



THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Cultures, Politics, Societies

Editor Witold Maciejewski



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The Baltic Sea Region and the relevance of regional approaches

Lars Rydén

1. How the word “region” is used

This book is about a region, and how to study a region. A particular region, the Baltic Sea region, is in focus but there is also the general issue of how to understand the development in and of a region. How should such a study be done? Are there general tools for understanding regions that we want to apply? What constitutes a region, and the process of regional development?

The concept of region is used mainly in two ways. Firstly a region may be a part of a state, that is a county or perhaps a province. We then refer to an area where the inhabitants commute to work and study, and conduct more or less daily trips to buy goods or services, and where there is a considerable economic interaction. The concept of regional policy mostly refers to this and is below state but above city or municipality level.

The word region is also used to denote an area that consists of several states or parts of states. This concept of inter- or multinational regions is the one used below.

The traditional concept of regional geography is relevant here but far from sufficient. We will need to look at regions in many ways – their landscapes and environments, their societies and their histories, the people living there, the economies and so on. These pictures will together form a richer image of what a region is, why we talk about and think in terms of regions and how we prefer to constitute regions. Below, we will compare the Baltic Sea region with regions in other parts of the world, and thereby put our own region in perspective.

It should be mentioned here that not everyone accepts the concept of a Baltic Sea Region. The argument seems to be that it is too diverse, has too little internal contacts, that communality is lacking, and that therefore there are really no reasons to call this a region. It is certainly true that the present generation inhabiting the region do not know each other well at all and thus did not realise that they belonged to a Baltic Sea region as such. I will, however, argue here that this is not in itself an absolute criterion of presence or absence of regionality, and that there are many other ways to see the relevance of regions. Instead, we may in general point to the need to give the world some structure to understand it, a structure which tells us of which parts it consists.

How to define a region

Administrative *state borders* are an obvious way to structure the world. But there are many other demarcations than political ones to be used when structuring the world.

If we use the human dimension, *the people* living in the world, then language, culture, religion can all be used to define regions.

The *physical shape of the world*, the landscape or the waterscape, is another principle to make up regions. In the mixture of water and land, we see continents, islands, coasts, lakes, and rivers, we see mountains, deserts, forests, plains and so on. Regional geography deals with these features.

Yet another way to structure the world is *the biology*, the life forms living in the world. The biologists define life zones, each of which is inhabited by a characteristic collection of species of plants and animals. Biologists talk about bio-geographical zones, sometimes vegetation zones or – in American jargon – biomes. Examples of such zones are the arctic zone, the pine forest, also called the boreal zone or taiga, and the broad-leaved forest zone if we focus on northern Europe. Further south there are the tropical forests, deserts etc.

There are interesting interrelations between these different principles for the definition of regions. Sometimes these interrelationships are obvious. Thus deserts are defined geographical areas, but they also have very special biology and are inhabited by special peoples, often nomads. In short it is clear that the culture, economy and, in general, living conditions of a people depend on the physical conditions and the biology in the area in which they live. From this it follows that even if we define regions using one principle – often the geographical one forms the starting point – the definition is expected to be of significance for other ways to structure the world as well.

Table 1a. The definitions of the Baltic Sea Region in major co-operative projects

Project	Definition	Purpose of co-operation	Comment
The 1992 Convention for the Protection of the Baltic Sea Helsinki Commission, HELCOM	The Baltic Sea, including all sub-basins and Kattegat, with their drainage basins	Environmental protection of the common water; monitoring and reporting	The original 1974 convention referred to the same waters, but did not include the drainage basins
Council of the Baltic Sea States, CBSS, from 1992	9 coastal states + all Nordic states, i.e. Norway and Iceland are added	Intergovernmental co-operation in the region	The EU Commission takes part as observer
Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea 2010, VASAB from 1992	Nine coastal states + Belarus; In Russia the drainage basin + Murmansk regions included	Co-operation of spatial planning between ministries of planning	
Baltic 21 cooperation	Same as in CBSS	Sustainable development in the region	From 2001 as a CBSS cooperation
Union of Baltic Cities from 1991	Drainage basin of the Baltic Sea, same as	HELCOM Cooperation between cities	

2. How water can define a region

What about the Baltic Sea region (BSR), what is it? It may be defined in several ways. One way is to look at the sea and the areas close to the beaches of the Baltic Sea itself. We will then end up in a region consisting mostly of the sea itself. This was the approach taken when the first international agreement on the BSR in “modern” times was written, in 1974, the Convention of the protection of the Baltic Sea. The organisation set up to work with it, which is hosted by Finland and situated in Helsinki, is known as the Helsinki Commission, Helcom. The focus of the Convention was on the sea itself, and activities like shipping were important. A considerable monitoring activity regarding the Baltic Sea was agreed on in the convention and thus Helcom became an unusually lively contact point for the countries around the Baltic Sea during the Cold War.

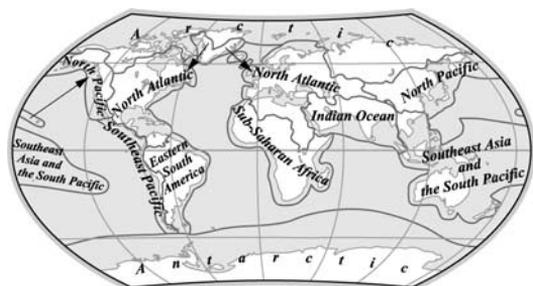
Geographically it makes more sense to include not only the coasts of the sea but also the inland connected to the sea through waterways and rivers. This land is called the drainage basin of the sea, or the catchment or watershed in American jargon. Geographically, a region was classically very often defined in this way – a drainage basin. There were several reasons. Conditions within the basin were often comparable. Historically, travels were most easily made on water and therefore interaction in the region often dominated over those with the world outside the drainage basin, in both peace and war.

In Europe there are six large sea basins. These are the areas draining to the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and finally the White Sea and Barents Sea basins. The classical Mediterranean region might be the best known of these. In the world as a whole it is possible to point to 60 such areas connected to a local sea or other larger water body. Well known are, for instance, the Great Lakes district in the USA, the Lake Victoria region in Eastern Africa and the Gulf of Thailand in Southeast Asia.

These basins are often international. The Baltic Sea region contains, in addition to the 9 coastal states, 5 inland states with larger or smaller areas draining to the Baltic Sea. The Great Lakes district in North America holds 12 US states and Canadian provinces, and Lake Victoria in Africa five states, in their respective basins.

The Baltic Sea

It should be noted that the definition of the Baltic Sea is not given a priori. The Sea may be delineated in several ways. The so-called Baltic proper is the water south of Åland and east of Denmark. This body of water is in constant exchange with waters around it in the north, south and east. These waters were included in the Baltic Sea convention in 1974. They are the Bothnian Bay, the Bothnian Sea, the Gulf of Finland, the Gulf of Riga and the Belt Sea. Kattegat, north of the Öresund, was also included, although Kattegat may easily be included in the North Sea. Kattegat is marine and salty, but it has much in common with the Baltic Sea when it comes to its environmental situation, since it is shallow and threatened by a large influx of polluted water from its drainage area which is mostly agricultural. In this way the area defined in the Convention includes seven interconnected water bodies. Delineating the Baltic Sea in this way is today in common use.



Map 1. See map The main sea regions of the world on p. I. Ill.:
Radosław Przebitkowski

Also, rivers with their catchment or drainage basins often define geographical regions. Classical river basins are the Amazonas, i.e. the Amazon river basin in South America, the Yellow river basin in China, the Nile basin in Africa, and the Rhine river basin in Europe. Also these larger rivers typically flow through several states.

It is typical that the common water body is important to all states in the region. We thus often see international agreements on shipping, fishing, coastal management etc.

International river commissions exist all over the world. These commissions often survive in times when all other contacts between the states in a drainage area are frozen or even broken. An example is the Mekong river commission in Southeast Asia that continued working during the Vietnam war. The task of the commission was to agree on water levels for the rice cultivation, but political issues were discussed secretly in the commission. We may, of course, remind ourselves that the Helsinki Commission on the Baltic Sea worked during the Cold War period.

As mentioned, up to recent times, rivers, and, in general, water was in fact a more important framework for communication than land – and it still is in many ways. This means that river basins or the basin of a Sea were areas of more communication within themselves than with the surrounding world. They were regions in this basic sense, areas of communication. From this it follows that they had much common history, common culture, and common economy. In the Baltic Sea Region the Viking period, and the Hanseatic League period, remind us of this basic fact. However, contact with the Baltic Sea was important politically much later and in fact is still important.

3. The Baltic Sea region

The Baltic Sea *drainage basin* includes wholly or partly the territory of 14 countries altogether with some 85 million inhabitants. In addition to the nine coastal states – Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Denmark – we also find Belarus with almost half its area in the basin, and smaller parts from Ukraine, Czech and Slovak republics draining through Poland in the south, and very small parts of Norway draining through Sweden in the west.

Germany contributes to comparatively smaller land areas along river Odra and the coast itself. However, some of the areas that drain into the North Sea through the Elbe are often of concern in a Baltic context by tradition from Hanseatic times. In Denmark, about 50% drains to the Baltic Sea, if the Kattegat is included, which we will do here.

The whole drainage area covers 1,745,000-km². If the Baltic Sea is included in the area, it will be 2,250,000 km². This is about 15% of all Europe.

The border of the drainage basin is called the *water divide*. The Baltic water divide is easy to find where the basin is limited by high mountains. On the Scandinavian mountains in the

north and west, the water divide and the national border between Norway and Sweden almost coincide along the ridges. In the south, the Carpatian mountains form the water divide which again practically coincides with the national borders between Poland and its two southern neighbours. In the east, however, the divide is found in a much flatter landscape. In Belarus the sources of the rivers of Dvina/Daugava going to the Baltic Sea and Dniepr flowing to the Black Sea are close, and equally in Ukraine where sources of river Bug running to the Wisła and further to the Baltic and Dniestr running into the Black Sea are close. These are the areas where the Vikings crossed from the Baltic to the Black Sea basins one thousand years ago. Also, in Germany and Denmark the divide is found in a flat landscape.



Map 2. The Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Basin, i.e. the drainage area of the Baltic Sea, including Kattegat, is marked by the bold line. In this region all water flows towards the Baltic Sea.

The nature of the Baltic basin is extremely diversified (see chapter 9). It may be described from many perspectives. In general, it is characterised by boreal forests in the north, agricultural areas in the south and an abundance of water. In the southernmost part of the area are the Tatra mountains and the mining areas of Czech and Slovak Republics which drain to the Baltic Sea via the Odra and Wisła rivers. Just north of these mountains, in the southern part of Poland, western Ukraine and Belarus, is a densely populated industrial and agricultural area. The arable land, 20% of the catchment, is concentrated here. Poland alone accounts for 41% of the arable land. In the south, the population density is also by far the highest. Poland accounts for almost half of the 85 million population in the basin with its 39.5 million inhabitants.

The eastern rim of the Baltic Sea with the Baltic States and Russia south of St-Petersburg is less populated, but in some parts of this area, there is a concentration of heavy industry. The largest rivers in the east are the Nemunas and Daugava.

The central part of the drainage area, with Sweden, Finland and north-western Russia has a large number of lakes, with 83,000 of them in Sweden alone. Here, we find Lakes Ladoga,

Onega, Peipus/Chudskoe, and Vänern, which are the largest in Europe. The water from Ladoga and Onega in Russia enters the Gulf of Finland via the important but short Neva river.

The forests dominate in the north, and here forestry is economically very important. Sweden, Finland and north-western Russia together have close to 80% of the forests of the basin. In the most northern and north-western parts of the basin, we find large and high mountains, the Swedish and Norwegian fjell. This region is only sparsely populated. A number of large rivers, several with impressive waterfalls, are found here, many of them with hydroelectric power stations and large upstream reservoirs.

The Baltic basin has a very long north-south extension, about 3,000 km. The climate is thus dramatically different in the north and south (see chapter 9.7). The mean annual temperature in the north is 0°C. At the southern end of the basin, mean annual temperature is 8-12°C. The Baltic Sea basin receives a comparatively large volume of precipitation each year. Evenly spread out over the basin, it amounts to 40 cm of water per year. The north has an abundance of water resources and at the same time a small population. In the south, on the contrary, precipitation is lower and evapotranspiration higher. Water availability is limiting agriculture in large areas of Poland.

The degree of urbanisation is largest in the western and central parts of the region, with a maximum of over 90% in the industrialised areas of Sweden and Denmark, and decreasing to below 70% in the east. St Petersburg is the largest city in the region with its 5 million inhabitants. There are a total of 29 cities with more than 250,000 inhabitants.



Figure 2. The landscape of northern Sweden. Photo: Andrzej Szmaj

From the point of view of the people, the Baltic region is very heterogeneous. In fact looking at the region it counts as one out of three European areas or large diversity, and one out of three important fault lines between different peoples, cultures, and political systems. The other two are the Caucasus where the Islamic/Arabic, Turkish and Slavic/Orthodox world meet, and the Balkans where the

Turkish, Slavic, Germanic and Italian cultures meet. In the Baltic, the interfaces are between the Nordic (west), West Germanic (south), Finno-Ugric (north) and Slavic (east) worlds.

We find diversity, however, not only in these three regions. International regions are typically diverse areas of intercultural communication. It holds for the classical Mediterranean world with its diversity of people from Greek and Roman as well as North African and Middle Eastern origin. It is equally possible to say a similar thing about e.g. the North Sea basin with its Scottish, English, French, Dutch, German and Scandinavian components. However the three mentioned areas of “cultural fault lines” had a special situation after the end of the Cold War and the aftermath of the “deconstruction” of the Soviet Union and the communist states.

Table 1b. Frameworks for regionalisation

Category of regionalisation	Purpose	Methods	Possible outcome
Political	Political co-ordination	Creating security Building common institutions	Formation of Unions, Federations
Economic	Economic co-operation, increasing markets	Free trade agreements	Common banking Formation of free trade areas
Planning	Planning co-operation, co-ordination of infrastructure		Common authorities
Environmental	Environmental protection	Setting common rules, surveillance	Common monitoring and reporting

The peoples of the Baltic, as well as in other regions, are thus diverse in their origins, cultures, languages and roots. However, the smaller, more homogenous areas do not necessarily lie within one state, but are rather more often intersected by national borders.

Within the European Union this has been recognised, and an interesting policy to support co-operation and development in small areas with common history, culture and often environment has been implemented. These smaller areas include e.g. the Archipelago region between Sweden and Finland, the Pomeranian region with Poland, Germany and Sweden, and the Green Lungs region between Poland, Lithuania and Belarus. In general, the European Union's approach has led to less emphasis on the national states, as these often trans-border cultural regions at one end and the multinational regions at the other get interest and support. It has also promoted pride of local cultures, as these get more recognition.

4. Three ways to study a region

How to study the development of a region? Here I will use three different conceptual frames: regional development as a *political process*, as an economic process (perhaps progress), and as a so-called spatial process. The three may be studied separately, but are connected, most interestingly through the paradigm of sustainable development.

Regional development as a political process focuses on *regional institution building*. Political co-operative structures, from loose alliances to federal states, exist all over the world. In northern Europe we may point to the Nordic countries as a relevant example. Here a long common history of political interaction in war and peace over almost a thousand years finally evolved into a situation where we find much co-operation in many fields, from politics and economy to culture, education, and environmental protection to mention but a few. The Baltic Sea region may also be studied from this aspect. It is certainly true that it has been more divided than united over the period of the Cold War, but the situation before and after has been much different.

Regional development and international institution building have several corollaries. The first is obviously the historical process of *state formation* – regions are made up of states – and the connected development of democracy, *democratisation* (see Section IV on democracy). Regional development may be seen as a maturing of the states and their democratic institutions, making them increasingly better working and more fair. Democracy serves the purpose of a non-violent tool to *solve conflicts*, but is also used as a huge machinery for redistribution of the resources of society to make it *more equal*. We may refer to the development of *human rights*, and *minority rights*. In political regions all over the world these rights are expected to be respected and “regional authorities” may intervene in the internal politics of member states to support democracy and human rights.

The political process of international institution building serves the important political purpose of managing of international conflicts. Thus political regions are, to a larger or smaller extent, also security regions, or, in slightly stronger wording, *security communities* (that is, they are not, or not only, defence alliances, see chapter 32). An example of a security community is the European Union, where there is a large family of institutions to resolve conflicts between member countries, in spite of the fact that fifty years ago the most devastating war ever was fought between these same countries. We may thus ask to what extent the Baltic Sea region is developing in the same direction.

Secondly, regional development may be seen as an *economic process* – or even progress – focusing on *trade* (see Section VIII on economy). Even if trade is as old as human society, its present enormous volume and extent has become a new phenomenon in the 20th century. Economic development has to do with production and the creation of markets to sell and trade the products. A basic pattern in the world as a whole is that trade flows are largest with neighbours, if artificial constraints do not interfere. The natural development of trade thus leads to the development of international regional co-operation and region formation. In the BSR trade has a long history from the Hanseatic League in the Medieval times and on to the present day (comp. on the Hansa in chapter 2).

Economic development also includes the increased capacity, diversity, and sophistication of the economic life of the members in the region. Region building will allow member states to specialise and rely on other members for that which they do not produce easily themselves. They may also rely on common institutions for investments and economic development. With a large common economy they also become dependent on each other for economic stability, labour market and currency politics.

Thirdly, regional development may be seen as a *spatial process* focussing on *resource use*. Obvious components here are communications infrastructure with the laying of roads, railroads, ferry lines etc, habitation infrastructure with urbanisation and city development of large and smaller cities. Spatial development also includes the use of *natural resources* – forest, agriculture, mines, energy, etc – and the *environmental impact* of resource use. Resource use also requires an infrastructure, consisting of hydropower dams, electric grids etc, but it is equally connected to the use of land, that is *regional planning*. This way of studying a region is close to the classical one in regional geography, where the natural resources and their use for economic development was a main concern.

The concept of *sustainable development*, finally, combines social, economic and environmental aspects. Here, social may, or perhaps should, be defined in such a way that it contains political and security aspects as have been discussed above. It certainly also includes the economic aspects and the use of natural resources. A weak point is that these different dimensions of sustainability are not related to each other in a well defined theory.

The three frames for regional studies can be defined more precisely and thus allows us to compare regions. It is thus possible to compare development of regions, e.g. regarding economy and democracy, and thus see if regions develop in similar ways. It is possible to do this in a more quantitative way using the notion of *indicators*. There are, however, hundreds of indicators in use and it is not easy to choose the most relevant ones or even to measure indicator values. However, a start to do that has been achieved in the study of sustainability of different regions. For the Baltic Sea region a first report from the Baltic 21 project in 2001 contains a series of indicator values for the region and their change over time.

Below we will look more closely at the Baltic Sea region from the various perspectives indicated above. We will use a historical approach to clearly describe development, but with the purpose to critically analyse the contemporary situation.

5. The origin of the Baltic Sea region – state formation and development of democracy

In the Baltic Sea region state formation can be seen from about 1000 AD. The first states were not strong and the central power did not control the entire area of the state. This was the situation during all the Middle Ages. The better organised states in southern and continental Europe had a considerable influence on the events in the BSR and some historians have called this the “europeanization” of the Baltic Sea region, referring to the period 1100 to 1400.

Strong centralised states developed in the Lutheran parts of the region around approximately 1600, after the Reformation. These states had the military, economic and juridical power. They collected taxes, customs etc to become the economically most powerful actors. The power was used to raise and equip armies and conduct war with large military force. The wars in the 17th century, the Thirty Years War and the following Polish-Swedish war, spread to involve all states in Europe, from Spain to Russia. They were indeed devastating. When in the 20th century this was again the case the warring states became equally centralised, equally strong and with equally disastrous results. The 1600s and the 1900s have many sad parallels, as the most violent centuries in our history.

The strong centralised state invariably used its monopoly of violence also against its own inhabitants. This violence took all kinds of forms of oppression. As a result, a dichotomy developed between the state and the rest of society, the so-called civil society. A strong central power, in the form of a king or otherwise, has in history been shown to have its limitations



Figure 3. Some Nordic countries have a long tradition of public involvement in national politics, here illustrated by the election of the medieval Swedish king Magnus (13th century). Ill.: Uppsala University Library

as a guiding principle for developing a society. The alternative principle is the *division of power*. This was common in the historical origins of the societies in the Baltic region. There were many power holders and the king just had his special role to fulfil as “head of state”. Originally a leader – a king – was appointed by *election*. It may be that few members of the society were allowed to vote. Well documented procedures for the election of kings exist from the middle ages, around the year 1000, in e.g. Iceland, Sweden and Poland. *Elected assemblies*, parliaments, are also very old. The first Icelandic parliament, the Allting met in 1000, the first Swedish Riksdag in 1334, and the first Polish Sejm in 964. Novgorod had a representative democracy well in place in the Middle Ages from its origin around 900. Likewise, the first *courts* are equally old. In Old Uppsala, which in Viking times was a political and religious centre in the Baltic Sea region, one may still visit the mound where court cases are said to be have been conducted every 11 years.

The three basic components of a democratic state – the executive power or the king, the representative power or the parliament, and the judging power or the court – thus featured as “social inventions” very early. These inventions were repressed in the strong states in the 1600s, but came back during the 1700s with the French revolution and the American constitution as spearheads.

The first modern constitution in the Baltic Sea region was written in Poland in 1793, just before its final eradication as a state, and in Sweden in 1809. However, it was much later that a modern process of general election, in which all groups were allowed to take part, was established. Finland was in fact the first country in the world to allow women to vote in 1906. This was the establishment of true *representative* democracies, where the inhabitants could express their preferences in elections, elections which were “*free and fair*”: all those who want to run for election should be given a fair chance to do so, and all those who want to express their opinion and criticise or argue for various candidates in an election should be free to do so.

Those who have been given the confidence of the people in election, rule the country for a defined period of time. However, in a fully matured democracy, the people do not sit back and watch between elections. They should have the possibility to intervene, take part and be active. This is *participatory* democracy. Just as representation may take many different shapes, so does participation. The *political parties* were central. But there are many other kinds of groups that may pursue political goals without running for parliament. These are the so-called *interest groups* or, in general, non-governmental organisations, NGOs. NGOs are important components of the civil society in mature democracies. Interest groups have always existed in societies but it was not until the end of the 19th century that modern political parties developed. NGOs, blossomed in the western democracies after the WW II. These groups are important in societal development, especially when the public authorities are weak.

In a democracy ideally a *majority decision* should also be fair enough to allow all groups not only to accept it, but in fact also work for it. This of course requires a considerable respect for the process, and the process requires a considerable degree of respect for the partners. Integrity should be a key word, which is related to the development of *human rights*, and *minority rights*. The respect for those who have a different view or ideology or even more so, religious belief, appeared in a formal sense from the 1600s at the end of the large wars with the treaty of Oliwa outside Gdansk in northern Poland in 1660, as an extension of the older Polish law from 1573. It has since developed in many ways (see chapters 30 and 31). A more recent invention is the *ombudsman* institution, a Swedish name for a person or authority that represent a weak group in society. Disrespect for others, especially ethnic groups, is still a major concern in many societies. It turned out to be devastating in the Balkans after the Cold

War. It is also a true challenge in the Baltic region as our societies become increasingly more mixed and multi-ethnic.

The description of regional development within the paradigm of the political process may be seen as the *maturation of democratic institutions*, making them increasingly better working and more fair. We may also refer to the net of social contacts. The trust between individuals and organisations that this represents is today more often referred to as *social capital*. There are many ways in which social capital can express itself and become meaningful (see chapter 12). One of these is in the relationship between the state and civil society. A proper working state needs both legitimacy and confidence. A state that does not have *legitimacy*, that does not in a very clear way represent the inhabitants, will be seen as separate from them. It is through the democratic system that the state acquires legitimacy. A legitimate system also has some *confidence*. As an example, people in general are willing to pay taxes since they know that the money goes to health care, streets, schools, and other common responsibilities, and trust they are used well.

It remains to be said that in the world as a whole, the process of state formation and democratisation has only begun. Large parts of Africa are now at the beginning of this process as colonisation has ended. In Latin America the wars have largely ended after the systems shift and the development of democracy is promising. Much of the development that many people desire, a peaceful world, a protected environment and a good economy, will have to wait until the strong absolutist state changes in a more democratic direction.

6. The present political scene – co-operation increases

The formation of political co-operative structures, from loose alliances to federal states, is a central part of regional development. Tighter structures, federal states, include in Europe with among others the United Kingdom, with England, Scotland (for two years with its own parliament), Wales and Northern Ireland (now with increasing autonomy), and the German Federal Republic. In the world as a whole, larger states are federal in some sense. This is the case for instance in North America with USA and Canada, in Brazil and in the Russian Federation. Groups of states with extensive co-operation but which are not federations include the Nordic countries and Benelux. The outstanding inter-state political structure in Europe is the European Union. It is an economic union but also a political one in which many common institutions have been created to allow the co-ordination of political measures as well as the co-ordination of legal initiatives and changes. There are today in the 15 countries of the EU, both those who want a tighter structure, so called federalists, and those who argue for a looser structure, the unionists.

Is the Baltic Sea region in some sense a political region? It is clear that a considerable move towards the creation of common institutions has marked the will to create political co-operation in the region. Foremost is the Council of Baltic Sea States, the CBSS, created in 1992, including the 9 coastal states, all the Nordic states (with Norway and Iceland included) and the European Commission. The inland states, e.g. Belarus, do not take part. The CBSS has since autumn 2000 an enlarged mandate and will be charged with all inter-governmental co-operation in the region. Its secretariat in Stockholm has a Polish Secretary General and personnel from several other countries in the region. The presidency in the CBSS rotates between the member states, which chair the council for one year at a time. In 2001-2002 the

presidency is held by Russia. The CBSS manages e.g. social issues such as crime prevention in the region, and works to combat drug traffic. Presently issues such as common security and economic integration are not treated in the Council and it is thus still a rather weak political body. As from the autumn of 2000 it includes, however, the work towards sustainable development in the BSR, the so-called Baltic 21, with its own secretariat in Stockholm. At present there are three common intergovernmental secretariats in the region, the Helcom Secretariat in Helsinki, the CBSS with the B21 Secretariat in Stockholm, and the VASAB Secretariat in Gdansk. To this should be added a co-operation at the parliamentary level, as the Nordic council regularly has invited the three Baltic States and Poland since the early 1990s to join their annual meetings.

Co-operations at a lower administrative level have also bloomed in the region after the systems shift. The Union of Baltic Cities, UBC, was formed as early as 1991 through an initiative by Kalmar in Sweden. It has developed to support a large number of so-called town twinnings, or friendship towns, and has its own extensive program. In 2002 it numbered 99 member cities. It may be compared to associations of cities on the national level, and the now long-working association of cities on European level as well as in other areas of the world. On the sub-state, that is county, level there is also a Baltic Sea region co-operation, called the BSSSC, Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Council, with its office in Copenhagen. In addition the CPMR, Council of Peripheral Maritime Regions, with its main office in France, has a Baltic Sea Region group, just as there have now been for a long time similar groups in e.g. the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

In all these developments of new institutions since the systems shift the region referred to is the Baltic Sea basin. The Baltic Sea region is thus developing politically as a region of co-operation. It is true that some parts of the region, such as the arctic area, are less tightly involved in all these new activities, but they are nevertheless invited. For political reasons Belarus has not been invited to join most of these institutions. For geographical reasons Ukraine, Slovakia and the Czech republic are also normally not involved although they share small pieces of the drainage basin. However Norway, although its share is equally small, is invited in its capacity as a Nordic country.

7. The Baltic Sea region as a security region

Baltic Sea region politics have been a key element in foreign politics in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway since 1990, while Germany has focused on the unification of the two German states. Since the early 1990s the Swedish government investments have been several tens of millions Euro yearly summarising over the state budget as a whole. If one adds the values of initiatives from counties, municipalities, various associations, down to the individuals, the sum is certainly much larger. Why these considerable efforts?

At least when reading official documents, the answer is clear and not entirely altruistic: Security politics. The goal for the Swedish Baltic Sea politics is to develop regional security to avoid further East-West confrontation, a backlash of the Cold War. Instead of a costly confrontation and military threat on the other side of the Baltic Sea we would like to see co-operation and market possibilities.

This is the “Realpolitik” dimension. One can be perfectly sure that there is as well a very real human dimension to the Swedish interest, as well as of that in other countries, in co-

operation and investing in the region. Countless individuals are motivated by a concern for fellow human beings in neighbouring countries which suffered greatly over many years. This concern is of course additionally powered by all those who have a refugee background in some way, and sometimes also have family in the former communist countries.

The security dimension of regional co-operation has been addressed as the issue of security community (see Section VI on security). A security community is a region in which disputes are not expected to escalate to armed conflict but are settled through various peaceful means, for instance, through negotiations in common institutions. Making a survey of such 'security regions' in the world highlights that they are characterised by democratic institutions, economic integration, and well-developed broad co-operation.

Seen from this perspective, the politics in the Baltic Sea region in the 1990's and later is not very different from what happened on continental Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, with its economic support, especially the Marshall plan, to the new German Bundesrepublik, and the efforts to increase co-operation between two of the main warring parties, France and Germany, and the support of democracy and creation of common international institutions. These efforts led to the coal and steel agreement, and later to the European Union. One might have divided opinions on many aspects of the development of the European Union. I do not think, however, that anybody would expect a conflict between member states to end up in an armed confrontation. The Union is in fact a security community. Other examples are the Nordic Countries, and the countries in North America.

Will the Baltic region ever be united? What are the arguments for and against? On the positive side, we have the development of a number of common institutions, such as the Council of Baltic Sea States, and the incorporation – or co-operation – of the “new democracies” into existing structures such as the Nordic Council (see chapter 37). The further development will lead to the enlargement of the European Union and NATO to cover part of the region. One might question if this is good, considering that not all of the region will be part of these institutions. We do not want a new iron curtain, not even further away. The recent events in the autumn of 2001, where a common fight against terrorism entered a top position on the political agenda, have led to an unforeseen co-operation between the USA and the Russian Federation, which may ease these concerns for the situation in the Baltic Sea region.

We may also analyse the development in a broader context. Traditionally, security was considered to depend on military might. The assumption was that an aggressor could be “fended off” at “the fence”, the border, and the defence capacity was proportional to military strength. This is obviously no longer a viable option. No country will be able to defend itself in this way in a situation where nuclear weapons can be used on both sides. Also, conventional war in modern societies will lead to extensive destruction on both sides. Security can thus not be created through one-sided national politics, but rather requires agreement and co-operation.

The background to such a possibility in the Baltic Sea region should not be forgotten. In the Baltic Sea region, the Cold War ended in 1989-91 with very little military action. The former Soviet forces left the territories of the three Baltic States and the former allies in 1994, even if some military personnel remained in Latvia up to 1999. The situation of Russian-speaking minorities in the three Baltic States, a constant source of aggressive behaviour from the Russian authorities, has improved considerably over the ten years after the systems change. A comparison can be made to the two other regions which are interfaces between East and West, the Balkan region, or between East and South, the Caucasus region. Wars broke out here. It is not so easy to explain why this did not happen in the Baltic Sea region. We should be grateful that it did not happen. Thus, even if much remains to be done,

the security situation in the region is improving continuously. The inhabitants in the region will hopefully be able to trust that they are living in a corner of the world where war is not an option. This requires continued international co-operation and friendship with neighbouring countries.

We might conclude by citing one representative of the American Embassy in Stockholm when invited to give a speech on the American view of the Baltic Sea region. He formulated the American hope for the future: “we hope that in some years from now in the area around the Baltic Sea we will continue to see a community of States that constructively co-operate to address common problems”. This is certainly what we have today – a community of states that create common institutions to address common problems in a co-ordinated way.

8. Economic regional development

As everywhere else the economy in the Baltic Sea basin developed from the available natural resources, firstly within agriculture, hunting and fishing. Even if self-sufficiency was dominating, some trade was possible. During the Hanseatic times, the Baltic region was a net exporter of skin and fur with Novgorod as a trading centre. During the period of about 1200-1400, the small town of Skanör on the southern tip of present Sweden, arranged an extraordinarily rich two-month long market for herring each year. Salt, to conserve the fish, was imported from salt mines in Lüneburg in Germany, and Kraków in southern Poland. Mining was also part of the early economy. The mountains in the north and the south of the basin have been mined since historical times. The earliest mining enterprises were, however, in mid-Sweden where the copper mine at Falun 300 km north of Stockholm was the largest in the world and very important for the Swedish economy during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. Likewise, iron mining in this region of the country was important. During the Middle Ages and up to the beginning of the 19th century, Sweden was an important producer of iron, mostly for the war industry in Europe. In southern Poland and in the Slovakian mountains mining began very early, and became very important in the 18th and 19th century when coal mining increased.

It is not clear how much people could be supported in this economy, but it is assumed that the population rose only slowly during the Middle Ages and reached an estimated 10% of its present size around 1600. In the 18th century improved agricultural methods, including the introduction of the potato, and improved health care started an early modernisation of the societies in the west. Family size increased, and the population began to increase steeply. Several millions emigrated to the Americas, and in this way eased the pressure on resources. The eastern part of the Baltic region also went through a phase of mass emigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, also mainly to the United States. The reason was mostly repression, especially of the large Jewish population.

Up to 1800, only some 2-3% of the population in the region lived in cities, and more than 80% worked in agriculture. During the later part of the 1800s *industrialisation* developed in the region and requirements for the centralisation of resources, including workers, led to the expansion of cities. The technology, such as cars and railways, and energy production – oil and electricity – developed by the industry itself allowed the building of a new transport infrastructure. This increased efficiency and boosted industrialisation. As railways and roads expanded, direct connection to Baltic Sea shipping, still large, was not mandatory and cities developed far away from water courses. The most important industrial branches in the

Baltic region include food, pulp and paper and forest industry, mines and steel works. Other important industrial branches are manufacturing and the metallurgic and galvanic industry. Some were big polluters. Important industrial cities and centres became mid-Sweden, north Sweden, the St-Petersburg region, the Baltic States with a concentration on Riga, northern and eastern Germany and southern Poland. At the beginning of the 20th century cities were in general still small, but in the coming years the cities grew further as the expanding industries swallowed most of the population increase.

In western countries, manufacturing industry had its peak around 1970 when close to 70% of the work force was still in industry. Today this figure is below 20% in the Nordic countries. The difference is the result of the collapse of several branches such as ship building and part of the steel industry, and a steadily increased productivity through introduction by, in particular, automation. In central and eastern Europe, industrial production since the systems change is in a process of changing the old technology, largely from the 1950's, to a modern technology which allows competition on a larger market, requires less resource use and is more acceptable for the environment. This requirement for change has resulted in a crisis for many industries after the systems change (see also Section VIII on economy).

In the period after WW II the resource use per capita has increased about four times in the west of the region. The GDP increased equally. In the west the *affluent society* was created. It can be measured in many ways e.g. through energy use per capita. It is today about four times larger than around 1950 and about 10 times larger than in the agricultural society the century before.

Since the end of the 20th century, population increase has abated and in fact ceased in almost all of Europe. The birth rate has decreased and the balance between fertility and mortality has established itself on a much lower level. The political problem is now an inverse population pyramid, with too few young persons having to support too many elderly. The crucial question now is not population increase but how much resources each individual uses.

The time of industrialisation and urbanisation is often referred to as modernisation. This phase has today changed into something new, a *post-modern society*. This new society has an economy that is increasingly based on the service sector. Less than 20% of the population is – working in industry, and less than 5% in agriculture. Manufacturing industry is dominated by high tech branches such as information technology and biotechnology. The ratio between GDP and resource use, increasing in the western world since about 1970, is an early sign of a *future dematerialization* of the societies.

The steps – agriculture, industrialisation, urbanisation, affluence, population stabilisation – seem to be typical steps that many regions in the world are passing. The Baltic Sea Region is at the forefront of this scheme. A large part of the world has not yet entered into industrialisation and does not have access to e.g. electricity. Large parts of the world have not stabilised their populations.

9. Economic regions

European post Second World War trade history is well known. In the west, trade barriers were systematically removed to create a common free trade zone, which eventually led to the European Union. Its predecessors, such as the Coal and Steel Union from the 1950's and its follower the EC, and the EFTA, European Free Trade Association, from the 1970's were steps on the way to the union. Today, in addition to the 15 states in the European Union,

several states have special agreements with the Union to facilitate trade, including e.g. Norway, Switzerland and Greenland (which is the only country that was, for a period, part of the Union but decided to leave).

In the east, economic co-operation within the Soviet Union and its allies in Central Europe was even tighter. This was a natural consequence of the planned economic system. The two systems, west and east, were largely isolated from each other. Exceptions included, for example, the trade between the USSR and Finland as a consequence of the peace agreement after WW II.

More or less tight trade unions have developed in many areas of the world. In North America NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Association, includes Canada, the USA and Mexico. In Latin America, Mercosur includes five states, and in Asia ASEAN, organises most of East and South East Asia, from Japan to Australia. After the systems shift do we find tendencies to develop trade relationships in the area around the Baltic Sea? Definitely. In the political documents regarding BSR from the EU Commission and the individual countries in the region, it is clear that their policy towards the eastern part of the BSR aims at fostering an economic development, new markets and the development of economic life. Considerable sums of money are invested for these purposes. From the western perspective, the “new countries in transition” are potential future markets for their productions. From the eastern perspective, the richer western countries are invited to invest, and foreign investments are seen as a tool for economic development, and the development of a new economic culture and competence (see chapters 45-48).

The results are noticeable. Even if these “new markets” are still small they are rapidly increasing. For instance Estonia’s three largest trading partners are today Finland, Germany and Sweden. The Russian Federation, which of course formally before was the only trading partner, is now further down the list. Increasing numbers of companies from the western part of the region are establishing themselves in the new countries. In Poland by far the largest trading partner is Germany, with Sweden in the second position with a value of about 35 billion Euros in 2000. Russia is in third place due to its major role in Poland’s gas and oil economy. Factors that are obstacles in this process are e.g. the still unclear legal situations, especially in Russia and the three Baltic States, and weak banking development, factors that are rapidly changing. The economic development is impressive during the 1990’s. After a painful economic decline in the early years after the systems shift, the increase has been rapid and during part of the time world record economic growth rates, up to 11%, were noted for Estonia and Poland. Several of the countries in the region are candidates for the European Union and the first countries are expected to join in 2004.

In addition to formal trade agreements to constitute regions, economists also focus on special so-called “growth” regions. In Western Europe, “the yellow banana” – referring to its curved appearance on the map – stretching from London over eastern France and Montpellier to Barcelona in Spain – is one such much discussed area. Another one is the Öresund region, which includes the cities of Malmö and Helsingborg in Southern Sweden, Helsingör and Copenhagen in Denmark, and which may extend to Northern Germany with Hamburg. Is there such a region in the Baltic Sea Region? Apart from the Öresund region, the line from St Petersburg, over Helsinki and Tallinn to Stockholm and perhaps down to Öresund, has been pointed out to have the capacity for extraordinary economic co-operation and growth. It is sometimes referred to as the “blue banana”.

It is clear that the Baltic Sea region is a region of increasing economic co-operation. After the expected expansion of the European Union, the formal economic co-operation will include the entire region with the important exceptions of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. However,

work to develop agreements between the EU and the near regions of NW Russia, especially the Kaliningrad Oblast, is already ongoing, and may make the border less sharp.

10. Regional development as spatial planning and sustainability

The development of a region may also be seen in the context of planning, both regional and local. Comprehensive planning, local plans etc are all part of the larger scheme called *spatial planning*. This concept, though difficult to describe, addresses all kinds of changes in society. Obvious is infrastructure development, building of residential areas, industry etc but also culture, and social development are included. The background to these efforts to develop a holistic concept was the 1980's.

In the mid 1980's the development of the world as a whole was seen as a series of failures. The third world continued to be poor and in conflict despite all developmental aid. The industrialised part of the world had entered a route of immense resource consumption and environmental destruction. Obviously this would, if it continued – lead to disaster. The United Nations were at the time calling a commission to deal with the dilemma, the so-called World Commission for Environment and Development. In 1987 the Commission published its report asking for a new kind of development, called *sustainable development*. It was described as a development that “would allow us to meet our own needs without endangering the possibilities for future generations to meet their needs”.

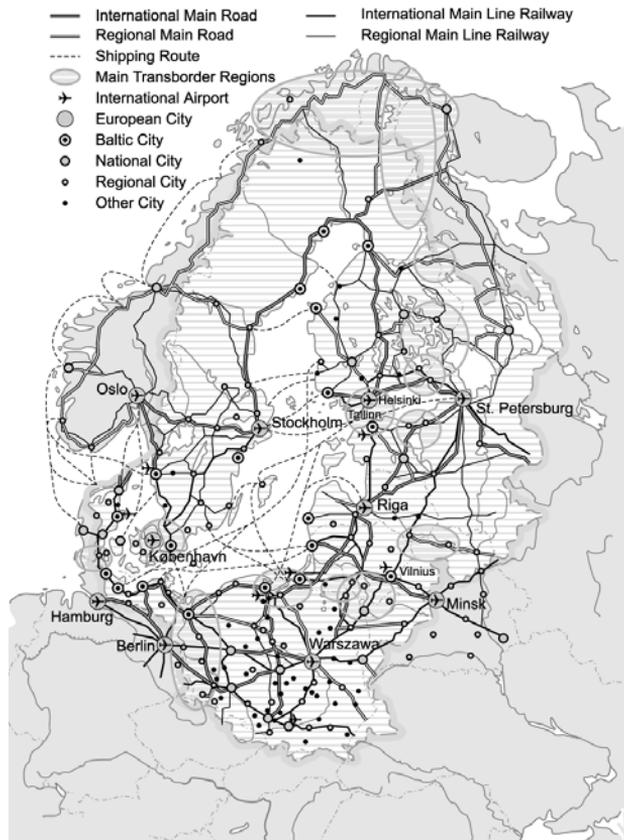
The concept of sustainable development was both political, technical or scientific and ethical. In fact, it was the value dimension of the concept that was stressed most often, not least by the chairman of the commission, the former Prime Minister of Norway, Ms Gro Harlem Brundtland, when she presented the work. Sustainability, it was stressed, could not rely on environmental concerns alone, the so-called ecological dimension of sustainability. It was crucial to take into account also the economic and social dimensions. There were enough examples of how these three dimensions were interconnected to convince people that a good development needed to be comprehensive and include all sides of society. In 1992, the United Nations arranged a conference on Environment and Development, UNCED, in Rio de Janeiro, the Earth summit, where leaders from 178 states and numerous other organisations met to discuss development. So far it is the largest conference ever held. Five documents were signed. Of these, the 400 page Agenda 21, an agenda for the 21st century, is the most remarkable one in its unusual complexity, comprehensiveness and consequence. It details how to achieve sustainable development in a series of areas in 40 chapters.

On the European Union level, co-ordination of spatial planning has been a concern since the 1980's. It is clear that development of infrastructure requires co-ordination. Roads and railroads need to relate to each other. But much more is discussed in the context. A first concrete step to co-ordinate planning in the Baltic Sea region was the conference organised in the fall of 1992 on the initiative of the Swedish minister of physical planning Ms Görel Thurdin. Her proposal was to co-ordinate planning for a sustainable future as a co-operative project in the region in parallel with similar efforts within the European Union. The ministers agreed and created VASAB 2010, Visions and Strategies for the Baltic Sea Area, lagging two years behind the European project which was aiming at coordination by the year 2008. The secretariat of VASAB has its site in Gdansk, Poland. The area that VASAB is looking into is partly larger and partly smaller than the one covered by the Helcom Convention. It extended

further north, to Murmansk, and further South, into Germany. It was the area considered the most relevant for spatial planning.

Also, the following meeting on the level of Prime ministers of the region in Visby in May 1996, dealt with the developmental issues. The ministers then agreed on the creation of an Agenda 21 for the BSR, the Baltic 21 to support a sustainable development in the region along the principles laid out in the Agenda 21 Document from the Rio conference. The Baltic 21, it was agreed, should address seven sectors: industry, energy, transport, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and tourism. In addition, spatial planning with VASAB as the responsible actor was added. Later on, the new sector of education and so-called joint actions have been added to the Baltic 21 process, to make it a very comprehensive programme for addressing issues of sustainable development in the region.

It is clear that improvement of the environment is a very basic component in the Baltic 21 activities, as is proper resource management. But in the longer term, social and economic development will have an equal weight in the agenda. The Baltic 21 co-operation has the potential to become one of the most forceful tools in making the Baltic Sea Region a region of co-operation. It should be recognised that in this respect the BSR is rather unique in the world. No other international region has entered such a process. There are only formal agreements in some regions, e.g. in the western Mediterranean, but nothing as concrete as the Baltic 21.



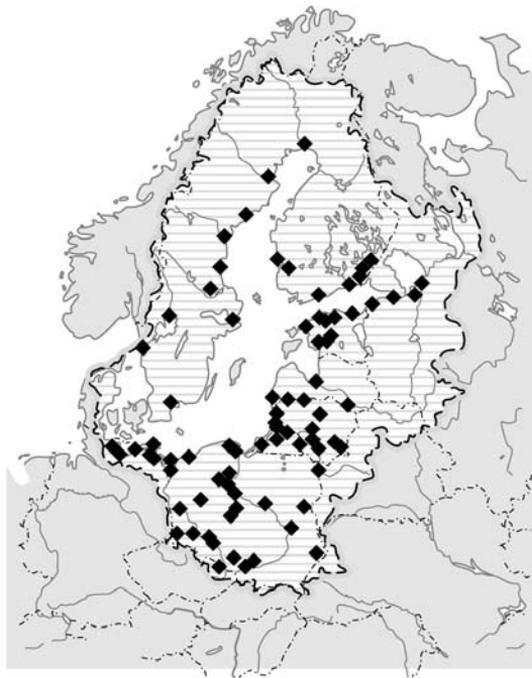
Map 3. The project Visions and strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 is a co-operation between the Ministries of Planning in all countries in the Baltic Region. It was created in 1992 through an initiative by the Swedish Minister of planning, Görel Thurdin, and has a secretariat in Gdańsk, Poland. A first report on infrastructure and spatial coherence deals with urbanization, communication, and energy supply. The strategies for developing the railroad and road networks are illustrated on the maps. (Source: Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010, Karlskrona.) Ill.: Radosław Przebitkowski

11. The environment of the Baltic Sea region

Environmental protection is an important concern in planning. It is natural that regions defined by geographers are relevant to environmental protection. The common water – a river, a lake or a sea – receives pollutants from the entire drainage basin and if the inhabitants wish to protect their common water they have to co-operate. Even if you yourself do not pollute but your neighbours do, your water will still be polluted, or, as most often stated, pollutants do not recognise state borders. However, they are often stopped by borders between drainage basins.

Water is relevant for pollutants in many ways. Pollutants sooner or later end up in water, since either they are emitted with waste water, they leak from land to water, or they are washed out from the air with precipitation, rain or snow.

The common water, the Baltic Sea, was also a priority when, in the first moments of the systems shift in 1990, the Swedish and Polish Prime ministers invited all states around the Baltic Sea to a meeting to support and extend the co-operation in the region. One important result was a rapid improvement and extension of the Baltic Sea Convention. The new Convention, signed in Helsinki in 1992, included a much larger portion of the drainage area of the Baltic Sea. This is a major step forward for the protection of the environment. After all, at least 95% of the pollutants in the Sea come from land and to improve the water situation, it is necessary to come to grips with the root causes of the pollution, that is activities on land. A large program started to remove 132 identified “hot spots”, the worst polluters, in the region. The major banks in the region were engaged to finance the implementation of this programme, which was planned for 20 years, that is up to 2012, and to a cost of some 20 billions of Euro. In 2001 it is fairly well on the way and some 30% of the money has been invested and 20 of the hot spots removed.



Map 4. The main sources of environmental pollution in the BSR.
Ill.: Radosław Przebitkowski (see the map on p. III)

Concern for water

The concern for water is thus well motivated. Water, clean water, is very important to people in all kinds of life situations. Interviews with even poor inhabitants tell us that they are willing to pay quite a lot if they would be given better water. It is reflected by the fact that more than 90% of environmental investments of the newly independent states in the Baltic Sea region after the systems shift were used to improve water, either wastewater treatment or water provision.

Further initiatives for environmental protection in the Baltic Sea Region include the work within the UBC, Union of Baltic Cities, educational activities in the Baltic University Programme, the school project called BSP Baltic Sea Project and several projects run by non-governmental organisations co-ordinated by the so called Coalition Clean Baltic, CCB.

Co-operation for environmental protection in the BSR has a long history compared to other areas of the world. Another long term co-operation exists around the Great Lakes in North America. Later projects have been started in a series of regions around the world, in the drainage basins of seas or rivers. Too often they have been prompted by environmental disasters or, in general, deteriorating environmental situations. Thus the situation in the Black Sea, where such a co-operation started after the systems change, is environmentally in a very bad situation. An important reason is the invasion of foreign species. The Rhine river was the scene for a major outlet of toxic chemicals from a Swiss factory 20 years ago. This led to much improved co-operation between the five states along the river, which today has resulted in a considerably cleaner river. In general, we might observe that such pollution events which may be very destructive for those living downstream of the outlet, do not often lead to conflict or re-compensation claims. Typically, they instead lead to an increased co-operation, development of protection measures and improved environmental safety, e.g. through monitoring schemes and alarm routines.

On the global scene, the United Nations Environmental Programme, UNEP, has taken a lead to start activities all around the world. Thus a monitoring and evaluation project was started in 1999, addressing the 66 water areas. The authority working with the project, called Global Initiative for Water Assessment, GIWA, has its headquarters in Kalmar Sweden. GIWA started its assessment work with the Baltic Sea.

12. Resource use

How do we know if a society is sustainable, or how sustainable it is? A judgement on this topic should be done using measures, or *indicators of sustainability*. Such indicators have been developed for a series of sectors, but often they are not easy to interpret. In practice, questions of resource management dominate. It is clear that use of non-renewable resources is not consistent with sustainability. It is also clear that linear resource flows are not consistent with sustainability either. Thus fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and gas, need to be replaced by e.g. biomass and hydropower, and likewise linear flows of nitrogen and phosphorus in agriculture have to be replaced with recycling of such resources. Accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is a consequence of the combustion of fossil fuels, leads to global warming, and linear flows of nutrients in agriculture, lead to eutrophication of waters, e.g. the Baltic Sea itself. The environmental consequences are thus serious, and will, in the longer term, have economic and social consequences.

So how sustainable is the Baltic region, especially when compared to other regions in the world? The Baltic region is rather well provided with energy resources. Not all of them are, however, sustainable and renewable. Coal was used as mining developed in Polish, Czech and German areas in the south, while forests were the main energy resource in the north. Estonia has long since been independent energywise due to its oil shale mining. Around 1900, hydropower plants and adjoining large reservoirs were built in the northern part of the region. The rapid expansion of energy use occurred after World War II, with imported oil as a main resource. Norway later became the main provider of oil in the

west and Russia in the east of the region. The use of fossil fuel slowly changed character as coal was substituted by oil and oil by natural gas. In particular Sweden, but also Germany, Finland and the earlier Soviet Union, developed nuclear power to decrease their dependency on fossil fuel. In Norway, Sweden and Finland renewable resources account for some 50% of the energy budget, while in e.g. Poland it is close to nothing, while Denmark is improving due to increased use of wind power.

The first report from the Baltic 21 project was published in early 2001 with values for a series of indicators. On a world scale, Colombia University in New York compared 150 countries. Generally, by these measures the Baltic Sea region is doing well, with Finland, Norway and Sweden as No 1, 2 and 4 on the list. The Baltic states are in the first third of the list while Poland does not score well. The list is based on an average of 30 indicator values for each of the countries.

The work cited should be understood as a first effort to estimate the state of the world and its regions from a sustainable development point of view. Even if the results are thus approximate, it is clear that there is a long way to go. Globally it is estimated that resource use will have to decrease to half to achieve sustainability. In the industrialised countries, this factor will be much larger, a factor of ten has been mentioned, to be on a sustainable level if the world as a whole should have an equal resource flow. This is not at all the situation today. Regardless of this rather bleak picture of what is needed, it seems clear that the Baltic Sea region is doing very well compared to other regions in the world. A whole series of interesting projects in the region point to a considerable capacity to improve.

13. Epilogue – regionalisation as part of globalisation

Let us return to the question of how regions are formed? We may ask if regions are *naturally given* entities or if they are *constructed or invented* by those living in them. Geographers and biologist would say yes to the first, they are given by nature. But also those dealing with economy, culture, peoples, languages etc would see them as factual, given certain criteria. One obvious such criterion is *identity*. If identity is the criterion, then regions will be of very different size depending on which parameter is studied.

Social scientists may see regions as *areas of communication*, that is areas that have more communication within them than with the outside world. It is partly connected to the units of classical regional development which are smaller than the national state but larger than the local society. These regions are areas where people work, consume and find social contacts. Authorities think in terms of economic development, schools, social services and health care etc when it comes to such regions. They certainly have more communication within themselves than with the outside world. However, this may also be true on a much larger scale. It is so, for instance, for Europe and even more so the European Union. Such communication may be defined in economic terms more easily, trade, investments etc, but also in e.g. travel and tourism.

There is a third way to define a region. I will simply call these *common interests and responsibilities*. We have pointed out two such reasons, environmental protection, especially the shared water, and the shared security. Regions formed for these reasons exist in many places in the world, and several examples were already given above.

Where do we find the Baltic Sea region in this panorama of types of regions, and approaches to regional studies? As in most regions it is not only one dimension that we see. The com-

mon interests and common responsibilities clearly dominate in the BSR at present. Efforts for co-operation are mostly concerned with environmental protection, and creation of security. Economic co-operation is steadily increasing but is very far from the trade patterns in e.g. the European Union. In an historical perspective we see much common history, politics, and culture. But as the region has been divided a very long time these facts are more theoretical than alive. The very different historical and present experiences we have in the various places in the Baltic Sea region, of course mostly east and west, make us strangers to each other. From this point of view the region needs to be re-established.

The process of regionalisation is naturally discussed in the context of globalisation. Much has been written on the topic of globalisation, and it has been described as a process where common cultures, values and markets eventually encompass the entire world. Coca-Cola, pop music and the trans-national companies are seen as part of globalisation. There are definitely aspects of the globalisation process that fit in region building.

Firstly, globalisation is a long term process, which slowly includes continuously larger areas. It has been going on for at least two generations, or one may even count it from the beginning of industrialisation. Also, regionalisation has this character of enlargement of an originally smaller area. In globalisation, Europe and the USA took a lead. In the Baltic regional context, one may point to the Nordic countries as a core from which the larger area is established, although this is not uncontroversial.

Secondly, globalisation is driven by communication possibilities and market expansion. The same process is seen in the regional context.

Thirdly, globalisation is clearly seen to consist of several stages. Some of these were early such as the spreading of science and technology. Others were later such as the spreading of common media. Between them is the spreading of international economy, language, and cultures. We see similar aspects in regionalisation, e.g. on the economic scene with the establishment of international power companies or banks which are present in all countries in the region. We see less so far of the common language and culture, although it is clear that pop music, movies and other cultural phenomena are spreading regionally.

Fourthly, globalisation goes together with a strengthening of local cultures and a weakening of the national state. This process of stronger local cultures is interesting to observe in the European union expansion. It is also directly supported by the Commission.

As a *fifth point*, globalisation slowly approaches a system of global governance. This includes international conventions in a series of areas, global institutions such as United Nations, and the first signs of a global world order with the Peace Court and more recently the ICC, International Criminal Court. The building of such common institutions in the region has been a major aspect in the discussion above.

Regionalisation is in this way a local aspect of globalisation. The development of regional co-operation around the Baltic Sea is boosted by thousands, or even millions of individuals who conduct projects on scales from personal to governmental. The interest, will and enthusiasm for the common project “developing the Baltic Sea region” cannot be denied. This is in itself worth studying, getting involved in and enjoying as an important and meaningful part of the lives of those people in the area around the Baltic Sea.

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