



Summary of VASAB workshop

“Smart urban governance in times of transition. Resilience of small and medium cities in the Baltic Sea Region”

6 September 2018, Liepāja, Latvia



Digitalisation – how technologies can help and make smart cities?

1. What are the current challenges and problems?
 - *Insufficient digital skills (for elder generations), citizens are not prepared to use digital services*
 - *Services are ready, but urban landscape is not*
 - *Development of services is too fast and chaotic, it is difficult to set up standards in such pace, regulations often come late*
 - *Discrepancy between real demand and supply (more tailored policies are needed), most of technology is invented in private sector, therefore they have leading role in digitalisation*
 - *Threat for nations and persons to lose personality*
2. What is what we want to reach? How the future should look like?
 - *Shared economy – benefit for environment and management of time (beneficial system for shared economy)*
 - *Transparency – showing how public money is distributed*
 - *Technologies will ensure decision making process that is based on participation and feedback basis (involvement of civil society)*
 - *Health sector will benefit*
 - *Unfair use of digitalisation will be prevented*
 - *Drones will be delivering goods in remote areas – rural areas will benefit*
3. What measures and steps should be taken to reach desired future?
 - *Designing unique products and services to support small town survival*
 - *Use of 3D technologies (to make cities more attractive)*
 - *Elaboration of a strategy and action plan for management of digitalisation (e.g. strategy for digital connectivity)*
 - *In civil society it is difficult to have a good plan for the future – it is hard to predict which technology will disrupt and take the lead*

4. How VASAB can support these measures?
 - *Collect and disseminate good practice and also bad experiences to learn from*
 - *Support projects in Baltic Sea Region on smart digitalisation*



Entrepreneurship – how cities can support business development?

1. What are the current challenges and problems?
 - *Demography trends and outmigration*
 - *Scale of businesses and market size - not many businesses would like to invest anymore in small cities, market potential is limited*
 - *Historically in many cities there have been highly specialised businesses, which have to adopt now to current markets and trends by re-training employees and to change products*
 - *Location – many small cities are far away from transport corridors and transport hubs (connectivity should be improved)*
 - *Digital connections (if there is a good internet connection, more jobs could be done remotely)*
2. What is what we want to reach? How the future should look like?
 - *Quality of life is a factor that can keeps people living in small towns (e.g. accessibility and quality of education)*
 - *Collaboration between education institutions (schools, universities etc.) and businesses, cross-sectoral collaboration*
 - *Good stakeholder involvement in order to ensure good quality of life - internal environment of society of small and medium sized towns (all groups of society should be involved in planning discussions of cities)*
 - *Flexibility in rules (e.g. if there is an empty house and no one is interested to invest in it, it could be rented out for free or symbolic price to create co-working places, cafes etc.)*
 - *Smart shrinking*
 - *Strong local leadership with vision, which is created together with stakeholders (local leaders e.g. a strong, visionary mayor matter a lot in change)*
 - *Long-term commitment planning (not only for political election period)*
 - *Changing mind-set, being a bit of "crazy" to support change*
3. What measures and steps should be taken to reach desired future?
 - *Simpler taxations for small and medium sized businesses, tax incentives for small municipalities to attract business*
 - *Simpler bureaucracy and rules*
4. How VASAB can support these measures?
 - *Knowledge exchanges and case study sharing*
 - *Networking and dissemination*



Social space – how to create inclusive cities and ensure the feeling of belonging?

1. What are the current challenges and problems?
 - *Levels of social-economic equality are raising*
 - *Need to increase the feeling of belonging to a place*
 - *Safety (both physical, social, resource safety to be resilient)*
 - *Weather (northern) – people do not go outside, it has impact on culture and mentality, therefore impacts also local economy*
 - *Need of public space for citizens to meet and interact*
 - *Stratification and segregation of society (by age, income, education etc.)*
 - *Unemployment in small cities*
 - *Citizen involvement in decision making is still weak*
 - *Need of defined balanced communal values of life*

2. What is what we want to reach? How the future should look like?
 - *All challenges will be disappeared*
 - *Balance between individual and social values (safe space both inside and outside)*
 - *Open space for personalised interaction, comfort in public and private spaces – open space suitable both for introvert and extrovert people*
 - *Access to public good and services, services in local neighbourhoods*
 - *Cities being lifestyle responsiveness*
 - *Safety ensured*
 - *Implementation of social innovation*
 - *Common creative idea of a city*
 - *Cities are made for children, elderly, disabled people etc. – cities are for all*

3. What measures and steps should be taken to reach desired future?
 - *Smart, inclusive, evidence base designed social policies (both national level, city (municipality) level)*
 - *Ensuring financing*
 - *Find out priorities and categorise them*
 - *Using new tools, applications etc.*
 - *Monitoring different social groups*
 - *Ability to pilot project, to test and to prototype*
 - *Policies adapted to silver/ grey economy, cities encouraging healthy lifestyle to citizens*
 - *Making politicians more professional (give them evidence based solutions)*
 - *Use scientists and researchers to ensure knowledge based solutions*
 - *Strategic long-term plan, action planning for communities with involvement of citizens*

4. How VASAB can support these measures?
 - *Providing knowledge based research results/ policy making*
 - *Capacity building for politicians, experts*
 - *Facilitating networking (interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral)*

- *Expert involvement in taskforces for solving city issues*
- *Involvement of end-users in planning*
- *Selecting different cases (good practices to distribute and spread experiences), encourage prototyping*
- *Provide knowledge to EU and BSR level, CBSS, globally and to others*
- *Help local municipalities*



Public space – how to ensure that physical space of cities is made for everyone?

1. What are the current challenges and problems?
 - *Lack of spatial plans*
 - *Lack of social interaction*
 - *Lack of diversity*
 - *Lack of continuity*
 - *Space is not only a territory*
 - *Conservative approach – plans do not depict reality (shrinkage of cities)*
 - *Car dependency*
 - *Lack of staff*
 - *Lack of financing*
 - *Opportunities – free space, environmental quality and innovation*
2. What is what we want to reach? How the future should look like?
 - *Green, sustainable, inclusive cities*
 - *Tech oriented, smart cities, but nature is preserved*
 - *Good quality of life*
 - *Accessible for all*
 - *Approach changed from problem solving to addressing needs*
 - *All social groups are involved in planning processes*
 - *Strategy or plan for inclusive towns*
 - *Cities with dedicated places for youngsters*
3. What measures and steps should be taken to reach desired future?
 - *Ensuring planned concentration*
 - *Having plans and strategies*
 - *Ensuring all social group involvement*
 - *Create "public space hotspots" for strategic importance of public space*
 - *Education as a tool to create vivid towns*
 - *Multifunctional spaces*
 - *Training for staff and mentoring*
 - *Collaboration of neighbouring municipalities*
 - *More public debate*
 - *Exchange of experiences*
4. How VASAB can support these measures?
 - *Upscaling local territorial planning*
 - *Providing case studies, experience exchanges*
 - *Raising role of public spaces as a strategic tool to reconstruct structure of towns*