

**NORDEUROPAforum**

Zeitschrift für Politik,

Wirtschaft und Kultur

ISSN 1863639X

1/2005

15. Jahrgang (8. der N.F.)

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## Post-modern and intergovernmental paradigms of Baltic Sea co-operation between 1988 and 1992

### The genesis of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as a historical case study<sup>1</sup>

*Leena-Kaarina Williams*

#### Zusammenfassung

Die Ostseekooperation steht nach der EU-Erweiterung um Polen, Estland, Lettland und Litauen 2004 heute vor einer Neuorientierung im veränderten europäischen und internationalen Kontext. In ihren Entstehungsjahren zwischen 1988 und 1992 war sie durch innovative Konzepte zum "region-building" geprägt, was sich vor allem in den Ideen der politischen Akteure um den damaligen schleswig-holsteinischen Ministerpräsidenten Björn Engholm sowie einer Gruppe nordischer Politiker und Friedensforscher widerspiegelte. Im Zeichen der Friedenspolitik strebte man die Bildung einer "postmodern-reformerischen" Region der Netzwerke und informeller Diskussions- und Kontaktforen an. Von deutschen innen- und somit auch parteipolitischen Konflikten beeinflusst, haben die damaligen Außenminister Genscher (D) und Ellmann-Jensen (DK) 1992 den zwischenstaatlich agierenden Ostseerat (Council of the Baltic Sea States, CBSS) als zentrales Ostsee-Gremium eingesetzt, was dem regionalen Kooperationspektrum eine neue, eher traditionell und hierarchisch geprägte Institution hinzufügte. Der Beitrag rekapituliert und analysiert die Entstehung des Ostseerates im Sinne einer Fallstudie über einen vielschichtigen und weiterhin durchaus aktuellen "region-building"-Prozess.

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Baltic Sea co-operation has come of age. Increasingly in articles and speeches there is talk of the necessity for a new definition of the political, economic and cultural co-operation of all Baltic Sea riparian countries that exist since the end of the 1980s. This has to do with the recent EU membership of the Baltic States and Poland, which has, according to many experts, led to an increasing diffusion of decision-making processes within the large framework of intergovernmental, non-governmental and sub-regional institutions and networks.<sup>2</sup> In the current debate on Baltic Sea regional politics the term "hybrid region" is frequently being used in order to describe this multi-level interaction.

In this article it will however be argued that the complexity of decision-making structures and the diversity of institutions are a result of the historical development of Baltic Sea co-operation, where originally a post-modern<sup>3</sup> and reform-oriented construction of the region was

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complemented by a more hierarchical and static intergovernmental paradigm during the “construction period”<sup>4</sup> between 1988 and 1992.

Therefore, this first phase of Baltic Sea co-operation can serve as a manifold region-building paradigm in a more general sense. It was a historical window of opportunity that opened up for many region-builders and their ideas on the construction of a region, all having participated for different reasons with a variety of goals in mind.<sup>5</sup> The genesis of the CBSS as a historical case study that pinpoints the main actors and their ideas exemplifies the assumption made above and shows how this regional endeavour was shaped by divergent political interests and conceptions of how the intended co-operation should be materialised. At the same time and in addition to a large amount of performative literature on Baltic Sea regional policies, this article chooses an analytical approach describing certain developments in the light of their intended political “mission” and their impact on the shape of the regional political landscape.

When searching for the founding fathers there has been some competition and confusion as to what is the actual starting point for interaction around the Baltic Sea. Unquestionably, when regarding the roots of the first Baltic Sea regional constructions in the time period considered here, the ideational cradle stands in the federal state of Slesvig-Holstein, where the then social democratic Prime Minister Björn Engholm launched the idea of a *New Hanse*. A supportive network of Scandinavian social democratic leaders further enhanced the idea, and the group of those promoting within Northern Europe began to grow rapidly.<sup>6</sup> Beyond the political scene there was, however, also a fair amount of scholars, especially those working in the area of peace research, in Northern Europe who seized the opportunity to actively participate in region-building and thereby complement the ideas and activities coming from Slesvig-Holstein.<sup>7</sup>

This group of actors was determined to create a post-modern paradigm, in which the nation-state was gradually to lose importance and new forms of interaction, based on networking and people-to-people contact, should take over. It was seen as a region-building experiment, where the actors obviously had their own interests but were joining forces in order to reach a synergetic effect.<sup>8</sup>

As indicated above, I intend to show how this post-modern project was complemented by a parallel, more traditional intergovernmental construction. The two liberal then-foreign ministers Uffe Ellemann-Jensen (DK) and Hans-Dietrich Genscher (D) implemented the *Council of the Baltic Sea States* in 1992 as a reaction to the plans of Engholm and his social democratic counterparts in Sweden and Denmark. The aim was to establish a “round table” of actors from different NGOs, regions and societal groups. Party politics and inner-German power struggles between the federal state of Slesvig-Holstein and the Foreign Ministry can therefore be seen as the principle motors of the paradigmatic change in the construction of the Baltic Sea region since 1992.

It can be shown through archival data examined at the federal state archive of Slesvig-Holstein (*Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein*) that this conflict of political interests was responsible for these crucial developments.

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Additionally, several interviews with relevant actors of this time period were conducted.<sup>9</sup> The role of the early region-builders has not been explored in an extensive manner up to this point.<sup>10</sup> There are certain publications which touch upon the issue, but the particular role of Slesvig-Holstein as the key motor of Baltic Sea co-operation has so far not been an object of broad research. This is also due to the fact that relevant archival material was made available to the public first in 2002.

After shortly presenting the methodological tools and theoretical assumptions applied for this study, the essay will consider the threefold concept of actors, ideas and institutions as key factors to region-building developing the argumentative path for the above-mentioned presumptions.

### Theoretical background

During the 1990s the so-called *New Regionalism* was increasingly being used to explain new regional phenomena which had emerged during the aftermath of the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> Regionalism is hereby regarded as a positive turn in history, where formerly hostile states decided to co-operate across rigid borders and where designated “pre-existing” regions simply (re-)emerged:

Previously the New Regionalism approach found itself in an uneasy position between normativism and positivism. This pointed to certain empirical trends identified as regionalisation, while reading a more positive content in terms of regionalism into them than perhaps was warranted. The end of the Cold War was expected to pave the way for a more horizontal type of world order and these empirical trends seem to fit this normative position.<sup>12</sup>

In my study, *New Regionalism* is understood not as a theory for explaining the genesis of regions but as a tool for describing certain structural constituencies of regional settings. This allows a precise differentiation between types of regional development, where *New Regionalism* is primarily being seen as a “bottom-up” development that questions hierarchies and supports multipolarism. *Old Regionalism* stands for classical intergovernmental relations where states and sovereignty play a crucial role. The following overview characterises the main constituents of the two regionalisms in an ideal typed dichotomy:

**Table: New Regionalism vs. Old Regionalism<sup>13</sup>**

Old Regionalism	New Regionalism
<i>Governing</i> : establishing of new hierarchies between state and local levels; nation-states are the main actors, top-down projects	<i>Governance</i> : formulation of visions and goals; involvement of all sectors that share the responsibility for the region; bottom-up projects
<i>Structure</i> : structural planning; formation of alliances; diplomacy	Process: process is central; consensus and conflict resolution are the main goals
<i>Closedness</i> : delimitation and membership are crucial	<i>Openness</i> : no boundaries; cross-border and multi-sectoral co-operation

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<i>Co-ordination</i> : hierarchical distribution of resources through governments	<i>Co-operation</i> : voluntary pooling of resources on an equal basis
<i>Responsibility</i> : suspicion towards accumulation of power on the regional level; fixed responsibilities and little flexibility	<i>Trust</i> : involvement for regional social capital and civil infrastructure as a confidence-building measure
<i>Concentration of power</i> : power as a zero-sum-game; sovereignty of the state; hierarchy	<i>Decentralisation</i> : diffusion of power between diverse regional actors; networking

This depiction of structural components which can, in various forms, be inherent to different regional settings serves here as a matrix for explaining the emergence of the two main parallel regional constructions within the Baltic Sea region.

If, as stated above, regions do not simply emerge but are for example generated by a bottom-up movement promoted by regional actors, the role of region-builders should be closely analysed. This is a key focus of the Norwegian researcher Iver B. Neumann, who, with his “region-building approach” encourages students of region studies to examine the process and the ideas and people behind it:

Instead of postulating a given set of interests that actors are supposed to harbour before their social interaction with other collectives, the region-building approach investigates interests where they are formulated, namely in discourse. Where every region-builder’s goal is to make the region-building programme as *natural* as possible, the approach aims to expose its historically contingent character.<sup>14</sup>

Regions are hereby seen as constructions, as imagined communities, whose existence is perpetuated and communicated by individuals and reproduced within institutional practices. Region-builders define the differences and common grounds on which their construction is seen to have a fruitful political outcome. History, cultural similarity or political necessities are therefore aspects of the region-builders toolkit with which he constructs the foundation of regional co-operation:

That begs one vital question: Is it possible to construct a region as it were *ex nihilo*? The region-building approach would side with radical constructivists and answer yes.<sup>15</sup>

The region-building approach proposes a research design as laid out here: the role of region-builders, their ideas, structural concepts and methods of communicating how and why the region should be politically utilised as an area of interaction are the main subjects of this study. The distinction between regionalisms assists the analysis of these developments.

**Actors and ideas**

Among the numerous region-builders active in the Baltic Sea sphere, two “groups” are responsible for having given a special input to the initial

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formation of the regional entity: the politicians from Slesvig-Holstein and the northern European peace researchers. They co-operated in an exceptional manner, exchanging ideas and concepts at shared meetings, writing for common publications or simply corresponding with each other. Early Baltic Sea region-building was a joint project of the “northern” intellectual and political elite, where the primary goal was to create something new for the region even if the political intentions and “marketing-strategies” for this might have been quite diverse.

In West Germany, Slesvig-Holstein had for a long time been one of the poorest federal states. Governed by the Christian Democrats for over thirty years, it was seen to be a traditionalistic very agrarian northern outpost of the industrial boom-regions in southern and middle Germany. The election of Björn Engholm as Prime Minister of the federal state in 1988 put an end to the long reign of the CDU and opened up a window of change. Along with other innovations Engholm introduced the *New Hanse* as one of the key policies for Slesvig-Holstein, which initiated new and brighter perspectives beyond the tough competition with other German federal states in which Slesvig-Holstein had been somewhat unsuccessful.<sup>16</sup> Engholm’s idea of a co-operating *Mare Balticum* aimed at showing his constituency that it had, in spite of everything, more in common with northern Europeans than with Bavarians. This was complemented by the fact that he was part of the so-called “grandson generation” of Willy Brandt with a strong dedication to *Ostpolitik*. The slogan “change through rapprochement” (“Wandel durch Annäherung”), voiced by Egon Bahr and Willy Brandt in the framework of the *Ostpolitik*, had shaped Engholm’s political background and was put into practice by his initiative of the *New Hanse*, where he suggested, similarly to the so-called *Mitteuropa-Politik*<sup>17</sup> launched by eastern European intellectuals in the 1980s, a cross-border bottom-up movement fostering enhanced and peaceful relations between East and West.<sup>18</sup>

In order to implement these ideas Engholm added a think tank, the so-called *Denkfabrik*, to his state chancellery, an institution which represented a completely new element in the German political landscape.<sup>19</sup> The *Denkfabrik*, consisting of renowned German researchers, was mandated to generate and document new ideas also in respect to the *New Hanse* policy, which were then to be implemented. The outcome of various brainstorming conferences from August 1989 until September 1990, orchestrated by the *Denkfabrik* by inviting a variety of prominent actors from different societal groups, was to enhance significantly political, economic and especially cultural ties between all the Baltic Sea riparian countries, focusing on the implementation of Baltic Sea networks, art events and regional partnerships.<sup>20</sup>

Parallel to the process of providing the *New Hanse* policy with solid content and concrete projects, Engholm travelled frequently in order to find further allies within the northern European social democratic sphere. Whereas the Swedes, and here especially Mats Hellström, at that time minister for agriculture, were clear proponents of the *Mare Balticum* idea<sup>21</sup>, the Danes and Finns had a harder time letting go of specific fears such as the Danish deep concern over the possibility of German dominance within the region-building project and the Finnish “Realpolitik” towards the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> On

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a trip to the GDR in spring 1989, Engholm was even able to convince Erich Honecker to be part of *Ars Baltica*, a cultural network which was one of the earliest components of the *New Hanse* policy that still exists until this day.<sup>23</sup>

A planned trip to the Baltic States was not granted by the German foreign ministry in 1990; however, informal contacts were on the agenda long before the political destiny of the Baltic States could be fathomed.

The *New Hanse* policy can be characterised as being guided by a strong impetus to re-focus the meaning of “domestic affairs” in Slesvig-Holstein. At the same time, it nevertheless emerged into a kind of foreign policy towards Eastern Europe which was not compatible to the strategy followed by the CDU-FDP government in Bonn. A major factor in Engholm’s affinity to the North was also due to the strong social democratic dominance in Scandinavia and the identification of northern German SPD politicians with the “Nordic model”.<sup>24</sup> The goal of forming a cross-border network for Slesvig-Holstein and the whole Baltic Sea region was seen as a port of entry into rigid systemic borders and to the export of Nordic societal values such as an open democracy, a strong civil society and a prioritised social agenda.

The aspect of exceeding borders was not only traditionally part of the foreign policy of the SPD but also a key feature of Engholm’s conception of space which challenged the nation-state and was defined by historical, traditional and geopolitical ideas. This was mirrored by Engholm’s idea of Baltic Sea co-operation consisting of networks of NGOs, municipalities, educational institutions, art associations etc.

Using the term *New Hanse* for this endeavour was often criticised as ill-chosen, since it not only conjures up memories of a glorious networking past but also of German dominance in the region. In Engholm’s case the title was actually chosen, on the one hand, because of his Hanseatic background, coming from the city of Lübeck, and on the other hand, and this was his primary motive, because of his attitude towards governing. His idea of governance implied a culture of positive encounter within society, where institutions open up towards different groups thereby promoting an open discourse.<sup>25</sup> The *New Hanse* was not, as frequently proposed, a hegemonic approach camouflaged by mercantilist historicism but rather a label or marketing tool with which the Engholm Government tried to implement this totally new political dimension beyond the local borders into the self-perception of the citizens of Slesvig-Holstein.

The Baltic Sea region, constructed by the region-builders from Slesvig-Holstein and perpetuated by the political leaders was based on the talk about cultural affinity, similar mentalities, common history and compatible standards of life with northern Europe under the heading of the *New Hanse*. However, for Engholm culture was the main binding link as it served as both a legitimisation and a concrete co-operation project. Culture was therefore regarded as the key measure for creating a common Baltic Sea identity, which was a designated goal of the actors from Slesvig-Holstein and a distinct label for the policy within the Engholm era. After his resignation in 1993, however, a more pragmatic approach to Baltic Sea politics entered the agenda, preserving the issue as one of the main policy sectors ever

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since.<sup>26</sup>

The group of peace researchers involved in Baltic Sea region-building coincided with Engholm's attempts at creating a new kind of region and seizing of the window of opportunity opened up by the historical changes taking place in the early 1990s. The academic participation of researchers in active region-building was seen as a rather unusual phenomenon. Some spectators, such as Iver B. Neumann for example, were said to have been seeing a "conspiracy theory of how the post-modern, Nordic foreign policy establishment has staged the project of Baltic Sea region-building" behind it.<sup>27</sup> The double role of these researchers was a conscious choice and interpreted as an intellectual involvement in a political project. But the participatory role of the researchers was not only a clear statement for entering new territory, it was also the commitment to post-modern ideas questioning the role of the nation-state and its sovereignty as the guiding principle for political order.

For Joenniemi and Wæver, the main protagonists of the academic region-building scene, the Baltic Sea region was

to be presented [...] as networking rather than building anything very firm and systematic. To be depicted as a way of taking advantage of initiatives at the local level, and this without any necessary interference of central, national authorities. There has to be space for a variety of names, labels and symbols ranging from the obviously medieval such as the Hanse, to post-modern notions such as the Networking North.<sup>28</sup>

This openness was also adapted to the other central elements of the regional construction such as membership, identity and security. According to the researchers, participation in the region-building project was not a question of demarcation and drawing circles but rather of a dynamic process including everybody who wants to be active. The emergence of various networks and organisations was seen as the key asset and 'trademark' of the region, not as an uncontrollable distribution of power:

This overlap is probably to be preserved as long as possible. At least a duality of Nordic-Baltic, council-to-council relations and an overarching North European (Hansa) co-operation has to be kept, and to the institutions has to be added the constant reminder, that they are secondary, the networks are the region and thereby it is non-exclusive – just link in!<sup>29</sup>

Baltic Sea identity-formation was regarded as a key goal for the regional project. However, the special quality of this regional identity should, according to Wæver and Joenniemi, be hetero- not homogeneity, which could be generated by addressing cultural diversity rather than trying to deliberately create and focus on similarities. Security, being the key issue in the Baltic Sea region throughout the post-war era, should, according to the researchers, be kept out of the region-building agenda and moved to other forums such as the CSCE, NATO, or EC. For obvious reasons security matters had high priority for the Baltic States during that time and the Baltic

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Sea regional efforts were therefore frequently employed as a platform for certain verbal battles with Russia.<sup>30</sup> For the researchers this aspect was part of the modern agenda that still existed in parts of the region, which, as region-building progressed, would be superseded by the post-modern ideas of soft-security and post-nationalism.

The re-organisation of political space in the Baltic Sea region was from the researchers' point of view a reform-oriented project; something totally new was to be created. This new construction evolved around the concepts of networking, the decline of national sovereignty and alternative attempts at security policy. *Old Regionalism* as in intergovernmental, classically diplomatic relations was not part of the construction:

The type of region one is thinking about is dependent on conceptions of politics at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In post-modern terms the crucial issue is linking up to the most important flows and networks. [...] Thus, the post-modern region might really not be about a whole, contiguous area, but about certain cities, flows and information. The modern region is more territorial, state based, concerned about security (as in the case of the Balts) or about power balancing [...].<sup>31</sup>

In terms of institutions, this also meant that a truly pluralistic concept was to be favoured, where smaller entities such as northern Germany, northern Poland or the coastal areas of Russia could participate and where, on “the new market of meanings”, post-modern and “medieval conceptualisations as that of the Hansa” could meet.<sup>32</sup>

### **Institutions**

Institutionalisation in the Baltic Sea region is a very complex issue. During the early 1990s numerous NGOs, projects, co-operation agreements and city partnerships emerged.<sup>33</sup> This “explosion” of networks and initiatives soon led to the consequence that political leaders, especially in Slesvig-Holstein and Sweden, began to think about an institution which could bundle these activities according to their understanding of the region. The genesis of the *Council of the Baltic Sea States* (CBSS), founded in 1992, can only be sketched here. Nevertheless, the main determinants and milestones, and thereby the differences between, on the one hand, the institutional model of Engholm-Hellström and, on the other hand, the model that was implemented by Ellemann-Jensen and Genscher, must be briefly outlined.

The intense social democratic co-operation between Slesvig-Holstein and Sweden, creating new policies for the Baltic Sea region, also led to a joint endeavour regarding the institutionalisation process.<sup>34</sup> Hellström had arranged meetings on this issue already in 1990, where the idea of a co-ordinating body was even dealt with in the Swedish press.<sup>35</sup> Within the Nordic political elite, however, there were at that point too many doubters, meaning the idea only gained momentum in the summer of 1991 through Hellströms invitation to intellectuals from around the Baltic Sea to Stockholm in order to develop the idea of a so-called *Baltic Forum*. The key



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outcome of this meeting was a basic plan on the core elements of this kind of an institution.<sup>36</sup> The *Baltic Forum* was to be pragmatic and consensus-oriented. Practical questions should have priority over the fundamental and institutional concerns of international politics. Co-operation should be flexible, open and not prone to rigid hierarchical structures, the main goal being societal dialogue, not political integration. Therefore the institution should represent a forum for different societal groups instead of governments. The main topics for the sessions within the *Baltic Forum* should be research and education, communication, technology-transfer, energy, environmental problems, transport and culture. The governmental input could be made during a separate and informal *Baltic Dinner*. After a test period these two arrangements could be merged into a *Baltic Council*. The aim was to create something new in order to develop the Baltic Sea region into a model region for Europe.

This concept for a *Baltic Forum* was used by Hellström and Engholm for propagating the idea within the Nordic and European political sphere. Engholm's key message was a "model of open participation" for a *Baltic Forum* which, of course, also resulted from his own political goals to have the federal states participating in the institution. These ideas were supported by a resolution of the social democratic group within the Danish *Folketing* in September 1991.<sup>37</sup> Especially during the election campaign in Sweden in the autumn of 1991 the Nordic social democratic politicians, including Björn Engholm, presented the idea to the public.<sup>38</sup> The publicity resulting from the election campaign in Sweden and the Maastricht referendum in Denmark also reached Germany, where Engholm had not only been elected leader of the social democratic party but was also the designated candidate to challenge Helmut Kohl in the next national elections in 1994. The project of creating a *Baltic Forum* with an open participation of civil society and parliamentary actors had rapidly become a public issue clearly associated with the social democrats.

After the election defeat of the social democrats in Sweden in October 1991 it was up to Engholm to take concrete steps. In an internal paper, the actors within Slesvig-Holstein discussed the constitutional problems that could arise from an invitation to the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea States for a founding meeting of a *Baltic Forum*. After all, Engholm was only the Prime Minister of a federal state.<sup>39</sup> In a parallel effort, Engholm sent a letter to the Prime Ministers in October 1991 to initiate a first preparatory meeting for the *Baltic Forum*, which should take place in January 1992,<sup>40</sup> and also to the German then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, informing him of his plans.

Genscher's reply to this letter marks the turning point in the founding history of the CBSS and ensures that Engholm was not to be tolerated as a key actor on the Baltic Sea stage any longer. Genscher agreed that new developments in the region had created a necessity for action, but only with clear roles and "within the sphere of constitutional responsibility."<sup>41</sup> In the same letter, Genscher informed Engholm that he and Uffe Ellemann-Jensen had invited the ambassadors of the region to Rostock in October 1991,<sup>42</sup> where the founding of a *Council of the Baltic Sea States* was to be decided upon. To this end the Foreign Ministers of all the Baltic Sea states would be

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invited to the founding conference in March 1992. Genscher wrote that the founding of the CBSS

is an issue that according to Art. 32(1) GG [= German Constitution, LKW] falls into the sphere of competence of the Federal Government of Germany. [...] For this reason the Federal Government will not support your initiative.<sup>43</sup>

The only concession Genscher made was the offer to invite one representative of the federal states to the founding conference in Copenhagen. In relation to Engholm's activities in Baltic Sea co-operation the phenomenon of so-called "Nebenaußenpolitik", i.e. foreign policy performed by a German federal state, was often cited and is subsequently a topical issue of the debate on the power division within the German federal system.

The reason for Genscher's harsh reaction remains open to speculation. Engholm, being on the verge of establishing a respected profile as an international politician was surely not welcomed by the CDU/CSU-FDP government, knowing that he was going to lead the SPD into the next national elections. Internal German party political rivalries therefore seem to have been a crucial factor for the further development of Baltic Sea politics.<sup>44</sup> But also in Denmark, the idea of a *Baltic Forum* might have become too much of a social democratic endeavour in the eyes of Ellemann-Jensen. As party colleagues and good friends, the two Foreign Ministers simply put their foot down on the issue by using their formal power.

This sudden coup by the two Foreign Ministers gave the future member states very little time to plan and act. The CBSS was founded in March 1992 and has since then developed itself in different directions. Not only the implementation of a permanent secretariat in 1998 but also the constant adaptation of new thematic fields and the recognition as an international organisation were significant milestones for the CBSS.<sup>45</sup> The initial architecture of the Council was, however, quite formalistic and clearly conceived by actors, whose political understanding had been formed accordingly to the guidelines of *Old Regionalism*. Annual intergovernmental conferences of the Foreign Ministers prepared by a *Committee of Senior Officials* recruited from the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs were to be held by rotating presidencies. Special members, such as the *European Commission*, and special guests and observers, for example from sub-regions, were bid welcome and working groups on special issues were planned. According to the *Terms of Reference*, sub-regional activities were to be given high priority, since Baltic Sea regional co-operation was in need of participation on different levels.<sup>46</sup>

The main contents for co-operation within the CBSS at that time were first democratic development, second economical and technical aid, third humanitarian affairs and health, fourth environmental protection and energy, fifth culture, education, tourism and information, and sixth transport and communication. The main difference to the initial ideas proposed by Slesvig-Holstein and the peace researchers was not only that the activities had been shifted to the intergovernmental level, but that they had been

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shifted to give a stronger focus on “development aid” for the Baltic States, and thus formulated in the wording of classical foreign policy.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, the reactions to this development were predominantly positive, also in Slesvig-Holstein. The main criticism offered was directed at the accumulation of institutions within the European framework.<sup>48</sup> The disappointment of Engholm and his supporters was not discussed. Obviously, the policy here was not to raise the issue in the press, since Engholm had de facto not completely followed the formal rules and at the same time wished to keep his image as *the* founding father of Baltic Sea co-operation.<sup>49</sup> Making Genschler’s decision a public issue would have been counterproductive to Engholm’s personal political ambitions. In any case, it had at that point become clear that Slesvig-Holstein had now formally lost its say within Baltic Sea politics and thereby also the official channels to voice its ideas.<sup>50</sup> This was of course not the case on the informal level or within various networks, projects and activities, as Slesvig-Holstein is until today one of the most active proponents of Baltic Sea regionalism.

However, the paradigmatic change in the key ideas initiated by the actors from Slesvig-Holstein and the peace research scene was brought about by this shift in the institutional architecture. The Baltic Sea region moved from constructions of *New Regionalism* into a framework complemented by *Old Regionalism*. This new development was also closely followed by the researchers, who in a quick reaction presented a charter that they had formulated at a conference in summer 1992 at the *Nordic Centre for Spatial Planning* (NORDREGIO). Here the will to form a Baltic Sea community without rigid borders and political goals such as solidarity and the formation of a common identity was formulated. A “Confederation of Baltic Sea Regions” should, in accordance with the Engholm-Hellström model, be open and flexible and the membership voluntary. This proposal was a last attempt at counteracting the intergovernmentalism of the CBSS.<sup>51</sup> Before the conference, Joenniemi and Wæver addressed a letter to Engholm in early 1992, inquiring as to what had happened to the initial ideas and how they should interpret these developments.<sup>52</sup>

The “post-modern and reform-oriented” region-building project had been complemented by an “intergovernmental and institutional” paradigm changing the main co-ordinates of the regional framework.

### **Summary and outlook**

In this study, the genesis of the two main lines in the construction of the Baltic Sea region was sketched out by addressing key actors, ideas and institution-building as in case of the CBSS. It was shown that, during the region-building period between 1988 and 1992, the initial ideas of region-building, concerning the main political topics and the institutionalisation, had their roots within different understandings of “region” which can be characterised as dynamics of *Old and New Regionalism*.

During the course of time the two constructions have “settled” within the regional framework. There is a fair amount of interplay between the different levels of co-operation as in the concept of “hybrid regions” mentioned at the

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beginning of this article. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the post-modern and reform-oriented construction has been contested by the strong role of the CBSS, since certain structural complications automatically appeared to become relevant. The post-modern project had propagated the complexity and network character of regional interaction, whereas for the intergovernmental sphere this had been seen to be a challenge: only through the implementation of the CBSS in its present constitution questions of membership and certain responsibilities have become relevant. The post-modern construction that presently coexists within various networks and projects had postulated the diffusion of power in general and the decline of power of the nation-state in particular. In this respect, the post-modern region-building endeavour was to a far extent ill-prepared. The nation-states obviously did not yet think enough in a post-modern way as to let go of their traditional role as manifested within the framework of the CBSS.

One example for this is the German case, where the recent governments in Berlin quite obviously have shown far less interest in the Baltic Sea region than the coastal federal states of Slesvig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. A common institution or round table as suggested by the post-modern and reform-oriented actors, where regions, NGOs, parliamentarians and different societal groups could have exchanged experiences, written common resolutions and informed their governments about the needs and activities, might have been a more effective forum than the CBSS with its formalised institutional architecture.<sup>53</sup> However, having stated this, it is quite clear that the CBSS has addressed this problem in several ways, for example by adapting a working group structure with thematic experts or initiating the NGO forum.

But not only does the CBSS nowadays also act within a wide variety of non-governmental activities, the intergovernmental scenery has also changed dramatically during the last years. The entrance of the Baltic States into the EU has especially led to questions on the future role of the CBSS. After the CBSS summit in Laulasmaa, Estonia in June 2004 new policy ideas about the relevance of the CBSS after the enlargement were voiced by, for example, German politicians proposing that the CBSS should re-focus on environmental questions and the integration of Russia into the larger European framework. And, interestingly enough, the summit resolution also proposed to reform the CBSS in such a way, that it could turn into an institution that is as “flexible and informal as possible.”<sup>54</sup> In the light of the post-modern and reform-oriented construction postulated in the early 1990s this sounds like a familiar concept.

This time travel presented here might consequently be useful in a time where a new “formative moment” has appeared for the Baltic Sea region due to the political developments within Europe. The Baltic Sea region has gone through several evolutionary phases as documented in this study, and is now in need of adequate strategies for transformation and adaptation of the institutional landscape and decision-making procedures within the enlarged EU. This might effectively lead to a re-consideration of some of the ideas of the early region-builders, where the Baltic Sea regional project with its institutional design was definitely seen to be more than a “back office” for

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the European Commission or solely a transformation aid institution for non-EU members. Time will tell.

**1** This article is based on my doctoral thesis: *Zur Konstruktion einer Region: Die Entstehung der Ostseekooperation zwischen 1988 und 1992*. which is forthcoming in autumn 2005.

**2** Hoppe, Ursel: *Perspektiven der Ostseekooperation nach der EU-Erweiterung, vor einer neuen Phase der regionalen Zusammenarbeit?* Kiel 2003, 10 (= SCHIFF-Texte 70).

**3** The term “post-modern” is in this context being used as the description of a certain approach towards regional development, which will be specified in the course of the article.

**4** This differentiation of region-building periods has been proposed by Stålvant, Carl-Einar: *Zehn Jahre Ostseekooperation: Was wurde erreicht – was bleibt zu tun?* Kiel 2001, 12 (= SCHIFF-Texte 61).

**5** Marko Lehti calls this period a “formative moment”, where old narratives are replaced by new ones and thereby “bringing order in the midst of change.” Lehti, Marko: “Possessing a Baltic Europe: Retold National Narratives in the European North.” In: Idem and David J. Smith: *Post Cold War Identity Politics*. London 2003, 11–50.

**6** On the basis of my archival material the ideas and early institutions generated during the “construction period” of Baltic Sea co-operation were clearly dominated by the northern German and northern European political and research scene. Poland, the Baltic states and Russia first entered the picture in a later phase. Lehti even sees the Scandinavian motivation in early Baltic Sea policies as a way to “control, educate and patronise the east”; Lehti 2003, like in footnote 5, 25.

**7** When referring to *the* peace researchers the group in focus is composed by the then active research communities at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI), the Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI) and the so-called project group on peace and conflict research in Kiel, which later on was institutionalised as the Peace Research Institute of Slesvig-Holstein (SCHIFF) at the University of Kiel. Key actors during this time were Pertti Joenniemi, Ole Wæver and Christian Wellmann, who were the first to publish on Baltic Sea issues, in organising conferences and the first to act as “political consultants” in this regard.

**8** On the retreat of the nation-state, as often predicted during the 1990s, and the emerging post-Westphalian order see for example: Hettne, Björn, Sverker Sörlin and Uffe Østergård: *Den globala nationalismen: Nationalstatens historia och framtid*. Stockholm 1998, 400–426.

**9** The archive of the federal state of Slesvig-Holstein (Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein) provided most of the very heterogeneous material, consisting of papers, non-papers, brochures, letters, articles from

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newspapers in German, Scandinavian languages and Finnish, speeches, plenary session protocols etc. for this study. Interviews were among others conducted with Björn Engholm (11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2002), Hans-Dietrich Genscher (17<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2003), Uffe Ellemann-Jensen (16<sup>th</sup> March 2002), Ingvar Carlsson (15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2002), Kalevi Sorsa (16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2003). The limited validity of the interviews as scientific sources has been taken into consideration.

**10** There have been a few attempts though not on the basis of the material employed here, see for example Männikkö, Päivi: *Periferiasta yhteistyön moottoriksi. Itämeren alueen yhteistyö Slesvig-Holsteinin poliittisessa keskustelussa 1988–1995*. Turku 2001; Krohn, Axel: *Schleswig-Holstein goes International*. Copenhagen 1998 (= COPRI Working Papers, 30); Harr, Tone: *Institusjonalisering av en Østersjøregion*. Oslo 1998.

**11** See for example Hettne, Björn, András Inotai and Osvaldo Sunkel (eds.): *Globalism and the New Regionalism: The New Regionalism*. Vol. 1, Basingstoke 1999; idem, András Inotai and Osvaldo Sunkel (eds.): *The New Regionalism. National Perspectives on the New Regionalism in the North*. Vol. 2, Basingstoke 1999.

**12** Hettne, Björn: "The New Regionalism Revisited." In: Fredrik Söderbaum and Timothy M. Shaw: *Theories of New Regionalism*. New York 2003, 39.

**13** This self developed table was inspired by Alan Wallis, who works mainly on regionalism within economic regions in the USA, see <<http://www.munimall.net>> online on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2005; see also Hettne, Sörlin and Østergård 1998, like in footnote 8, 421–424.

**14** Neumann, Iver B.: "A region-building Approach." In: Söderbaum and Shaw, like in footnote 12, 162.

**15** Neumann, Iver B.: *Regions in International Relations Theory*. Oslo 1992, 36 (= NUPI Research Report, 162).

**16** Engholm, Björn: *Regierungserklärung*. (government policy statement) 28th June 1988.

**17** See Kurth, James: "Germany and the Re-emergence of Mitteleuropa." In: *Current History*. 94 (1995), 384ff.

**18** Willy Brandt was, prior to Engholm, one of the few German politicians who had strong ties to Northern Europe due to his years in Norwegian and Swedish exile. For further information see for example Lorenz, Einhart: *Willy Brandt in Norwegen. Die Jahre des Exils 1933 bis 1944*. Kiel 1989; Müssener, Helmut: *Exil in Schweden. Politische und kulturelle Emigration nach 1933*. München 1974.

**19** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8841: Zur Konzeption der Denkfabrik.

**20** Der Ministerpräsident des Landes Schleswig-Holstein – Denkfabrik (Hg.): *Chancen einer stärkeren Einbindung Schleswig-Holsteins in den*

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*Ostseeraum. Abschlußbericht der 2. Projektgruppe der Denkfabrik.*

Kiel 1990.

**21** The Swedish Institute of Future Studies was also the initiator of a truly multifaceted conference of all groups of Baltic Sea actors in the Finnish city of Kotka in July 1990; see Hellström, Mats: *Politiskt liv*. Lund 1999, 144–146; Sundqvist, Ulf: “The Spirit of Kotka.” In: *Framtider International*. 1 (1991), 4; Andersson, Åke: “Nights and Days in Kotka.” In: *Framtider International*. 1 (1991), 3.

**22** Engholm, Björn: Plenarprotokoll 12/18, 895; Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8017a: Vermerk zum Besuch des Ministerpräsidenten in Finnland (Helsinki-Kotka-Helsinki) vom 27.–29.6.1990. Kiel, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1990.

**23** “Gemeinsames Interesse für Zusammenarbeit im Ostseeraum.” In: *Ostsee-Zeitung*. 3rd Feb. 1989; “Björn Engholm informierte sich im DDR-Küstenbezirk.” In: *Neues Deutschland*. 3rd February 1989.

**24** Interviews with Björn Engholm and Gerd Walter (13<sup>th</sup> February 2002) and Klaus Rave (15<sup>th</sup> June 2004).

**25** Engholm, Björn: *Regieren heißt nicht befehlen – Von der Macht der Politik*. Speyer1990 (= Speyerer Vorträge 17).

**26** A few years after his resignation he confirmed this opinion within the following article: Engholm, Björn: “Die Ostseeregion wird entweder kulturell bestehen oder gar nicht. Über die Bedeutung von Kultur für die Entwicklung Nordosteuropas.” In: Christian Wellmann: *Kooperation und Konflikt in der Ostseeregion*. Kiel 1999, 64 (=Gegenwartsfragen, 81).

**27** Wæver, Ole and Pertti Joenniemi: “Region in the Making – A Blueprint for Baltic Sea Politics.” In: Christian Wellmann (ed.): *The Baltic Sea Region: Conflict or Cooperation? Region-Making, Security, Disarmament and Conversion. Proceedings of the TAPRI-PFK-Workshop*. Kiel 1991, 44.

**28** Joenniemi and Wæver 1991, like in footnote 27, 58.

**29** Ibid., 59–60.

**30** This happened, for example, at the first Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Helsinki in 1991 where, interestingly enough, Pertti Joenniemi acted as a Secretary General, which exemplifies paradigmatically how inter-linked the research and political communities were. Väänänen, Pekka and Mika Boedeker (eds.): *Parliamentary Conference on Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area. Helsinki, 7–9 Jan. Helsinki 1991*.

**31** Joenniemi and Wæver 1991, like in footnote 27, 56–57.

**32** Joenniemi, Pertti: *Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Needs and Prospects*. Tampere 1991, 151 (= TAPRI Research Report 42).

**33** See for information on the Baltic Sea networks and institutions

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Antola, Esko, Hiski Haukkala and Terhi Suominen: *Networks in the Baltic Sea Region*. Turku 2000 (= Working Papers of the Jean Monnet Unit, 5); Schymik, Carsten: "Networking Civil Society in the Baltic Sea Region." In: Norbert Götz and Jörg Hackmann (eds.): *Civil Society in the Baltic Sea Region*. Aldershot 2003, 217–234; Williams, Leena-Kaarina: *The Baltic Sea Region: Forms and Functions of Regional Co-operation*. Gdansk 2001 (= BaltSeaNet Working Paper 2).

**34** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8529g: Vermerk zum Gespräch mit Mats Hellström, schwedischer Minister für Nordische Zusammenarbeit und Landwirtschaft. Lübeck, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1991.

**35** "Hellström vill ha Östersjöråd." In: *Dagens Nyheter*. 13th November 1990; "Hellström vill bilda Östersjöråd." In: *Dagens Industri*. 15th November 1990.

**36** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8529l: Summary of the discussion on Baltic Sea Co-operation in Stockholm, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1991.

**37** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8529w: Socialdemokratiet, proposal for a Folketing resolution on the Creation of a Baltic Sea Council.

**38** "Socialdemokratiskt trekejsarmöte: Östersjöns framtid." In: *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*. 25th August 1991; "Socialdemokrater i tre lande foreslår Østersøråd." In: *Berlingske Tidende*. 28th August 1991; "Tvænationalt S-aftale om Østersø-samarbejde." In: *Jyllands Posten*. 28th August 1991; "Gemeinsamer Vorstoß für Ostsee-Rat." In: *Schleswig-Holsteinische Landeszeitung*. 28th August 1991.

**39** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8529v: Vermerk zur Einberufung des Ostseerates. Kiel, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1991.

**40** Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Letter by Björn Engholm to Denmark's Prime Minister Poul Schlüter, 27<sup>th</sup> October 1991.

**41** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8529x: Brief vom Bundesminister des Auswärtigen Hans Dietrich Genscher an Björn Engholm, Bonn, 2<sup>nd</sup> December. 1989.

**42** "Erste deutsch-dänische Konferenz der Botschafter am Dienstag in Rostock." In: *Der Nordschleswiger*. 21st Oct. 1991.

**43** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein, like in footnote 41.

**44** Both Ellemann-Jensen and Genscher did not specifically mention the initiative taken by Slesvig-Holstein in the conducted interviews. The founding of the CBSS is not mentioned in Genscher's political autobiography either: Genscher, Hans-Dietrich: *Erinnerungen*. Berlin 1995.

**45** See for further information Hubel, Helmut and 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*



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**46** Council of Baltic Sea States: "Terms of Reference for the CBSS 1992. Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Sea States." Copenhagen, 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> March 1992 <<http://www.cbss.st/documents/foundingdocs/dbaFile752.html>> online on 19 July 2005.

**47** Council of Baltic Sea States: "Copenhagen Declaration. Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Sea States." Copenhagen, 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> March, 1992 <<http://www.cbss.st/documents/foundingdocs/dbaFile751.html>> online on 19th July 2005.

**48** "Außenminister streben einen Rat der Ostseestaaten an." In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. 5th March 1992; "Viel mehr als Meer haben die Ostsee-Staaten nicht gemeinsam." In: *Frankfurter Rundschau*. 7th March 1992; "Moves to bridge divide between the east and the west." In: *Financial Times*. 6th March 1992; "Itämeren maiden uusi yhteistyöelin muotoutumassa." In: *Helsingin Sanomat*. 4th March 1992; "Et hav av muligheder." In: *Politiken*. 5th March 1992.

**49** Landesregierung Schleswig-Holstein: Ostseerat in Kopenhagen gegründet. Press release, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1992; "Erstmals Treffen aller zehn Ostseestaaten." In: *Schleswig-Holsteinische Landeszeitung*. 3rd March 1992.

**50** There were still some efforts made to formalise Schleswig-Holstein's participation and to influence the institutional architecture of the CBSS, such as a meeting between Engholm and Genscher in early 1992; Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8529z: Vermerk für den Chef der Staatskanzlei, Gespräch des Ministerpräsidenten mit Außenminister Genscher über Ostseerat. Bonn, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1992.

**51** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8018l: Lars Hedegaard: Charter for sammenslutningen af Baltiske Regioner. Unpublished manuscript, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1992.

**52** Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein: Abt. 605, Akte Nr. 8221: Briefwechsel Denkfabrik – Pertti Joenniemi (TAPRI).

**53** Of course, there are other institutions such as the *Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference* (BSPC) or the *Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation* (BSSSC), where the German federal states are represented and where they have been able to play active roles.

**54** "Ostseerat orientiert sich neu, Gremium bemüht sich um Abgrenzung von EU-Aufgaben." In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. 22nd June 2004.