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14 Education and research as cultural policies

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1. Introduction

Increased educational and research activities concerning the Baltic Sea region in recent years let us speak of them as of some form of distinctive cultural policies. This chapter deals with the potential of these policies as a possibility for transforming the region into an efficient unit of inter- and sub-national cooperation. On the regional level, overcoming the legacy of the past and meeting the challenge of the future places particular responsibility and awakes expectations with regard to educational and research policies. They are regarded as a likely means of transformation, which in a rational manner may help to turn the Baltic Sea littoral states into a cooperating community. A point of departure is an interest group comprising of independent states which, through cultural policies, starts viewing itself as an integrated socio-cultural community.

Benedict Anderson has shown that a community emerges if the belief in it is shared by a sufficient number of its inhabitants (Anderson 1983). In the prospective Baltic Sea community this implies that the inhabitants should, apart from their national or sub-regional background, be able to identify with common patterns and artefacts which they would regard as constituting a distinctive achievement of the peoples inhabiting the Baltic Sea region. Education and research are able to deliver a matrix for regionalism, i.e. regional identification, through the exchange of ideas among networking scholars and the introduction of common, regionally integrated curricula. So far this aspect of cultural policies has often been overseen, which results in the scarcity of relevant enquiries and research papers.

A reason for underestimating the role of regional education and research as cultural policies has often been their conceptual ambiguity. The concept of “policy” is relatively easy to explain as an organised human activity aiming at achieving social or societal change in a structured manner. The concept of “culture” is more complicated as it includes both abstract and material elements. One refers to learned and accumulated experience or knowledge, the other to the man-made part of the environment. The concept of culture connotes both patterns of behaviour and patterns for behaviour (Keesing 1981:67).

Education and research refer both to the realm of ideas and to the realm of observable phenomena. Within the realm of ideas, culture emerges as “the organized system of knowledge and belief whereby a people structure their experience and perceptions, formulate acts, and choose between alternatives” (Keesing 1981:68). In the realm of observable phenomena created by education and research, culture is identifiable in such artefacts as institutionalised, “material” centers of learning and research. Within both realms, educational and research policies create and transmit symbols, including their embodiments in artefacts, such as schools, institutions, degrees and procedures.
2. Context of transition in the Baltic Sea region

During the last decade of the twentieth century the Baltic Sea region witnessed many changes in political and social constellations which had existed in Europe since the end of World War II. In the 1990s regional actors received an unprecedented chance in modern history of defining the region according to new categories and new paradigms. These were different from those of a geopolitically frozen area clearly divided between two military, ideological and economic blocks. The new political situation enabled some countries to regain their independence and made others redefine the old doctrines and world views. This induced the construction of new cultural and spatial awareness.

The new Baltic Sea region seemed attractive as it allowed for both temporal, spatial and causal redefinition of local actors and policies. In the beginning of the 1990s environmental and security considerations, being partly the legacy of the past decades, were still the main driving forces behind budding co-operation in the geographical space denoted by the Baltic Sea region. Gradually, new aspects were added and building up foundations for a sustainable political, social and economic development became of primary concern.

Education and research have been growing increasingly popular and presently they lie at the very heart of the ongoing transformation. In the long run, it is believed, only the society that bases its development on knowledge has a chance to develop and advance in a sustainable manner. This specific stage of development has been called the knowledge society. The Baltic Sea region is a case in point, inasmuch as its development coincides with the general course of events in the European Union and the world. Similar to the knowledge society being declared the main potential for developing a successful and prosperous Europe, improving a Baltic Sea region knowledge society should provide sustainability and growth in the region.

If one applies the slightly outdated terminology of peace studies and international relations, the knowledge society addresses the ideal of a security community as defined by Karl Deutsch in the 1960s. In the knowledge society, instead of the wartime hardware, it is the "software" provided by education and research and generated in closely co-operating states, which brings about cultural change and which, in turn, guarantees security by means of ever closer collaboration, interdependence and growing cohesion. In their capacity of...
Constructing identities and transforming culture, education and research become of strategic importance. Their importance is evident when analysing them as particular definite strategies of regional development. In the following, educational and research policy will be shown as a possible tool and a functional correlate of community construction, region building and modernisation.

3. Cultural construction of a regional community

In the 1990s construction of community in the Baltic Sea region happened through challenging the general mode of thinking caused by the bi-polar world system. For instance, the “sea of peace” metaphor launched during the Cold War had to be revised because, instead of forging a community, it rather weakened the feeling of cultural affinity and communion. The idea did not include exchange and communication among the peoples of the region and, as a matter of fact, the “sea of peace” projected war in its field of discursivity. Instead of closely cooperating partners it implied the existence of enemies in the region. Countries on the southern and northern or eastern and western Baltic Sea coasts did not feel they were members of any regional, socio-cultural community (Cf. Stråth 2000:199ff).

More plausible images of a community in the whole region emerged in the late 1980s. Carefully selected events of co-operation in the remote past provided a more credible foundation for the newly projected regionalism. Trade relation or political domination in the pre-nation state era were employed to present region-building as a natural process. A specific version of history suggested a certain naturally founded, generic community of destiny in the Baltic Sea region. Hanseatic trade or the geopolitical figure of Dominium Maris Baltici were among the most spectacular constructs.

New Hansa. The images of Hansa especially were found suitable for defining a functional region based on historical identity. This referred to former territory controlled by the Hanseatic League, whose towns were efficiently organised in a network partnership stretching from Bergen in the West to Novgorod in the East. With this historical evidence in mind, the policy makers fuelled the debate with carefully chosen examples like, for instance, the New Hansa coined in 1988 by the former prime minister of Schleswig-Holstein, Björn Engholm. For at least a decade the concept of the New Hansa enjoyed the unceasing attention of politicians and journalists and was frequently addressed in the German Ostseeraum-discourse.

However, the New Hansa was not equally attractive to all regional actors. Instead of references to remote history, Scandinavian scholars preferred imagining the future co-operation across the Baltic Sea within the framework tried out among the Nordic countries. In Sweden “soft” environmentalism, i.e. propagating ecology and environmental protection, emerged as a new regional ideology. This was a starting point for many foundations, educational initiatives and government policies. Functional region-building within the scientific community, with a point of departure in the environment and nature protection, became a priority for some of the educators and cultural policy makers and a point of departure for building the region by educational means.

The first educational initiative. One of the most spectacular examples of this orientation was undoubtedly the establishment of the Baltic University Programme in Uppsala in 1992. The program gradually developed other interdisciplinary syllabi to cover such issues as demo-
ocratic institutions and political and social development. Up to now the programme has been associated mostly with environmental protection and sustainable development. In 2000 Prof Lars Rydén, the program director, was awarded a prize for his work “to combine care for environment and nature protection with a sustainable economic development in the Baltic Sea Region”. In a broader sense these are still the main fields of interest of the Baltic University Programme, despite its explicit attempt to promote courses dealing with politics, culture and other issues at the regional level.

Nordic approach. The construction of a Baltic Sea region community emerging in the Nordic countries was also enhanced by some Scandinavian scholars who hinted at a possible evolution of the Nordic identity into a Baltic Sea identity. This was supposed to compensate for the vacuum which allegedly occurred in Norden after it had lost its “Middle Way” status when the iron curtain had collapsed (Wæver 1992). Indeed, the great interest which the reinstated Baltic states enjoyed in the Nordic countries throughout the 1990s could have become a catalyst of cultural change. Increasing subregional co-operation and common educational ventures bears witness to this burgeoning process in which the Nordic countries often provided the most significant assistance to the three Baltic republics. Nevertheless, throughout the 1990s, the Nordic countries were not willing to dilute their relatively homogeneous Nordic identity for an emerging, diversified Baltic Sea community.

Furthermore, the Nordic approach mostly disregarded the role of the three largest national actors in the region, i.e. Russia, Germany and Poland. From the Polish side, like in the Baltic republics, only at the beginning of the 1990s pursuing a new common Baltic Sea identity became part of the strategy towards the European integration (cf. Heurlin 1997a, p.121). An echo of this rhetoric is still present in Poland, yet the attractiveness of the Baltic Sea region community for the Polish politicians started fading away once the perspective of joining the EU became more realistic (Cf. Kwaśniewski 1999). For the Polish public the Baltic Sea region as a community of practice, i.e. a closely networking, policy-based territorial community, still remains to be discovered.

What is the Baltic region? A problem which has accompanied projection of a socio-cultural community is the very definition of the region in the Baltic Sea context. For one thing, the terms denoting sub-areas and their inhabitants shift over time and are linked to political changes, for the other, different sciences have defined the geographical space of their interest in a discipline-specific way. For the natural sciences, for instance, watersheds mark the regional borderlines and according to them the Baltic Sea region is congruent with the drainage basin of the Baltic Sea. Conversely, a cultural definition opens up for a more diversified interpretation but, in reality, a political construction of the region is taking place and it negotiates its field of discursivity with the geographical definition of the subject matter.

Hence, regardless of whether the emphasis is on drainage basin

Figure 52. Students of the Baltic University Programme. Photo: Lars Rydén
or common history, the Baltic Sea region can hardly be defined by institutionalised state membership or exclusion. It is rather, as suggested by some authors, a truly post-modern creation in the sense of a possible, negotiable construction. It may be seen as a region without strict boundaries or with varying boundaries (Cf. Joenniemi 1997:222 and Lehti 1999:435). Depending on definition the Baltic Sea region is as large as from Norway to Ukraine or, when narrowly defined, only covering the sub-regions of the Baltic Sea littoral states. When trying to identify a community or regional identity one has to be aware of these floating connotations.

Like other communities, the Baltic Sea region is made up of history. So far some constructs of the past decade have helped to imagine a common cultural basis by referring to the same nodal points in the region-building discourse. Up to the 1990s, common care of the marine environment was the only platform for pan-regional scientific cooperation. In the 1990s, fields of discursivity created around civil society, human rights, subsidiarity and democracy have contributed to creating a sequence of common denominators for co-operation. Some new pan-regional institutions were established on the grounds of this platform as a proof of progressing regionalism. Broadly understood cultural policies were supposed to follow, among them education and research involving region-oriented academics and students.

4. Education and research as a strategy of region-building

Improving a regional knowledge society is important, inasmuch as it may provide common patterns for and of behaviour in the Baltic Sea region of the future. In this regard the question is whether education and research organised in a regional network and realised through regionally-oriented training and innovation is attractive enough to become a new “unifying” factor for the whole area. The historical record prior to the 1990s in this domain is not very impressive, owing to the fact that the Baltic Sea region epitomised the constraints and limitations of the Cold War policies in a nutshell.

Ecological concerns. The first serious attempt to include scientific research into a regionally-based confidence-building initiative happened with the participation of the natural sciences. Ecological concerns and protection of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea were issues which, despite the Cold War, provided the first functional platform for regional co-operation among the scientists of the region. The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) set up within the framework of the 1974 Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Baltic Sea Area guaranteed that all countries were treated as equal partners and it became one of the first forums of dialogue on the regional level. The convention stipulated, among other things, extended scientific cooperation through the receiving, processing, summarising and dissemination of relevant scientific, technological and statistical information among the parties of the convention, which would further the promotion of scientific and technological research. This could have become a foundation of building the region through common educational and research initiatives.

Nevertheless, the real breakthrough for devising a qualitatively new region-building was shaped by the extraordinary opening of unmitigated and face-to-face contacts between peoples, organisations and institutions. The cultural landscape changed rapidly and both the so-called “transition countries” and the more stable “old democracies” in the Nordic countries and Germany had to adjust to the reality in which a “bottom-up” perspective on regional policy-
making grew more popular. The scientific community was affected by this reorientation and scholars became active participants in defining the framework of transformation. This time, however, not only the ideologically “neutral” natural sciences, but also the social sciences and humanities in general entered the discourse.

Region building from social sciences’ perspective. The fall of the iron curtain brought about the so-called postmodern condition in the social sciences. In studies of international relations, the geopolitical approach based on bi-polarity became a less favoured mode of looking at the developments. Due to new regionalism the realist paradigm with its point of departure in the individual state as an actor in international politics has been particularly subject to criticism and often disqualified. Bi-polarism and traditional notions of security, which in the past had been used as a constant of international relations, have gradually lost their relevance. Building up security by other means, such as promoting education for civil society or enhancing interdependence, has grown increasingly important as a more rational strategy of the region-building process.

Region-building became one of the main categories taken on board by different social sciences as a plausible framework to describe what was happening below and above the statist level in the age of globalisation. Some historians and political scientists saw region-building bearing a great deal of resemblance to nation-building. Their point of departure was that any community, be it national or regional, needs preachers of the community as well as a number of cohesive artefacts to prove its existence (Hettne et al. 1998, p. 419ff). To define region-building meant defining the actors and institutions of the process. Furthermore, following an observation of E.J. Hobsbawm that “nationalism made nations” (Hobsbawm 1993:10) the quest was on to define the ideological content of regionalism. Regionalism, with its artifacts, would seem necessarily to have existed before the region in question was established. The concept of regionalism, i.e. regional consciousness, has emerged as an ideological correlate of the region-building.
Parallel to this direction in studies of region-building, several other attempts to conceptualise regionalism and regionalisation in the Baltic Sea area could be witnessed. For instance, region-building was explained as a strategy towards establishing a Baltic “security community” in a longer perspective (Heurlin 1997b, p. 220). According to this agenda, in the course of the 1990s a gradual transformation of the security dimension in the area has taken place in the direction of regionally oriented “soft” security. Security ceased to be solely a statist, high policy theme, and the “magnetism of integration” made the societal and less institutionalised world-view more attractive for diversified region-builders (Cf. Joenniemi 1997).

New regionalism. The majority of the social scientists and research institutions regarded region-building as a process which could be studied as a model case in relation to some arbitrary ideal type. Many conferences and workshops have been organised, older theories of international relations tried out and new theories formulated (Wæver 1992, p. 31ff). In studying region-building, both old and new theories were tried out and the concept of new regionalism emerged as a means of explaining the qualitative change in policy making in relation to the previous era. The dividing line between the old and new regionalism was at the beginning of the 1990s.

The old regionalism emerged as a correlate of older theories of international relations, formed in and shaped by a bi-polar world system, and classified regional policies as created “from above” by the superpowers. It concerned relations between formally sovereign states and was very specific with regard to objectives, some organisations being security-oriented, others being economically-oriented (Hettne 1999:7f). Old regionalism would be mainly realised through institutions at an international level, propagating a top-down pattern of region-building. Conversely, new regionalism denotes a multidimensional form of integration which includes economic, political, social and cultural aspects and is promoted “from below” by a large number of different types of institutions, organisations and movements.

According to this typology education and research in the region during the Cold War developed mostly within the framework offered by old regionalism. Institutions and policies furthering the cultural dimension of regional policies were few and formalised. Cultural exchange agreements between states and governments, including education and research, were bound to follow a top-down principle of implementation. Cultural agreements not only provided very tight and rigid frameworks of formal co-operation but established limits on who could go abroad to study or perform, and for how long. The antagonised blocks of the Cold War organised their cultural policies without much openness for the ideas developing on the other side of the iron curtain.

The beginning of the 1990s marks a qualitative breakthrough in region-building in the Baltic Sea region. It is at this point that theoretical studies postulate new regionalism as the most fitting matrix for explaining the developments. By definition the new regionalism opens up for a more pragmatic and future-oriented vision of a community of practice based on increased networking within a policy-based regional community. The main argument for it is that in the whole region a great number of new initiatives and new policies have been introduced in order to come to terms with the new reality.

Regionalism the Nordic way. However fitting the dichotomy of the old and new regionalism is for marking the fall of the iron curtain, it may be argued that some limited policymaking within the scenario of the new regionalism was present in the Baltic Sea area throughout the Cold War. Whenever any policies were supposed to serve the ideology on the
The experience of the past decade shows that region-building may be treated a strategy of modernisation. Within this framework, region-based educational and research networks have been gradually made more prominent because a scholarly structured diffusion of progressive ideas in the region has a greater chance of creating a coherent pattern for social and political advancement. A learning Baltic Sea region dominated by trust, norms and networks is able to bridge the gap between the peoples and countries while generated economic dynamism brings all partners more wealth and prosperity. Initialising educational and research networks may be regarded as the most effective strategy of regional modernisation, since scholars and the academic community are probably the quickest to accept common standards and norms.

Consequently, the Nordic Council addressed issues which helped create many non-statist institutions and which were answers to initiatives from below. For a long time, indeed, it was the only viable pattern of a functional and functioning regional co-operation in the Baltic Sea area. From 1946 to 1972, for instance, a Nordic Cultural Commission operated, from 1952 parallel to the Nordic Council, as a permanent co-operation organ responsible for identifying questions and suggesting common solutions in the broadly defined domain of cultural policies. These were initiatives in education, research, popular education as well as in literature, music, theater and other arts (Stråth 1994; Andrén 1994). Within the community of the Nordic countries the new regionalism was practised along with a more formalised old regionalism long before its application in other parts of Europe.

The novelty of the “new” regionalism emerging in the Baltic Sea region since the 1990s is that it has concerned the whole region and has not been limited to the Nordic countries alone. Educational and research cooperation is one of the most spectacular examples of the regional community of practice emerging around the Baltic Sea. Education and research, strengthening the construction of regional identity, have become some of the main tools in the region-building cultural policy kit. More importantly, nowadays not only the natural sciences but also the social sciences provide grounds for co-operation within the scholarly community of the region.

5. Regional Knowledge Society as a strategy of modernisation

Initialising educational and research network. At the beginning of the 1990s the Nordic countries were among the first actors to devise a region-wide strategy of modernisation based on education and research. This was due to their long-lasting tradition of educational networking and co-operation in research that had been tested during the previous decades. After the collapse of the iron curtain the Nordic Council of Ministers became the first insti-
tution to provide a consistent policy framework furthering the exchange of students, teachers and scholars among the countries of the region. Its goal was to contribute to the overall stability and security in the Northern part of Europe. This was realised, among other things, through providing training to the people who would later be responsible for developing civil society in the post-communist countries.

In particular, the goals declared by the council included promoting democratic development and respect for human rights, supporting the transition to a market economy and promoting a sustainable use of resources. Among different categories of activities, special attention was given to networking scholarships which to a great extent financed exchange programs for students, teachers, academic researchers as well as civil servants and politicians. According to the statistics, some 3000 people from the adjacent areas participated in these programs by staying in one or several Nordic countries for periods of a few weeks to several months in the 1990s (Christensen 2000:98).

Initiatives at university level. Parallel to these initiatives, a semi-institutionalised co-operation among institutions at university level was promoted. Baltic University Programme (BUP), coordinated by Uppsala University, opened up for this development at the beginning of the 1990s. Since the outset it has concentrated on questions of sustainable development, environmental protection and democracy in the region as some of the most important issues towards its modernisation. A distinctive feature of BUP is its broad definition of the region based on the drainage basin of the Baltic Sea. This has allowed for running its courses even at universities in the Ukraine and Belarus, the latter of which seems to be the greatest beneficiary of the program at present.

While the Nordic countries were pioneers in introducing regional-oriented educational initiatives, in recent years an important factor significantly contributing to the development of the Baltic Sea region knowledge society is the initiatives generated in Germany. Changing the engagement of the united Germany in accepting the Baltic Sea region as “a litmus test for European politics” (Genscher 1999) resulted, among other things, in furthering education and academic exchange as a strategy for sustainable social development. A spectacular breakthrough is yet to be expected, but an increasing number of graduate colleges, Ph.D. programs and student exchange programs initiated during the previous decade makes it possible for us to view the future optimistically.
In May 2000 a special “Initiative for strengthening the Baltic Sea region” was motioned by the opposition parties in the Bundestag and in November the government answered with an 80 page-long paper summing up the chances and risks of economic growth existing in this region. The discussion suggested that the region might become an “engine of new development and well-being” in Europe and the world. Furthermore, with over 300 universities and research institutions, it might also become a significant educational and research centre in Europe. The German academic community has for some time prepared for a clear stand on this issue and suggested solutions.

Prof Bernd Henningsen, director of Nordeuropa-Institut at the Humboldt University in Berlin, who is one of the most active protagonists of institutionalised educational and scientific cooperation in the area, promotes the idea of a pan-regional Baltic Sea University (Henningsen 2000). This is to become an institution, both virtually and of bricks and mortar, where the old ideal of university as a cultural centre will meet the challenge of regionalism and, within this framework, of identity-building. As the first stage on the way towards its establishment, a research training network The Baltic Sea Area Studies: Northern Dimension of Europe (BaltSeaNet) was started in summer 2000. With eight participating universities and coordinated by the Nordeuropa-Institut this venture promotes the exchange and education of young researchers who in the future will become regional professionals and, at the same time, a new elite implicitly aware of the region’s diversified culture.

Nonetheless, the BaltSeaNet is not the only recent initiative with a modernising effect on the university co-operation in the region. The idea of higher-education and research institutions being able to provide patterns of modernisation for the whole region finds its protagonist in all Baltic Sea littoral countries. The universities of Turku and Tartu University offer courses in their centers for Baltic studies, aimed at developing local awareness of the regional issues. So far, their curricula have mainly covered Finland and the Baltic states while the pan-regional dimension has been represented to a limited degree. In Sweden a Baltic and East European Graduate School (BEEGS) created in 2000 and based at Södertörn University College has the ambition of functioning as an international research centre, graduate school, school of further education and research depository for the Baltic Sea region.

An educational initiative which deserves special attention in the context of its modernising effect on the region is the EuroFaculty called into being by the Council of Baltic Sea States in the middle of the 1990s. The EuroFaculty was formed to foster the establishment of modern teaching programs in economics, law, public administration and business administration in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In 2000 the Kaliningrad State University inaugurated its first EuroFaculty courses, thus expressing its will to increase the cohesion of its educational offer with the other universities in the region. However costly, initiating EuroFaculty in Kaliningrad seems to be one of the feasible means of modernisation and integration of this Russian academic centre based in the Baltic Sea region into the western academic world.

Among all educational and research initiatives called into existence in the Baltic Sea region, the EuroFaculty has been the most spectacular as to its explicitly defined goal to modernise higher education in the Baltic republics. It has managed to a great extent to realise its mission, even though establishing EuroFaculty in Kaliningrad may take more time and money than expected. Even if the EuroFaculty is criticised – the program has implicitly recognised the superiority of the “western” academic world over its east European counterpart – there is no doubt that it has furthered decent academic standards while at the same time forging greater unity among and within the participating universities. It has also introduced good practice in education and research, which is a prerequisite for local scholars on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea for their participation in the regional knowledge society.
6. Conclusion

Cultural policy shaped and furthered through education and research has the potential of becoming one of the most important means of region-building. Apart from propagating sustainable development in the sense of nature protection and the use of resources, education for civil society has been the most spectacular achievement of regional scholarship so far. This has been important because the Baltic Sea region is a laboratory of transition and transformation, in which the problems of uniting Europe are particularly tangible. More importantly, the social change experienced during the past decade requires effective cultural policy to let the people absorb the rapidity and irregularity of transformation.

In this regard a knowledge society in the Baltic Sea region provides a possibility for adapting to the ongoing changes in the least problematic manner. Educational and research policies which promote the physical mobility of learners and teachers, virtual mobility and the various uses of new information and communication technologies, introduce a new cultural pattern where everybody is given equal access to the existing facilities. Further development of co-operation networks, the promotion of language and cultural skills, pilot projects based on trans-national partnerships etc. offer a chance to turn the Baltic Sea region into a learning region in which innovation in resources, the acceptance of common academic standards and dissemination of good practice in education will be realised in full. Thanks to education and research, the regional factory of identity can be managed in a more rational way and the result become advantageous for the futures of the individual states and their citizens.
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