustainability is about. The seventeen UN SDGs can be quite abstract. In combination with strategic planning, it is important to be practical and give practical tools and hands-on experience – these are what cities are very good if not the best at. Then you can create story telling around this.

www.games4sustainability.com

Question from the audience, Pilar Meseguer/City of Turku, commented on the issues of populism and nationalism that were discussed in the previous panel: We need to analyze our actions in the past that have caused the rise of populism and nationalism and get stakeholder engagement, since at the moment progress is not made, also not in the themes of sustainability.

Alan A.: Is there another way to deal with nationalism in our cities; is there some stakeholder process we could use to understand where it is coming from?

Per S.: Involving young children and teaching them to be critical about the different information online and in social media is one key to hold back extreme thinking.

Carina S: Important to start working against populism and nationalism with young children and get their views and knowledge on the issues, on what not to do anymore.

Alan A.: Cities are reclaiming virtual space by naming themselves as knowledge platforms, bringing people and youth involved, in a range of topics and on how to navigate this difficult future. For most people, everything happens in the cities. That is why what we all do in the cities is crucial in whether we achieve the vision of the SDGs.

Per B.A.: Important to show that the UBC is handling the matters discussed today. We have to deal with the issues in the cities and to show leadership.

(Resolution on sustainable development goals was adopted.)