REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION CO-OPERATION: A RESEARCH PROPOSAL TO COMPARE THE BALTIC SEA AND THE BLACK SEA REGIONS

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Abstract:

While the Baltic Sea Region is considered to be a pioneer region in the development of regional integration and identity, the Black Sea Region is regarded to be a laggard in terms of regionalization and region building. My paper summarizes the role of regional higher education co-operation in the Baltic Sea regionalization process in theory and analyzes the empirical background of these assumptions. Yet, inasmuch an evaluation of the regions' status as a pioneer is possible only in a comparative perspective, I propose to compare the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea Region regarding their higher education networks systematically. My paper asks for the transferability of arguments in favor of a strong regional higher education co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region since the 1990s to today's situation of the Black Sea Region. It concludes with some fundamental considerations on a comparative research project.

Rezumat:

În timp ce regiunea Mării Baltice este considerată a fi o pionieră în dezvoltarea integrării și a identității regionale, regiunea Mării Negre este considerată a fi codașă în ceea ce privește regionalizarea și consolidarea regională. Lucrarea mea rezumă rolul cooperării regionale în învățământul superior în procesul de regionalizare a Mării Baltice în teorie și analizează fundalul empiric al acestor asumptions. Cu toate acestea, întrucât o evaluare a statutului regiunii ca pionieră este posibilă numai dintr-o perspectivă comparativă, îmi propun să compar regiunea Mării Negre și regiunea Mării Baltice privind sistematic rețelele lor de

învăţământ superior. Lucrarea mea îşi pune întrebări cu privire la transferul de argumente în favoarea unei cooperări regionale puternice în învăţământul superior în regiunea Mării Baltice din anii 1990 până la situaţia actuală din regiunea Mării Negre. Ea se încheie cu câteva consideraţii fundamentale asupra unui proiect de cercetare comparativă.

Keywords: regionalization; region building; regional higher education co-operation; academic networks; interregional comparison

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, the Baltic Sea Region experienced a strong increase of regional *bottom-up* initiatives of co-operation, yet also a growing number of political *top-down* projects like the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) or the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC)¹. Social scientists emphasized the intensive co-operation of non-political institutions and the networking of the civil society as a feature and stated the Baltic Sea Regions' status „as a pioneer in the introduction of new modes of governance”². The constructivist approach on *Baltic Sea region building* became the dominating approach in explaining regional co-operation³.

Co-operation and networking of higher education institutions in the Baltic Sea Region is considered as a main pillar of *regionalization* in social sciences theory and regional politics. In the beginning of the 1990s, the CBSS, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) along with different bi-national initiatives supported regional higher education co-operations as a *soft security* strategy to enhance stability and economic prosperity in the

¹ I define the Baltic Sea Region as the region consisting of the eleven member states of the CBSS. These states are Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Sweden and Finland. For Russia, Poland and Germany, only the subnational administrative bodies bordering the Baltic Sea are considered. For a discussion of this definition of the Baltic Sea Region, cf. Stefan Ewert, *Region Building im Ostseeraum? Zur Rolle der Hochschulen im Prozess der Regionalisierung im Nordosten der Europäischen Union* (unpublished dissertation at Greifswald University, 2010), 4-5.

² Marko Joas, Detlef Jahn and Kristine Kern “Governance in the Baltic Sea Region: Balancing States, Cities and People”, in *Governing a Common Sea. Environmental Policies in the Baltic Sea Region*, eds. Marko Joas, Detlef Jahn, Kristine Kern (London: Earthscan, 2008), 6.

³ Hilde Engelen „Die Konstruktion der Ostseeregion: Akteure, mentale Landkarten und ihr Einfluss auf die Entstehung einer Region“, in *Die Ordnung des Raums. Mentale Landkarten in der Ostseeregion*, eds. Norbert Götz, Jörg Hackmann und Jan Hecker-Stampehl (Berlin: BWV, 2006), 66-67.

region⁴. Co-operation was mainly a transfer of knowledge from the established democracies in the north and the west of the Baltic Sea to the transition countries of the region. Academic co-operation projects to support the transition of higher education institutions in the Baltic States, but also the north-western oblasts in Russia and the northern voivodeships in Poland were argued to have a *multiplier effect*. The training of the new elites for the economic, political and law systems was the key of a peaceful and economically successful development of the region⁵. After 2000, regional academic networking between east and west became more balanced. Goals like the promotion of the Baltic Sea as a “knowledge-based region” in global competition and the scientific contribution to the enhancement of the ecologic stability of the Baltic Sea were the reasons behind the regional higher education co-operation. The regional political organizations supported these goals, while scholars were actively included in the *region building* initiatives.⁶

In my research on higher education co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region, I measured the degree of regional academic networking. As a result, the existence of a regional *higher education space* as stated in the region building literature can be identified in parts. There is some evidence for a strong co-operation, but the regional focus of a higher education institution depends on the main subjects and the membership in academic networks.⁷ But is the strength of co-operation in the field of higher education a distinguishing mark of the Baltic Sea Region? Is the region a “pioneer” in *bottom-up-networking*? To answer these questions, an interregional comparison is needed.

My paper is a first step of such a comparison, analyzing the pre-conditions for a strong higher education co-operation in the Baltic and the Black Sea. A systematic analysis of academic networking in both regions has three goals:

⁴ Cf. Helmut Hubel, Stefan Gänzle, *The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as a Sub-regional Organisation for ‘Soft Security Risk Management’ in the North-East of Europe*. Report to the Presidency of the CBSS (Jena: University, 2001), 8-14.

⁵ Kazimierz Musiał, “Education, research and the Baltic Sea Region Building”, in *Approaching Knowledge Society in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Kazimierz Musiał (Gdansk/Berlin: BaltSeaNet, 2007), 55-56. Cf. EuroFaculty, *EuroFaculty Report 1993-2005*. Available at: <http://www.eurofaculty.lv/FinalEF10.B2.pdf>, (accessed April 05, 2007).

⁶ Cf. the different articles in *Towards a Knowledge-based Society in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Bernd Henningsen (Berlin: Arno Spitz, 2002).

⁷ Stefan Ewert, ‘Higher Education Co-operation and Networks in the Baltic Sea Region - A Basis for Regionalization and *Region Building*?’, *Journal of Baltic Studies* 2011 (iFirst, DOI:10.1080/01629778.2011.628549). cf. Ewert 2010, 216-233.

(1) The interregional comparison could – for the field of higher education – test the thesis of a “pioneer status” of the Baltic Sea Region.

(2) The comparison could help to understand the regional development/regionalization around the Black and the Baltic Sea.

(3) From a political consulting perspective, the analysis could help to evaluate the conditions of success of regional political initiatives.

In the second chapter of my paper, I will summarize the arguments for a strong academic co-operation on regional level and the creation of a *higher education space* in the Baltic Sea Region. I will distinguish an internal, academic benefit of such a regional networking and external benefits (positive externalities). Chapter 3 tests the empirical background of the assumptions discussed in chapter 2 in order to evaluate the *region building* rhetoric and the political initiatives for the Baltic Sea Region. This analysis is done by an index-based comparison of the higher education institutions' process of internationalization and the importance of the region within this process.

Following my research on Baltic Sea regionalization and the results of my *intra-regional* comparison in the field of higher education policy, I propose to extend the research to an *inter-regional* comparison between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea Region. This research would be a promising project to enhance our knowledge on regionalization and regionalism in the future and to understand the peculiarities of both regions. As a kind of preliminary study, chapter 4 asks for the transferability of arguments in favor of a strong academic co-operation in the Black Sea Region. Chapter 5 concludes my paper with some fundamental considerations on the comparative research project.

Reasons for Regional Academic Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region

In the early 1990s, the number of projects of academic co-operation increased strongly. While the western assistance in the reforming process of the transition countries in general and their higher education systems in particular was the main argument for regional co-operation projects in the beginning, the reasons for a strong academic co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region were extended later. This is true for the arguments discussed in the scientific literature as well as for the reasons given by the regional political organizations.

Scientific discussions of benefits of regional higher education co-operation

A matrix differentiating the assumed benefit (for the higher education institution vs. externality) and the level of the effects (concrete policy field vs. subjective level) shows the different rationales for regional academic networking. Table 1 outlines these arguments.

Table 1: Benefits of strong higher education networking as discussed in the discourse on Baltic Sea regionalization

		Benefit	
		For Higher Education Institutions (internal benefit)	External benefit
Effects on	Concrete policy	Internationalization Transformation of Higher Education Institutions in the south-eastern Baltic Sea Region Positioning of Higher Education institutions in the global competition	Security and stability in the region Environmental protection/ protection of the Baltic Sea Economic synergistic effects
	Subjective level	Creation of a common identity/“Branding”	Creation of a <i>Baltic Sea identity</i>

Source: own illustration

The internal or academic benefit argument refers to the assumption that a strong regional academic co-operation of a higher education institution increases the academic quality of that institution (field top left of table 1). Firstly it is said that the Baltic Sea Region offers a consistent framework for internationalization of higher education institutions. There is some evidence that cultural and spatial proximity of co-operating universities in general has a positive impact on the success of international collaboration.⁸ Transferred onto the Baltic Sea Region, networking on the regional level could help to enhance the internationalization (as one indicator for the success of the higher education institution) and to

⁸ Uwe Brandenburg, Philipp Höllermann and Daphne Lipp, “The laws of attraction. Erfolgsfaktoren in internationalen Hochschulkooperationen“, *die Hochschule* 17, no. 1 (2008): 19-20.

implement the aims of the Bologna process of convergence and harmonization in European higher education.⁹

At the beginning of the 1990s, the main argument for a strong regional networking referred to the special situation of the higher education systems in the transition states and especially in the new independent Baltic States. To reform and modernize the higher education sectors in the transition countries, the region was a suitable frame for a knowledge transfer from (north-) west to (south-) east.¹⁰ Higher education co-operation should help to modernize curricula, teaching methods and materials, to enhance the quality of teaching and to avoid a *brain drain* in the tertiary education sector of the new democracies.

A third argument of a benefit for the academic institution to co-operate on regional level is presented prominently by the former rector of Tartu University and minister for education in Estonia, Jaak Aaviksoo: He proposes to establish a global brand name for the Baltic Sea universities in the global educational competition.¹¹ The universities in the region are – like the higher education systems in general – comparatively small. To be perceived in the global competition for staff and students, they should come together under one regional label. A pre-condition for this is a coordinated higher education policy in the Baltic Sea region, making strong regional networks work.

But the arguments in favor of a strong regional academic co-operation are not restricted to an assumed benefit for the higher education sector. Higher education networks in the Baltic Sea Region are supposed to create external, non-academic benefits, too (field top right in table 1). The first one refers to the transition process of the new independent Baltic States during the 1990s. Higher education co-operation was seen as a *soft security* to enhance security and stability in the region¹². Teaching the new elites in economy, politics and law system with modern curricula, methods and materials does not only help to modernize universities, but also – as a *multiplier effect* – to strengthen and democratize the civil society.¹³ After a

⁹ HØGUT, *Report on the Potential for Creating a Nordic-Baltic Space for Higher Education and Training* (Copenhagen: NORDEN, 1999), 10.

¹⁰ Tom Rostoks, "The Impact of Economic Factors on Development of the Knowledge Society", in Musiał, 24-41; Janis Kristapsons, Helle Martinson and Ina Dageyte, *Baltic R & D Systems in Transition. Experiences and Future Prospects* (Riga: Zināte, 2003).

¹¹ Jaak Aaviksoo, "University Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region", in Henningsen, 75-79.

¹² For a definition of "soft security" as covering all aspects of non-military security problems and an overview of soft security issues in the Baltic Sea Region see Hubel and Gänzle.

¹³ Kazimierz Musiał, "Education, research and the Baltic Sea Region Building", in Musiał, 55-56.

successful transformation process of the Baltic States and Poland and their accession to EU and NATO, regional co-operation within the framework of the *EU-strategy for the Baltic Sea Region* or the CBSS is considered as a strategy to intensify the relations between the EU and Russia and to test new forms of co-operation with Russia to improve the regional stability.¹⁴ Again, co-operation and networks in the higher education sector are regarded to be a pillar of this strategy.¹⁵

Another *soft security* risk in the region is the specific ecological sensitivity of the Baltic Sea. To protect the marine environment, the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area" was adopted as the first region-wide convention during the Cold War in 1974. The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) was implemented as an institutional frame.¹⁶ Co-operations of universities and other higher education institutions were considered as an appropriate way to improve the marine environment: Joint research projects should help to enhance the knowledge on the ecological situation, and teaching collaborations should disseminate the knowledge in the whole Baltic Sea Region.

The argument of a positive influence of regional higher education networks on the position of the participating institutions in the global academic competition could be extended to the regional economies in general. Higher education co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region could help to bundle knowledge resources and bring about synergetic effects to the region.¹⁷ The common regional label of the higher education space or a "knowledge based Baltic Sea Region" could help to make the economies more visible in the global competition.

The arguments of an internal or external benefit discussed hitherto are clearly functional in scope: Regional co-operation should have a positive influence on concrete policies like environmental protection, regional stability, economic competition or internationalization. But the constructivist region building approach as the dominant approach

¹⁴ Leonid Karabeshkin, "Crisis Challenges and Opportunities for Baltic Cooperation", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 22 (2009): 152-159.

¹⁵ Ewert 2010, 246; 261-264.

¹⁶ Tuomas Räsänen, Simo Laakkonen, "Institutionalization of an International Environmental Policy Regime: The Helsinki Convention, Finland and the Cold War", in Joas, Jahn and Kern, 43-59. For a discussion of environment protection as a core of Baltic Sea Region co-operation, see Fabrizio Tassinari, *Mare Europaeum. Baltic Sea Region Security and Cooperation from post-Wall to post-Enlargement Europe*. (Copenhagen: Socialforskningsinstituttet, 2004).

¹⁷ Hans-Jürgen Heimsoeth, „Die deutsche Ostseeratspräsidentschaft“, in *Politische Systeme und Beziehungen im Ostseeraum*, eds. Detlef Jahn, Nikolaus Werz (München: Olzog, 2002), 282-293.

explaining the development in the Baltic Sea Region in the social sciences emphasizes an impact of regional co-operations on the subjective level, too. Higher education networking is assumed to have an effect on the creation of a regional identity. First of all, universities are described as places of the regional discourse, creating and disseminating regional symbols.¹⁸ Secondly, the existing academic co-operations are a kind of “engine” of regionalization, and regional networking initiatives show the regional awareness on the academic level.¹⁹ A Baltic Sea Region identity arises on the one hand between the higher education institutions (field bottom left in table 1). On the other hand, university networking helps to establish a regional *sense of community* and thus have a positive effect on the treatment of regional policy (field bottom right in table 1).

Regional academic co-operation on the agenda of the regional political organizations and the EU-strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The analysis of the agenda of the regional political organizations in the Baltic Sea Region exposes the political influence of the arguments discussed in this chapter. Some initiatives like the *Nordic Advisory Committee on Higher Education* (HØGUT) of the NCM aim to implement academic benefits for the higher education institutions in the region. But primarily, the regional political organizations emphasize the positive external effects of regional higher education networking. Already the founding declaration of the CBSS from 1992 stresses education as one main field of co-operation for the “construction of democratic societies”.²⁰ And part of the core policy of the NCM in the 1990s was to enhance stability and security in the Baltic Sea Region by supporting the education of the new elites in the transitioning states of the region.²¹

After 2000, the focus of the regional political organizations was on the promotion of the Baltic Sea Region in the globalized regional competition. Again, co-operation in the higher education sector plays a key role in this policy. Especially the development and discussions of the

¹⁸ Kazimierz Musiał, “Education, research and the Baltic Sea Region Building”, in Musiał, 42.

¹⁹ Thomas Christiansen, “A European Meso-Region? European Union Perspectives on the Baltic Sea Region”, in *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality. The restructuring of Political Space Around the Baltic Rim*, ed. Pertti Joenniemi, (Stockholm: NordREFO, 1997), 264; Jan Åke Dellenbrant, “The Baltic Sea co-operation – visions and realities”, in *Nordic Region-Building in a European Perspective*, eds. Harald Baldersheim, Krister Ståhlberg, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 91.

²⁰ CBSS, *CBSS 1st Ministerial Session – Copenhagen Declaration*. Available at: http://www.cbss.org/component/option,com_attachments/id,151/task,download/, (accessed January 06, 2011).

²¹ Kazimierz Musiał, “Education, research and the Baltic Sea Region Building”, in Musiał, 55-56.

concept of a “Knowledge based Baltic Sea Region” in the CBSS and the *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference* (BSPC) with the universities as main forums exemplify this idea of an external benefit of regional higher education co-operations.²² Here, the connections between the academic *region building* discourse and the agenda of the regional political organizations are outstanding.²³

The *Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region*, adopted in October 2009 by the European Union, focuses on priority areas to bundle project-based European contributions to specific regional challenges like water protection and maritime safety. Again, educational and especially higher education co-operation is a core issue. On the one hand, there is a direct reference to this idea by integrating two university cooperation projects into the priority area 12 of the strategy (“To maintain and reinforce attractiveness of the Baltic Sea Region”²⁴). On the other hand, Schymik and Krumrey emphasize in their analysis of the consultation process the *external benefit* argument stated by the stakeholders in the formulation of the strategy. They conclude that ideas of education and research networking “touch upon all priority areas, be it educational programs to foster environmental awareness, research in maritime safety and security, or measures designed to promote region branding”²⁵. Again, regional co-operation of higher education institutions is described as an appropriate way to answer regional challenges beyond the academic institution.

The discussion of positive externalities of higher regional higher education co-operations and the corresponding initiatives by the political institutions make the analysis of the higher education networks focused in the region a question for political science: Is the empirical background of the initiatives strong enough to make them work and how influential are

²² CBSS, *Communiqué of the 10th Ministerial Session of the CBSS, Hamburg, 7 June 2001*. Available at: <http://www.cbss.org/documents/cbsspresidencies/9german/communiqu/>, (accessed August 23, 2008). BSPC, *Resolution of the 12th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, Oulu, Finland, Sept. 8-9, 2003*. Available at: <http://www.norden.org/bspcnet/media/Dokument/12%20BSPC%20-%20Final%20Resolution.pdf>, (accessed August 21, 2008).

²³ Cf. the different articles in Henningsen.

²⁴ EU-COM, *Commissions Staff Working Document Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, ACTION PLAN*. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/baltic/action2009.pdf, (accessed March 01, 2010), 53-56.

²⁵ Carsten Schymik and Peer Krumrey, *EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Core Europe in the Northern Periphery?* (Berlin: SWP Working Paper, 2009), 15.

the political institutions in terms of steering the internationalization of higher education institutions? To answer the questions, I made a proposal how to measure the regional embeddedness of academic institutions, analyzed the higher education institutions the Baltic Sea Region and discussed the role of the regional political organizations in this process.²⁶ The following chapter 3 outlines my research results.

Analyzing the Empirical Background: Higher Education Co-Operations in the Baltic Sea Region

To understand the perception of the arguments for a strong regional higher education co-operation as presented in chapter 2, four *flagship projects* will exemplify the project-based implementation of the internal and (mainly) external benefits discussed above. Yet, to evaluate the empirical background of a *Baltic Sea higher education space* in a comprehensive way, a systematic analysis on the level of the higher education institution will follow these case studies.

Four examples

The *region builders`* assumption of the higher education sector as an *engine* of regionalization in the Baltic Sea Region is reasonable in so far as there are different co-operation projects that aim at the implementation of positive externalities. Four projects may illustrate this matter of fact:

(1) Already in 1991, the *Baltic University Programme* (BUP) was founded as a university network to improve the quality of teaching in the areas of environmental protection/ sustainability and democratization. Initialized by the Uppsala University in Sweden, the project is a suitable example of a regional grassroots movement. Today, 225 higher education institutions from the Baltic Sea littoral states are members of the BUP and around 9,000 students take part in the courses developed collectively within the network.²⁷ The content of the courses and programmes – sustainability and water protection as well as democracy and peaceful development – are clearly aimed at improving the ecological situation of the Baltic Sea and the democratic consolidation in the transition states.

(2) As an example of a *top-down* initiative started by a regional political organization, the *EuroFaculty* project as one main field of activity of the CBSS in the 1990s is worth mentioning. From 1993 to 2005, the *EuroFaculty Baltics* project helped to (re-) establish and transform programs

²⁶ Ewert 2010.

²⁷ BUP, *About BUP*. Available at: <http://www.balticuniv.uu.se/index.php/about-us>, accessed September 03, 2010.

in political sciences, economics and law at the University of Latvia (in Riga), University of Tartu and Vilnius University²⁸. Financial aid and staff exchange should help to modernize curricula and teaching methods, libraries and IT-networks. The project aimed to educate “local civil servants with distinct sets of knowledge, skills and experiences”²⁹ to operate in the new democratic institutions. The overall goal was to “play a key role in the continued strengthening of the institutional and administrative capacity”³⁰ in the Baltic States to enhance security and stability in the region.

(3) In the beginning of the 1990s, the NCM extended its activities to the Baltic States. The activities in the field of education and the support of student and teacher exchange in the region were a strategy “to contribute to the overall stability and security in the northern part of Europe”.³¹ Again, the enhancement of security and stability as the main regional challenge in the 1990s is the core incentive for higher education co-operation. Yet, the establishment of the NORDPLUS higher education program with a complete integration of the Baltic States in 2008 demonstrates the political initiative to generate internal benefits for the participating universities, too. Aims of the program are e.g. the development of joint study programs and the co-operation in quality assurance³².

(4) Yet, also bilateral initiatives focus on the development of the region. In 1994, the *Stockholm School of Economics* established a branch in the capital of Latvia, Riga. The Swedish government and the parliament, as well as the George Soros foundation sponsored the project, while the Latvian government helped to acquire the school building. The *Stockholm School of Economics in Riga* aimed at broadcasting economic knowledge in the Baltic States to foster the economic and peaceful development of the

²⁸ In the 2000s, several *EuroFaculty* projects by the CBSS were implemented in Kaliningrad and Pskov to support the reform of study programs in law and economics. For a discussion of the problems in implementing the *EuroFaculty Baltics*, cf. Ewert 2010, 39-42.

²⁹ Cf. EuroFaculty, *EuroFaculty Report 1993-2005*. Available at: <http://www.eurofaculty.lv/-FinalEF10.B2.pdf>, (accessed April 05, 2007), p. 7.

³⁰ CBSS, *Communiqué of the 7th Ministerial Session of the CBSS, Nyborg, 22-23rd June 1998*. Available at: <http://www.cbss.org/documents/cbsspresidencies/6danish/-dbaFile3003.html>, (accessed August 20, 2008).

³¹ Kazimierz Musiał, “Education, research and the Baltic Sea Region Building”, in Musiał, 55-56.

³² Cf. NORDPLUS *About NORDPLUS Higher Education*, http://www.nordplusonline.org/-eng/higher_education/about_nordplus_higher_education, (accessed May, 11, 2011).

Baltic Region.³³ A fear was that the alumni will leave the region after finishing their studies, but surveys showed that the graduates remained in the Baltic States and worked in different economic sectors.³⁴

The Index of Regional Higher Education Networking

The four projects outlined exemplify the creation of positive externalities by regional higher education co-operation. Yet, to measure the strength of regional cooperation on the level of the higher education institution systematically, I use my index of Baltic Sea regional networking. The index consists of different dimensions of the internationalization of universities and higher education institutions. Four main processes of internationalization are the pillars of the index: In the field of teaching, academic mobility and the internationalization of curricula are the dimensions taken into account. For measuring academic research co-operations, the index comprehends the cross-border research projects with participating institutions from different countries and the joint publication of research results.³⁵

To operationalize these four dimensions, quantifiable indicators were built. For measuring academic mobility, ERASMUS exchange statistics served as the database. The ERASMUS program is the dominating exchange program in Europe³⁶. In contrast to the *free mover* mobility, bi- or multilateral contracts between higher education institutions are the precondition of exchange. The indicator for student mobility () and for teachers' mobility () displays the relation between outgoing students/teachers staying in the region and the total number of outgoings from this higher education institution³⁷.

³³ Staffan B. Linder, "The Fifth Anniversary Address", in *Stockholm School of Economics in Riga – A Retrospect 1994-2004*, eds. Leif Mutén and Anders Paalzow, A. (Riga: SSE, 2004), 8-11.

³⁴ Anja Timm, "What Happened to the Students Next?", in *Stockholm School of Economics in Riga – A Retrospect 1994-2004*, eds. Leif Mutén, Anders Paalzow, A. (Riga: SSE, 2004), 138-149.

³⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the index' dimensions cf. Stefan Ewert, "Index regionale Vernetzung. Ein Vorschlag zur Erfassung der regionalen Kooperation von Hochschulen", in *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* (special issue on indices in comparative politics, forthcoming).

³⁶ Due to the fact that the Baltic States and Poland take part in the ERASMUS-exchange since the end of the 1990s, Russia is the only country of the Baltic Sea Region that is not participating in the program. For the interpretation of the index results, this limitation has to take into account.

³⁷ Teachers' mobility concerns the internationalization of teaching and research. Hence, the indicator refers to both dimensions.

The spatial concentration in the Baltic Sea Region within the context of the internationalization of curricula is analyzed for *joint degree/double degree* study programs and for the foreign language courses at the higher education institutions. In *double degree/joint degree* study programs, the locations of formal project partners show the regional program networking . is the mean of all *joint/double degree* programs ratio of program partners from the Baltic Sea Region to the total number of project partners .

Apart from the co-operation in *double* and *joint* study programs, the foreign language courses offered at the higher education institutions show their regional integration. Even if English is the *lingua franca* in academic co-operation in general and in the Baltic Sea Region in particular, the teaching of regional languages is seen as one of the keys to regional knowledge and regional consciousness. The more regional languages are taught at the universities, the higher is one of the precondition factors for regionalization. In the Baltic Sea Region as defined above, there are eleven national languages, so every higher education institution in the region can offer ten regional foreign languages at most.³⁸ The indicator shows the ratio between the *de facto* numbers of offered regional languages courses/studies () and this maximum.

To analyze regional networking in research co-operation, the partners' location in international research projects financed by the EU and

³⁸ The languages are: Russian, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, German, Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Swedish and Finnish Cf. Footnote 1.

the publication of research results in international co-authorship are considered.´

For European universities, the different research programs established and financed by the EU are one main source for international research projects.³⁹ To research the regional networks in these projects, I have analyzed the location of project partners and compiled an indicator .

consists of the number of projects conducted with partners only from Baltic Sea Region (), with partners from inside and outside the region, but the coordinator coming from inside () and the number of projects with partners inside and outside the region, but the coordinator stemming from outside the Baltic Sea States (), divided by the whole number of projects of the university financed by the EU ().

Similarly, the regional co-operation in joint publications is weighted and related to the publications in international co-authorship on the whole . is the number of publications of scientists from one university written with international colleagues only from Baltic Sea Region universities, is the number of articles written with scientists from inside and outside the region.

Information on research projects financed by the EU are published on the portal CORDIS (*Community Research and Development Information Service*; <http://cordis.europa.eu>). For the research of international co-authorship, Thomson Scientific's *Science Citation Index* and *Social Science Citation Index* are the database (<http://isiknowledge.com/wos>). Both websites are reliable databases to investigate regional research networking by analyzing the location of research partner's home university.

The indicators for the different dimensions of internationalization have a range of values from 0 (minimum) to 1 (maximum). They are summarized to the *Index of Regional Networking* (IRN):

³⁹ Bernd Ebersberger und Jakob Edler, „Die europäische Ebene“, in *Die Internationalisierung der deutschen Forschungs- und Wissenschaftslandschaft*, ed. Jakob Edler, (Karlsruhe: IRB-Verlag, 2007) 199-215.

The index measures the relevance of the Baltic Sea Region in the process of internationalization for the particular higher education institution. The maximum value 1 indicates an exclusive concentration on the region, while the minimum value 0 shows that there is no regional co-operation⁴⁰.

Results for the Baltic Sea Region

The index is my instrument of a systematic intraregional comparison of higher education institutions from one region. It helps to

(1) Evaluate the strength of regional co-operation not only on the basis of *flagship projects*, but on the basis of all higher education institutions in the region

(2) To test possible factors that influence the importance of the region in the process of the academic institutions' internationalization by using quantitative social sciences methods.

(3) To give – from a political consulting perspective – advices to political initiatives of regionalization about the conditions for the higher education institutions to create the positive externalities discussed in chapter 1.

A further purpose of the index could be to provide the method for an interregional comparison as outlined in the following chapters. But first, the main results of my research on the Baltic Sea Region are depicted.

I compared all 70 higher education institutions in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the German federal state Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania with more than 1,000 students enrolled concerning their international contacts in the Baltic Sea Region in the year 2007⁴¹. The interpretation of the values measuring the degree of regional focus in the process of internationalization reveals that there is no *Baltic Sea Region higher education*

⁴⁰ The value 0 may imply that there are no international contacts of the higher school at all. However, it can also mean that there is some international co-operation, but all with institutions from outside the Baltic Sea Region. For the research question, the conclusion is the same: There are no regional academic networks which can generate an internal or external benefit described in table 1. Values near 1 may also indicate an exclusive regional network if not all ten regional foreign languages are taught at the higher education institution.

⁴¹ In 2007, there were 34 higher education institutions in Lithuania, 15 in Latvia, 16 in Estonia and five in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania with more than 1000 students enrolled. Data for the particular institutions comprehend their co-operation in the different dimensions in 2007.

space in general. The analysis shows considerable differences in regional networking between the institutions. While there are some academic institutions with more or less no international contacts in the Baltic Sea Region, other higher education institutions are strongly regional embedded. The *Estonian University of Life Sciences* in Tartu exhibits the highest score of regional integration ($IRN = 0.60$), followed by the *Latvian University of Agriculture* (Jelgava) ($IRN = 0.54$). In Lithuania, the University of Klaipėda ($IRN = 0.45$) and in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the University of Greifswald ($IRN = 0.48$) are the higher education institutions that have the strongest regional focus⁴². The regional higher education sector and its intraregional contacts offer an empirical basis for the *region building* approach and the political initiatives to foster regionalization, yet the strength of regional embedding depends on certain factors on institutional level.

I tested these factors using correlation analyses. While there are no significant correlations between the size or the strength of internationalization in general and the regional embeddedness, the membership of the higher education institutions in regional higher education networks and the academic focus of the institution correlate with the values. With the significant correlation of the membership in networks and the level of regional integration in research and teaching⁴³, one feature of the Baltic Sea Region described in the theory of *region building* can be verified for the higher education sector. The approach emphasizes the importance of *bottom up* initiatives and networks for regionalization.⁴⁴ The impact of networks on regional development is

⁴² The arithmetic mean of index for the 70 higher education institutions examined is $IRN = 0.254$, the standard deviation is 0.15. For a more detailed description and analysis of the regional embedding of the 70 higher education institutions, cf. Ewert 2010.

⁴³ I analyzed the correlations between the membership in one or both region-wide higher education networks listed by Suominen et al. (2001) and the values. The networks are the *Baltic University Programme* (cf. BUP, *About BUP*. Available at: <http://www.balticuniv.uu.se/index.php/about-us>, accessed September 03, 2010) with more than 220 higher education institutions involved and the Baltic Sea Region University Network, founded in 2000 as an umbrella group of regional academic networks (BSRUN, *General Information*. Available at: <http://bsrun.utu.fi/information/>, accessed September 03, 2010). The *Parsons r* correlation scores are $r = .409$ (BUP) and $r = .557$ (BSRUN). Both correlations are significant at the 0.01-Level.

⁴⁴ Leena K. Williams, *Zur Konstruktion einer Region. Die Entstehung der Ostseekooperation zwischen 1988 und 1992* (Berlin: BWV, 2010). Cf. Björn Hettne, "The New Regionalism Revisited", in *Theories of New Regionalism. A Palgrave Reader*, eds. Fredrik Söderbaum, Timothy M. Shaw (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2003) 22–42.

argued to be a characteristic of the region.⁴⁵ If a higher education institution is a member of a higher education network in the Baltic Sea Region, then this institution is systematically stronger integrated into the region in terms of teaching and research.⁴⁶

Next to the membership in regional higher education networks, the focus on the Baltic Sea Region depends on the focus of a higher education institution with regard to its content. My analysis shows a significant positive correlation of the *IRN* values for agricultural and traditional universities, while the higher education institutions with a focus on economic and social sciences are considerably less regionally embedded⁴⁷. This result is an empirical evidence for the assumption of a different academic incentive to co-operate mainly on the regional level. While e.g. agricultural universities have strong academic incentives to co-operate on regional level due to the comparable landscape situation and similar forms of farming⁴⁸, higher education institutions with other academic focus have smaller academic incentives. As a consequence for regional policies, there is a need for an external intensive (project funding etc.) given to the higher education institutions in order to create a regional higher education area not only in certain academic fields.

To sum up: The analysis shows that there are projects on the academic level to implement the benefits of a regional co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region as presented in chapter 2. A comprehensive measurement of the role of the region in higher education internationalization on institutional level depicts that there is an empirical basis for *region building*

⁴⁵ Amongst others Joas, Jahn and Kern, 3-17; Michael Karlsson, *Transnational Relations in the Baltic Sea Region* (Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2004); Carsten Schymik, "Networking Civil Society in the Baltic Sea Region" In *Civil Society in the Baltic Sea Region*, eds. Norbert Götz, Jörg Hackmann (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003) 217-234.

⁴⁶ Ewert 2010, 228-229.

⁴⁷ I correlated the values with dummy variables, mapping the focus of the academy with regard to its content. The allocation of higher education institutions to different groups is mainly based on the names of the academic institutions and the study programs offered. Except for the last category ("traditional universities"), institutions were allocated to the group which matched the majority of the programs best. The eight groups were technical, agricultural, medical pedagogical and social/economic sciences higher education institutions, art academies, police academies and traditional universities. There are correlations significant at the 0.01-level for the traditional universities (*Pearsons* $r = .383$), the agricultural academic institutions ($r = .342$) and the higher education institutions with focus on social and economic sciences ($r = -.449$). For the other groups, no significant correlations could be found.

⁴⁸ Aldis Karklinsh, "Regional Agricultural Cooperation: Experiences and Future Potential", *Ambio* 26, no. 7 (1997): 466-468.

and regionalization in the higher education sector, even if a *Baltic Sea region higher education space* does not exist in general. But to test the *pioneer* character of the Baltic Sea Region in terms of regionalization, an interregional comparison is needed. Hence, the following chapters 4 and 5 propose to compare the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea Region concerning the extent of regional higher education co-operation.

Arguments in Favor of an Academic Co-operation in the Black Sea Region

Analyzing the reasons for a regional co-operation in the Black Sea Region shows that a bundle of arguments given for a strong regional networking in the Baltic Sea Region in the 1990s could be transferred to Black Sea Regions' challenges and development. Yet, the role of higher education institutions in the process of regionalization is discussed only elusively. The arguments of an internal, academic effect and positive externalities of regional higher education co-operation could as a matter of principle be applied in favor of a strong Black Sea regionalization. Yet, the *de facto* discourse seems to be much smaller than in the Baltic Sea Region. Three issues of regional policy may point out the transferability, yet also the elusive character of a public or academic debate:

(1) Though there are different levels and trajectories of democratic development in the Black Sea Region, democratic consolidation and the enhancement of political stability is a main challenge in all littoral states and hence for the Black Sea region as a whole, too.⁴⁹ Obviously, the proper education of the civil servants in the region could serve as a key to consolidation of democracies, effectiveness, stability and a reduction of corruption. The *multiplier effect* of co-operations to reform and modernize the higher education systems in the transitional states for state stability and the development of a civil society could appear in the Black Sea Region as it appeared in the Baltic Sea Region (and especially in the Baltic States) in the 1990s.⁵⁰ Yet, unlike the Baltic Sea Regions' situation in the beginning of the 1990s, political as well as *bottom-up* initiatives are rather scarce.

(2) One core question of regional stability in the Baltic Sea as well as in the Black Sea Region is the integration of Russia into the regional co-operation. As in the Baltic Sea Region, Russia's history as the former

⁴⁹ Daniel Grotzky and Mirela Isic, *The Black Sea Region: Clashing Identities and Risks to European Stability* (Munich: CAP Policy Analysis No. 4, 2008) 9.

⁵⁰ Hans-Jürgen Wildberg, „Exportschlager Rechtsstaat. Hochschulkooperationen in den Rechtswissenschaften“, in *Länderprofile. Analysen – Erfahrungen – Trends. Edition baltische Staaten*, ed. DAAD/GATE Germany (Bonn: DAAD, 2009) 11.

hegemonic power in the region and its position today in regional co-operation is the key to the region's security and the solution of conflicts concerning energy transport networks through the region.⁵¹ In the Baltic Sea Region, the regional integration of Russia was a core question for the academic discourse as well as for the policy of the regional political organizations – even more with the accession of Poland and the Baltic States to the EU in 2004 (cf. chapter 2). A shared knowledge – region-wide spread on conferences, via academic exchange and other co-operation projects with Russia – is considered to be one *soft security* strategy of the EU member states to embed Russia into the Baltic Sea Region. Even if this strategy is far from being coherent in the Baltic Sea Region, it is even more elusive in the Black Sea Region.

(3) Another similarity of the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea Region is the ecosystem's fragility of the eponymous sea as a main regional challenge. Problems like the heavy tanker traffic, the toxic threats or the eutrophication by point- and diffuse sources (mainly agriculture) are only some threats for the Baltic and the Black Sea.⁵² Like in the case of the Baltic Sea, the regional co-operation to work on the improvement of the marine environment is – compared to other policies – strongly institutionalized. Organizations like the Commission for the Protection of the Black Sea (based on the Bucharest Convention) or the Black Sea Environmental Programme are regional institutions to improve the ecological situation of the Black Sea.⁵³ Concerning the sustainable development of the Black Sea Region, *bottom-up* initiatives of higher education co-operation are to identify. Particularly the *Black Sea Universities Network* (BSUN) with its aim “to identify and enhance intellectual resources needed for sustainable

⁵¹ The regions position as an “energy corridor” is a considerable similarity between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea Region. For the EU as destination of these corridors, it makes both regions to pivotal bordering regions. Yet, while the *Northern Dimension* formulates a coherent EU-strategy on its north-eastern border, a *Black Sea Dimension* is still much less elaborated. Despite this influence of the EU as an external actor, the question is how much potential arises of the regions' status as “energy corridors” for the development of a regional identity. The discussion in the Baltic Sea Region on the *Northstream* gas pipeline from Russia via the Baltic Sea to Germany shows that there is more conflict than co-operation on such projects. Cf. Grotzky and Isic, 5; Iris Kempe and Kurt Klotzle, *The Balkans and the Black Sea Region: Problems, Potentials, and Policy Options* (Munich: CAP Policy Analysis No. 2, 2006) 16-18.

⁵² For the Baltic Sea Region, c.f. Yrjö Haila, “Unity versus Disunity of Environmental Governance in the Baltic Sea Region”, in Joas, Jahn and Kern, 193-198. For the Black Sea Region, cf. Mustafa Aydin, *Europe's Next Shore: The Black Sea Region after EU-Enlargement* (Paris: ISS Occasional Paper No. 53, 2004) 24-28.

⁵³ Fabrizio Tassinari, *A Synergy for Black Sea Regional Cooperation: Guidelines for an EU Initiative* (Brussels: CEPS Policy Brief No. 105, 2006) 6-7.

development”⁵⁴ expresses the idea to create a positive externality for the region by academic networking.⁵⁵

Of course, further research is needed to describe the role of higher education networking in the discourse on Black Sea Regions development systematically. It is the first step to a comprehensive comparison of both regions as proposed in this article. Possible positive external effects and its public and academic discourse should to be analyzed for the policies mentioned above, yet also for the economic development, transportation networks or regional problems like human trafficking etc. But my point is the following: There is a good base for arguing that patterns of reasoning for a strong Black Sea regional co-operation are – with some exceptions – similar to the situation in the Baltic Sea Region. If this is true, higher education institutions and their regional co-operation could play a similar strategic role like the academic co-operation in the project of Baltic Sea region building. Next to that, we see a kind of political institutionalization of regionalization – for example the European Neighbourhood policy on the Black Sea Region and – as a kind of umbrella for different initiatives of regional co-operation – the organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).⁵⁶ These institutions could serve as an engine for higher education co-operations, being a forum of *region builders* and giving incentives to the academic institutions to co-operate regionally.

Yet among scholars, BSEC co-operation is considered to have a rather “poor performance”⁵⁷. While the regional challenges in the Baltic Sea Region (especially in the 1990s) and the Black Sea region feature a considerable amount of similarities, the level of regional identification, regional co-operation and political institutionalization in the Black Sea Region is much less developed than in the Baltic Sea Region.⁵⁸ It results in the situation that there is no coherent internal or external strategy on Black Sea regionalization discussing regional higher education co-operation and networking to foster regional development. From a political science point of view, it leads to the question if these different points of departure lead to a different level of regional higher education co-operation. Hence, I

⁵⁴ Mustafa Aydin, “Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea and the Role of Institutions”, *Perceptions, quarterly journal of the Center for Strategic Research / Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Turkey* 10 (Autumn 2005): 65.

⁵⁵ BSUN, “The Kyiv Declaration of the University Rectors for the Sustainable Development in the Black Sea Region”, *International Journal of the Black Sea Universities Network – Letters from the Black Sea* 12, no. 2 (2008) 5-6.

⁵⁶ Aydin 2005, 62-66.

⁵⁷ Tassinari 2006, 2; Cf. Grotzky and Isic, 7.

⁵⁸ Kempe and Klotzle, 5.

propose to compare this empirical background of regionalization projects in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea Region in a systematic way.

Conclusion: Comparing Academic Co-operation in the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea Region

Such a systematic comparison consists of three steps. First of all, the rationales behind the demand for a strong academic co-operation on regional level are to be compared concerning their role in the political and academic discourse and their regional adaption. The question is: Why should a higher education institution co-operate on regional level? A comparison of the arguments given in the Baltic and the Black Sea regional discourse serves as a foundation of the empirical analysis in both regions.

In a second step, the analysis of the implementation in different political and/or academic projects would help to understand the adaption of the arguments in practice. For instance, a case comparison of the *Baltic University Programme* and the *Black Sea Universities Network* could depict the prospects and challenges of academic co-operation generating a positive externality on sustainability in the Region. Furthermore, the model character of the BUP to establish the BSUN could be elaborated.

Yet, to test the empirical basis for a *region building* project in the tertiary education sector systematically, all higher education institutions should be included into the comparison of regions. An aggregation of values for different kinds of higher education institution and the comparison between the Black and the Baltic Sea Region could then depict the background factors of regional integration.

As stated in the introduction of my paper, such a threefold comparison could generate three research results. Firstly, it could test the hypothesis of the Baltic Sea Region as a forerunner or pioneer in regionalization and the governance of regional policies on non-state-level. Secondly, the analysis would help to evaluate the prospects and challenges for the region and regionalization in the light of the situation in the other region. And last but not least, such a research project has a political consulting dimension. For instance, the comparison of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea concerning the level of higher education co-operation within the regions could help to formulate a coherent EU-strategy for the Black Sea Region. In general, two approaches of a European policy towards Euro-regionalisms can be identified: An outside-in-strategy with the EU as an initiator of regionalization and the inside-out-model with a strong co-operation on state and civil society level already running.⁵⁹ While in the

⁵⁹ Tassinari, 2006.

second case, the EU has to position itself within these strong regional networks (like it has to do in the case of the Baltic Sea Region), the main challenge in the first case is to find partners in the region. The systematic analysis of higher education co-operation in the Black Sea region and its comparison to the Baltic Sea Region could help to evaluate the empirical background for an appropriate EU-strategy in the Black Sea Region.

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