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Non-Governmental Organizations and Cross-Border Environmental Cooperation: Salish Sea and Baltic Sea Regions

Margit Säre
Border Policy Research Institute & University of Victoria Cross Border Research Fellow

Border Policy Research Institute at Western Washington University

Borders in Globalization SSHRC Research Program at the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are transboundary watersheds all over the globe in which community members are concerned about the healthy water ecosystems and take actions. Governance systems, policies, and local stakeholders' engagement in transboundary water management can be quite different from one country to another, depending on political regimes, interstate relations, histories of civil society, available funding and more.

The Salish Sea is a transboundary body of water bisected by the U.S–Canada border between Washington State and British Columbia. In addition to governmental agencies, Indigenous people and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are increasingly playing a role in cross-border cooperation within the basin.

This research paper addresses the status of non-state actors in transboundary environmental governance in the Salish Sea, with particular attention to local NGOs, informal networks, and environmental activism. I have conducted content analysis of NGO websites with a focus on their activities and projects, including financial mechanisms, with a cross-border focus. I also studied professional and scientific transboundary networks in the Salish Sea Basin and conducted interviews with representatives of NGOs, research institutes, Indigenous nations, and governmental institutions both in Washington State and British Columbia.

My research showed that there are a large number of NGOs working on common problems in the marine region, including oil spill prevention, fisheries, or orca protection. Washington State and British Columbia NGOs and environmental groups have a good understanding of their colleagues' work across the border and informal networks are functioning well. However, despite active environmental groups around the Salish Sea, there are few NGO-to-NGO partnerships that are jointly planned and funded. The few existing cross-border NGO projects that do exist are mostly technical ones, with scientific research or conservation as the main component. The absence of public and private funding for cross-border cooperation and general policy support for transboundary cooperation are major obstacles.

This report also compares environmental NGOs and networks in the Salish Sea with the Baltic Sea area in northern Europe. This analysis conveys that there are more examples of pan-Baltic networks and unions of NGOs, towns, scientific organizations, and SMEs, whose work is supported by national and EU grant programs, than in the Salish Sea. NGOs in the Salish Sea region rely mainly on private donors while Baltic Sea organizations depend on public grants. In Europe, support for cross-border cooperation is mainly motivated by a desire to build a common European identity, which is not the case in Canada–U.S. relations. Civic environmentalism in the form of protests and action groups against environmentally unfriendly activities of companies or governments is more vibrant in the Salish Sea compared with the Baltic Sea. Both in the Salish Sea and Baltic Sea region, universities and the scientific community can be named as leaders of transboundary cooperation.

AUTHOR

Margit Säre has worked in Estonian environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for almost two decades and has extensive experience with Baltic Sea environmental networks and projects. She was a 2019 Cross-Border Research fellow with the Border Policy Research Institute at Western Washington University and the Borders in Globalization SSHRC Research Program at the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria. She conducted research around the Salish Sea from August to December, 2019, staying in both Bellingham and Victoria to investigate environmental cooperation of NGOs in the region.

CROSS-BORDER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

The Border Policy Research Institute at Western Washington University and the Borders in Globalization SSHRC Research Program at the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria co-host a Visiting Research Fellowship for emerging scholars and policy professionals. This joint appointment between two universities with established border studies programs offers a unique opportunity to conduct cross-border, policy-relevant research in the Cascadia border region. The fellowship is designed to support policy-relevant research in the Salish Sea and Cascadia region, to enhance the network of scholars and policymakers who work in this border zone, and to share comparative and regional research findings with other border zones.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Global integration has accelerated flows of people, money, and goods, but also pollutants, making border regions particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation (Day, Loucky, & Alper, 2008). It is critically important to develop mechanisms for continuous information-sharing and trust-building within and between border territories in order to cultivate joint efforts toward effective transboundary ecosystem protection and restoration. As seen world-wide, local actors are becoming increasingly active in environmental governance matters with rising awareness of environmental concerns and growing participation in policy-making processes.

The Salish Sea is a transboundary body of water crossed by the U.S.–Canada border between Washington State and British Columbia. In addition to governmental agencies, Indigenous people and various non-state actors are increasingly playing a role in cross-border cooperation in the region. Civil society has long traditions in the U.S. and Canada, and there are numerous nonprofits working on environmental issues across the Salish Sea, including oil spill prevention and biodiversity protection. This report analyzes the impact of non-state actors on transboundary environmental governance in the Salish Sea, with particular attention to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), informal networks, and environmental activism.

To analyze non-state actors and their role in the Salish Sea region, I began by conducting content analysis of NGO websites in the Salish Sea region, searching for activities and projects with a transboundary focus, grant programs and financial mechanisms with a cross-border focus, and professional and scientific networks focused on the whole Salish Sea Basin. I conducted in-person and phone interviews with more than twenty actors representing environmental NGOs, research institutes, Indigenous nations, and governmental institutions both in Washington State and British Columbia (Appendix: Interview Questions).

Based on my own work in cross-border collaboration in the Baltic Sea region, I also compared environmental NGOs and networks in the Salish Sea with the Baltic Sea, highlighting motivations and obstacles for cross-border cooperation, as well as the role of funding for transboundary initiatives.
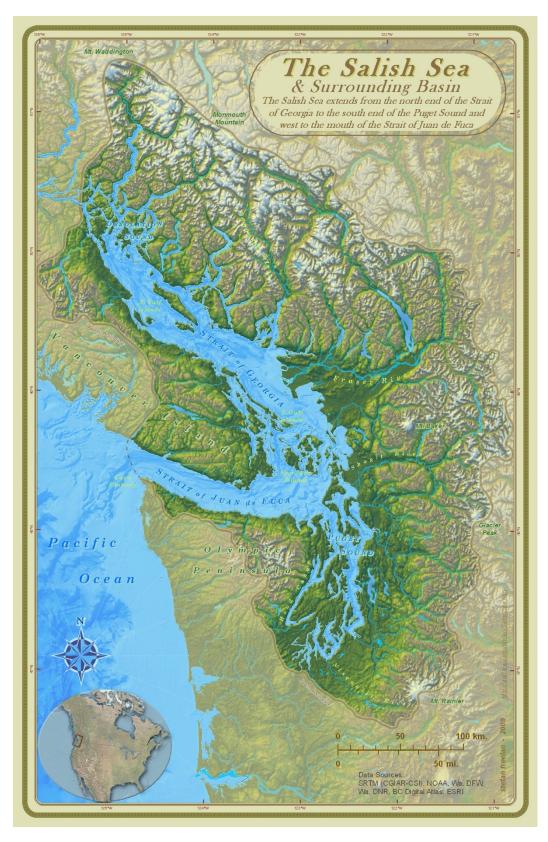
FIG. 1: SALISH SEA
SOURCE: FREELAN 2009

2. EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS IN THE SALISH SEA REGION

2.1 INTERGOVERNMENTAL TRANSBOUNDARY GOVERNANCE AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

The Salish Sea is an inland sea on the west coast of North America in the northwestern corner of Washington State and the southwestern corner of British Columbia (Map 1). The name "Salish Sea" was officially recognized in the United States only in 2009 and by Canada in 2010, as the common name for the Strait of Georgia, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Puget Sound (Freelan, 2009). The extensive border and unique ecosystems of the Salish Sea shared by the U.S. and Canada require close cooperation among many U.S. states, Canadian provinces, Tribes and First Nations, and local and federal governments (Environmental Protection Agency, 2018).

The cornerstone of the neighboring countries' environmental cooperation is the International Joint Commission, created by the Boundary Waters Treaty in 1909. In addition, there are twelve transboundary water agreements that apply to rivers and lakes along shared borders between Canada and the United States (International Joint Commission, 2018).

Recent efforts for joint ecosystem management of the Salish Sea basin began in 1992 with the signing of an Environmental Cooperation Agreement between the State of Washington and the Province of British Columbia (BC). This created one of the first binational provincial–state organizations, the Environmental Cooperation Council. The parties signed the Joint Statement of Cooperation on the Georgia Basin–Puget Sound Ecosystem in 2000 to facilitate cross-border understanding, dialogue and collaboration on Salish Sea issues (Environmental Protection Agency, 2018). It is a non-legally binding agreement that outlines common goals and sets up various mechanisms for transboundary collaboration, such as information sharing through the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference, identification and tracking of ecosystem indicators, development of action plans, and convening of working groups.

Created under the Washington–BC Environmental Cooperation Agreement, the Georgia Basin–Puget Sound International Task Force included Coast Salish First Nations in its work to foster cross-border management. However, the Task Force was often criticized for focusing on state– and provincial–level activities rather than those that occur at the local level (Rana, 2001; Jones, 2012). Wondolleck and Yaffee (2017) concluded that the Task Force did meet its goals in respect to joint ecosystem management, attributing its limitations to ever-changing officials, problems in relations between levels of governance and stakeholders in both countries, and challenges with the ways that information was collected and organized.

On October 10th, 2018, the Governor of Washington and the Premier of BC signed a renewed Memorandum of Understanding that emphasized shared aspirations to advance the innovation economy, environmental protections, and transportation connectivity (Border Policy Research Institute, 2018). This memorandum provides a formalized statement of intent to support more cross-border collaboration.

A number of other transboundary collaboration mechanisms, task forces, and regional organizations have emerged in the Salish Sea area in the last few decades. For example, the Pacific States–British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force was created in 1989, as the result of a memorandum signed by the governors of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and California, and the premier of British Columbia (Oil Spill Task Force, 2018). Another example is the annual meeting of the Islands Trust Council, a federation of local governments in the BC Gulf Islands, and U.S. San Juan County officials (Island Trust, 2018). The two governmental entities have a transboundary Island Action Plan and transboundary island agreement, and they make joint statements on urgent topics. For instance, in September 2018, island leaders in Canada and the U.S. prepared a joint statement to call on Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to abandon the Trans Mountain expansion project, which would result in 400 more oil tankers passing the island communities the Islands Trust and San Juan County represent (San Juan County, 2018). The public statement expressed the concern that increasing marine shipping has negative impacts on the local economy, which is highly reliant on tourism and a healthy environment for the wild salmon and orca.

Another important multi-stakeholder cross-border initiative is the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference, administered by the Salish Sea Institute at Western Washington University and supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Environment and Climate Change Canada through their Action Plan Initiative for the Salish Sea (Environmental Protection Agency, 2017). The biennial conference began in 1988 as the Puget Sound–Georgia Basin Ecosystem Conference, and was renamed the Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference after the Salish Sea name was officially adopted in the U.S. and Canada by 2010. In 2018 over one thousand scientists, managers, policy makers and Indigenous leaders participated at the conference in Seattle; the next conference will be held in Vancouver in 2020. Several interviewees named the conference as the most important multi-stakeholder cross-border initiative in the Salish Sea.

Subnational transboundary governance mechanisms can provide flexibility to fill gaps in governance, but their non-binding nature can make them more susceptible to changes in politics and budget priorities. Differing government structures, political priorities, Canadian sovereignty concerns, and U.S. emphasis on border security were (and remain) serious obstacles for formalized engagement by local border actors to transboundary water governance (Norman & Bakker, 2014; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2017). Also, although the number of subnational mechanisms have increased over time, this trend has not necessarily resulted in increased decision-making capacity of non-state actors. Local NGOs are generally not part of transboundary task forces, nor are there specific policies or grant programs to support non-

state partnerships across the border. This report examines the implications of this lack of support for cross-border NGO engagement.

2.2 INDIGENOUS NATIONS IN TRANSBOUNDARY GOVERNANCE

Indigenous peoples have become leaders in the social and environmental justice movement, particularly in relation to climate justice and fishing rights worldwide (Norman, 2017; Peiris, 2018). For Coast Salish communities in the Salish Sea region, protection of water sources and access to food, such as salmon or crab, is an important part of preserving their traditional livelihoods. According to Environment and Climate Change Canada there are 55 Canadian First Nations and 23 U.S. Tribes that call the Salish Sea home (2016). U.S. Tribes have historical treaty agreements with the U.S. government while many First Nations in Canada do not have any such arrangements, resulting in a complex political region with multiple forms of government-to-government relationships and contestation over rights to lands, waters, and resources.

Indigenous peoples in the region have created a variety of tribal councils and associations as a means of protecting Indigenous rights and land claims, such as the First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia, the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, and the Northwest Treaty Tribes in Washington State. Representatives of Coast Salish nations are included in the work of various task forces and working groups related to oil spills, orcas, salmon, and more on both sides of the U.S.–Canada border. Some of these arrangements are mandated by government-to-government agreements, treaties, and/or duties to consult with Indigenous communities about matters related to their resource rights.

A notable transboundary example is the Coast Salish Gathering, founded in 2005. The Gathering hosts annual meetings that "provide the opportunity for U.S. tribal leaders and First Nation Chiefs, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Environment Canada to build a collaborative body for mutual understanding to solve the environmental issues" (Coast Salish Gathering, 2018). Annual gatherings bring together around 200 leaders from Washington State Tribes and British Columbia First Nations gathered with governmental representatives from the Province of British Columbia and Washington State (San Juan Islander, 2017).

The Coast Salish Gathering website states that, "our environment and natural resources know no boundary, nor do the traditions and cultural life ways of the Coast Salish Peoples," pointing to the fact that the U.S.–Canada border first crossed Coast Salish peoples' homelands in the mid-1800s, thereby creating a boundary that is not culturally relevant but nonetheless creates political and practical challenges for Indigenous peoples in the Salish Sea region.

First Nations, Tribes, and the respective Canadian and U.S. governments have significant influence on the Salish Sea region. Indigenous rights protections have been critical hinge

points for recent environmental controversies, including a proposed coal terminal at Cherry Point, Washington, that was blocked through the affirmation of Lummi Nation's treaty rights at the site, and recent Indigenous mobilization around the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project in Canada.

There are also several NGOs and charitable organizations who work close together with First Nations/Tribes teaching advocacy, environmental law, and other issues (examples include Raven Trust, Stand.Earth, and Sierra Club).

3. NON-GOVERNMENTAL CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

During recent decades, the activity and influence of non-governmental organizations in almost every country in the world have grown and become central to policy making, promotion of civic action, and the delivery of services (Casey, 2016).

For example, in the U.S., from 1995 to 2007, the number of environmental and conservation organizations grew by 4.6 percent per year and is now increasing at a more rapid rate than the total population of registered nonprofits (Straughan & Pollak, 2008). The nonprofit workforce is the third largest of all U.S. industries, and in Washington State their share of private employment is about 9% (Salamon, 2018).

Some scholars argue that environmental NGOs have the ability to overcome the inevitable barriers and limitations imposed by the national sovereignty concerns of governments (Dobell & Neufeld, 1994). Funded by private sources and grants, environmental NGOs often have more flexibility than government agencies in finding solutions to environmental problems (Norman & Melious, 2004). Thus, NGOs and community initiatives are important contributors to transboundary basin management and can significantly contribute to increasing understanding of shared watersheds.

Professional NGOs can also be significant as lobbyists in pushing for policy changes for protections and conservation. For example, a recent court case brought together Salish Sea-based NGOs, Indigenous peoples, and local governments to lobby against the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project (Federal Court of Appeal Decisions, 2018). The Tsleil-Waututh First Nation, along with several other First Nations of the Salish Sea coast, collaborated with the Cities of Burnaby and Vancouver and the not-for-profit organizations Raincoast Conservation Foundation and Living Oceans Society to file a case against the Government of Canada and the pipeline project. They objected to the lack of consultation with Indigenous nations and lack of consideration of potential impacts on whales. Their efforts led to a Federal Court of Appeals decision in favor of their position in 2018, which significantly stalled the project.

Community members also have a direct interest in maintaining the Salish Sea's biodiversity as their everyday wellbeing and livelihoods depend on activities such as fishing and ecotourism. Collaboration of border communities extends beyond the environment to include education, culture, and rescue services. These activities can contribute to an increase in well-being, stability and security of border regions. Thus, the role of environmental NGOs in the cross-border context extends beyond environmental concerns as they help to build relationships between community groups and stakeholders.

3.1 NGOS IN THE SALISH SEA

Washington State and British Columbia both have strong NGO communities with a wide range of organizations, from grassroots-level volunteer groups to influential and highly professionalized organizations. A directory of environmental organizations (Eco-U.S.A, 2018) names more than sixty environmental NGOs in Washington State, although some organizations have offices in different locations. British Columbia Environmental Network lists around 300 community-based member organizations in the province (2018).

Earlier research has mapped environmental non-profits working at the transboundary level in the Salish Sea basin (Alper, 2004; Clauson & Trautman 2015; Norman & Melious, 2004) but it appears that many transboundary NGOs or initiatives do not have long "life-spans." Some findings illustrate that a few decades ago there were more NGOs and community groups working towards improved transboundary cooperation in the region. For example, the Shared Waters Alliance was established in 1999 with a focus on improving the water quality of Boundary Bay. This was a strong transboundary environmental working group with members from private and nonprofit sectors at the provincial and federal levels (Jones, 2012). They had a rather wide scope of activities, ranging from strategic water quality monitoring to facilitating decision making and tackled the gap between research and action at the cross-border level. However, in 2011 the group had its last meeting. According to the respondents, one main reason for closing the Alliance was that it worked entirely on a voluntary basis with no hired staff. In the end, volunteer enthusiasm dwindled. People for Puget Sound, a once-influential NGO working at the transboundary level, shut down in 2012 after twenty years of work (Mapes, 2012). Among the main reasons for the closure were fundraising difficulties for transboundary-focused activities and overall impacts of the economic recession.

Another multi-stakeholder cross-border initiative, the Orca Pass International Stewardship Area, started in 1999 as a cross-border project financed by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) and aimed to establish and monitor specific protected zones and restore important habitats for a diversity of species (Sato & Bloch, 2001; CEC 2002). The BC Islands Trust Association and San Juan County's Board of County Commissioners formally adopted the Orcas Pass International Stewardship Area along with the Sound & Straits Coalition in agreements signed in November 2000. However, because of increased security concerns in the U.S. over transboundary waters after the September 11th terrorist attacks, this important initiative was not developed further. As the Southern Resident orca whale population has decreased to a critical level in recent years, several initiatives have been generated by governmental, scientific and NGO communities in 2018 but in most cases they are not taking place on a transboundary level.

For efficient and sustained work, permanent staff, regular joint activities/meetings, and reliable funding are needed. Without them, NGOs in the Salish Sea will face challenges in developing and maintaining efforts toward transboundary initiatives. Increased security concerns about

transboundary waters have exacerbated the challenges to non-state sector cross-border cooperation in the last decade.

3.2 NGO ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES IN THE SALISH SEA

3.2.1 BIODIVERSITY AND CLEAN WATERS

The results of my study show that fisheries and ecosystems issues are the most common themes of transboundary NGO collaboration and networking in the Salish Sea area, as well as some bird and coastal protection areas projects. Cross-border projects in this case mean that partners from each side of the border planned, fundraised, and implemented sets of activities for jointly agreed goals.

Among the largest NGO projects in monetary terms and in involvement of different organizations across the border in 2018 was the Salish Sea Marine Survival Project, coordinated by the Vancouver-based charitable organization Pacific Salmon Foundation and Seattle-based NGO Long Live the Kings (Salish Sea Marine Survival Project, 2018). The joint project consists of national technical teams in British Columbia and Washington State and as many as 60 organizations involved in the sustainable fishery-focused project. The project is anchored by contributions from the Southern Endowment Fund, established by the U.S.-Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty, and many of the partners contribute to the project monetarily as well.

The Fraser Basin Council in BC is another important nonprofit that has worked basin-wide for twenty years with teams across multiple sectors engaged in healthy watersheds, action on climate change and resilient communities. They have regular contacts with their colleagues from Washington State in watershed management-related organizations and engage in frequent cross-border meetings. However, the cooperation is not formalized in the sense of jointly developed and managed transboundary (water management) projects.

From 2017-2018 there was a mushrooming of various ad-hoc protests and campaign groups taking a stand against the Kinder Morgan/Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project. For example, on August 23, 2018, hundreds of protestors gathered outside Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet meeting in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, BC, to protest the government's proposed purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline (Nanaimo News Staff, 2018). To support their fellow environmental activists on the other side of the border, several nonprofits from Washington State made joint statements concerning the threats to biodiversity or an inadequate oil spill response plan for the pipeline expansion project (Stand, 2018).

Several organizations on both sides of the Salish Sea are concerned about the decreasing population of Southern Resident orca whales, due to lack of food sources, pollution, and

disturbance from boat traffic. For example, in February 2019 orca organizations from British Columbia and Washington State were calling for immediate action to save Southern Residents (Orca Conservancy, 2019). They sent a public letter to government officials in Washington and British Columbia identifying their five key suggested actions to help save the Southern Resident orcas. Additionally, the David Suzuki Foundation, Georgia Strait Alliance, Natural Resources Defense Council, Raincoast Conservation Foundation, World Wildlife Fund Canada, and Ecojustice sent out a joint statement, calling on the Canadian government to make an emergency order to protect this population of orcas (Tuytel, 2018).

Potential oil spills are also an issue of urgent concern for many nonprofit groups. Stand is a nonprofit with offices in Vancouver (Canada), and in Bellingham and San Francisco in the U.S., which leads several cross-border campaigns and advocacy work in North America's Pacific region related to biodiversity, water quality, forests, and climate change topics. Dogwood is another advocacy nonprofit, organizing campaigns against coal or oil transport, based mainly in British Columbia, but some of their campaigns also have transboundary elements. Both Stand and Dogwood are engaging in significant work to oppose the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project.

On the U.S. side of the basin in 2018, the Orca Recovery Task Force was set up by Governor Jay Inslee, with several NGOs and U.S. Tribes participating in the task force working groups. A Canadian Consulate representative (without voting rights) was also invited to participate in Task Force meetings. In August 2018, individuals and organizations had submitted over 2,000 written comments to the Task Force and in November 2018 the final report and recommendations for recovering Southern Residents were released (Southern Resident Orca Task Force, 2018). Although the final report mentioned the need for "increased transboundary coordination with Canada" (p. 112, 114), no specific coordinated actions for orca protection at the transboundary level have been initiated in 2019 or were brought before the Washington State legislature.

3.2.2 ISLAND NGOs

The Salish Sea encompasses hundreds of islands, and there are several island NGOs working mostly with marine ecosystem issues. For example, KWIÁHT (Center for The Historical Ecology of The Salish Sea) has worked since 2006 to offer local, participatory scientific research for sound stewardship of the San Juan archipelago and to strengthen science education in island communities. Although they have good professional contacts across the border, no specific activities with cross-border partner involvement have taken place, despite their concerns and hopes for improved scientific cross-border collaboration.

Friends of the San Juans, an NGO in Washington State, has worked for four decades to protect and restore the San Juan Islands and the Salish Sea for people and nature. They have had more transboundary joint activities in the past than in recent years. For example, they have

worked together with Canadian stakeholders on oil spill prevention, fishing, and anchorage. In 2016 they organized a transboundary Salish Sea citizen conservation roundtable. Today their main cross-border contacts are on orca issues. One of the Friends of the San Juan NGO partners from the Canadian side has been the Georgia Strait Alliance, which focuses on issues that threaten the marine environment of the Strait of Georgia–mainly oil spills and tanker traffic. The cooperation consists mostly of information sharing.

Also, the Orcas Island-based SeaDoc Society in Washington State aims to ensure the health of Salish Sea marine wildlife and ecosystem through science and education (SeaDoc Society, 2018). Their partner list contains numerous government agencies and university marine labs, 15 First Nations and Tribes, and 31 NGOs, from both sides of the border. SeaDoc Society has a quite fascinating story from 2011: The organization called for a transboundary meeting on forage fish issues but it turned out that both U.S and Canadian officials were on travel bans. To get around the issue, SeaDoc and the Northwest Straits Commission facilitated a meeting at Peace Arch Park, directly on the border, bringing together 25 scientists and managers working on both sides of the U.S./Canada border (Sea Doc Society, 2011) overcoming federal limitations to trans-boundary work.

3.2.3 EDUCATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING

There exist some cross-border environmental education activities organized by NGOs and scientific networks. For example, the Redfish School of Change is a program that brings together students from the University of Victoria in BC with students from Western Washington University in WA for 3-5 weeks in the summer to participate in courses on ecological sustainability and social equity issues (Redfish School of Change, 2018). The initiative was first run by an NGO but now the partnership is formalized through arrangements between the University of Victoria's School of Environmental Studies, Western Washington University's Huxley College of the Environment, Center for Canadian American Studies, Salish Sea Institute, and Green Learning Canada. One main reason to change the format of the organizing body of the School (from NGO to University) was extensive fundraising and administrative tasks of the NGO, which were difficult to cover on a volunteer basis. Additionally, Western Washington University (WWU) has established an educational program in Salish Sea Studies, with new courses about the transboundary Salish Sea (WWU, 2018).

The Seattle-based NGO Cascadia Now aims to raise awareness of transboundary Cascadian bioregionalism (Cascadia Now, 2018). They are one of the organizers of the Salish Sea Day of Action, first celebrated on September 15, 2018. The Salish Sea Day of Action was run entirely by volunteer efforts, with partners from both sides of the border invited to register and report on their activities (Actionnetwork, 2018). Around 30 actions were organized by various groups, taking place from Tacoma, WA to Vancouver, BC to the Gulf Islands, and even in places not directly adjacent to the Salish Sea, such as Wenatchee (north-central Washington State) where a community there is concerned about an affected salmon run (Pailthorp, 2018). Action events were focused on the plight of endangered Southern Resident orca whales, beach cleanups,

pipeline opposition, and more. It is hoped that the Salish Sea Day of Action can become an annual event, bringing communities together and promoting the health of the Salish Sea and its inhabitants.

3.2.4 INFORMAL NETWORKS

Several nonprofits and foundations are working on topics relevant to the Salish Sea ecosystems but focused on only one side of the basin. Examples include the Social Environmental Alliance (BC), Langley Environmental Partners Society (BC), Protectors of the Salish Sea (WA), Washington Environmental Council (WA), Sierra Club (WA), 350.org Washington State chapters, Living Oceans Society and others. Several respondents said that they know their colleagues on the other side of the border very well, and if there was an urgent question concerning oil spills, orcas, etc., they could pick up the phone and call. As a good example of networking, a few NGOs reported that they would include their colleagues from the other side of the border on important meetings through the phone/internet. More frequent face-to-face contact seems to happen among the scientific community on acute environmental matters. There are also some transboundary groups on social media, such as the Facebook group Salish Sea Ecosystem Advocates.

3.2.5 TRANSBOUNDARY NGO EFFORTS

Dozens of nonprofits in the region are concerned about Salish Sea water quality or biodiversity. Still, almost none of them focus primarily on promoting cross-border collaboration and joint actions for the benefit of the entire ecosystem. The one environmental NGO with a clear cross-border cooperation focus is Conservation Northwest in Washington State, founded in 1989 with the goal to protect, connect and restore wildlands and wildlife from the Washington Coast to the British Columbia Rockies. However, their transboundary programs—Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative, South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Reserve efforts, and a project to reintroduce fishers to the Cascade Mountain Range—are focused primarily on land conservation, not marine or riparian initiatives that are central to Salish Sea environmental health.

Still, numerous NGOs understand the need for joint management of the Salish Sea ecosystem and are actively organizing projects and campaigns within their respective countries (See Fig. 2 for examples). Formal and informal networking meetings facilitate sharing with colleagues across the border, although persistent challenges sometimes limit more sustained and impactful engagement.

Biodiversity & Clean Waters	Island NGOs	Education & Awareness-Raising
Advocacy work	Participatory scientific research	Student exchanges, summer camps
Reintroduction of fishers to the Cascade Mountain Range	Protection of ecosystems through education in island communities	Awareness of transboundary Cascadian bioregionalism
Information exchange between water basin management organizations	Stewardship of the San Juan Archipelago	Salish Sea Day of Action
Campaigns, protests against Kinder Morgan / Trans Mountain pipeline	Improving health of marine wildlife	
Southern Resident orca whales population protection		

FIG. 2: EXAMPLES OF NGO ACTIVITIES IN THE SALISH SEA WITH TRANSBOUNDARY FOCUS

4. COLLABORATION CHALLENGES

As we can see from environmental activism in 2018, networking and campaigning have been developing mainly because of the critical status of orca whales, oils spill and biodiversity topics in the Salish Sea. However, there are few examples of formalized forms of transboundary cooperation and jointly planned and managed projects which are backed up with support from governmental sector or private donors in the Salish Sea region. More evident is the practice of similar projects on both sides of the border, which can be considered parallel, rather than joint actions. See Table 2 below for a summary table of various Impediments to cross-border collaboration.

Surprisingly, it was difficult to find cross-border cooperation activities focused beyond "pure" conservation and biodiversity; these are common in European transboundary water basins. This includes jointly developed and marketed (eco)tourism or canoe/bike routes, exchange visits of municipality specialists or teachers, joint publications (for example environmental education materials on the Salish Sea), and joint border fairs or also cultural and sports festivals of local communities. (Two notable cross-border initiatives, Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) and the Cascadia Innovation Corridor initiative, focus on economic growth and connectivity without substantial attention to ecological concerns and tourism. PNWER, for example, has a tourism working group with stakeholders from Vancouver and Seattle, but the main focus of discussions has been centered on technologies to enhance security and streamline passenger travel.)

Obviously, environmental concerns are most acute in the region, however, since the causes and solutions to those problems involve humans, building networks of professionals from various sectors would be useful. For example, joint teacher trainings (on environmental education) or events between ecotourism operators or fishermen associations are a few examples of possible cross-border actions. Also, transboundary community partnerships and people-to-people contacts, which is rather common in European border regions, could bring benefits to Salish Sea border communities.

4.1 FUNDING ISSUES FOR NGOs

Both Canada and the United States have a strong non-governmental not-for-profit sector, and numbers show increasing civil participation year-by-year. According to Imagine Canada (2018) there are an estimated 170,000 nonprofits and charities, while the U.S. Department of State estimates operational NGOs at 1.5 million (Giving USA Foundation, 2017; Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2017). In 2013, 73 per cent of British Columbians said they were involved in a group, organization, or association and most of them also did volunteer work there (Turcotte, 2013). British Columbians are the most socially active in Canada.

In both countries, a giving tradition is long-standing and somewhat different than in Europe. It is estimated that individual donors make up nearly 70% of all charitable donations in the United States, followed by foundations (Giving USA Foundation, 2017). However, for cross-border work, there are challenges. Many respondents explained that it is very difficult to use individual donations or tax payer monies for activities that do not take place in one's own country.

My research also examined possible governmental funding sources such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), or Canada's Ministries of Environment and Climate Change and Fisheries and Oceans, but did not uncover any sources for specifically transboundary watershed activities. Notably, the U.S. EPA highlights the importance of international cooperation in climate change and water management matters, saying that "Often, environmental challenges go beyond national frontiers and require a coordinated approach at the European and often global level" (Environmental Protection Agency, 2018), linking to the European Union Horizon 2020 and Climate Joint Programming Initiative programs. However, no open programs to support U.S.–Canada environmental research collaboration can be found.

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation, which is composed of the highest-level environmental authorities from Canada, Mexico, and the United States to implement the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC)—the environmental accord to the North American Free Trade Agreement—offers some support for cooperative projects to support actions at the community level (CEC, 2018). However, the Commission has not supported cross-border cooperation projects in the Salish Sea region in recent years.

Respondents emphasized that scientific organizations, especially Canadian ones, are best able to find money for transboundary collaborations amongst all potential collaboration efforts. At the same time, exchanges of guest-lecturers or researchers between British Columbia and Washington State universities are not very common.

Thus, due to the absence of cross-border cooperation funds, current joint civil society and NGO activities are mostly financed separately by each side. According to respondents it is quite complicated to work on the cross-border level without joint grant money as it is rare that both sides are able to raise funds for the same kind of activity. It is therefore difficult to organize joint events, monitoring or transboundary study tours, or trainings. Some interviewees also pointed to the lack of cooperation between NGOs working in the same field and rivalry over funds.

Overall, the main concern about fundraising seems to be that (private) donors want to see specific results locally and in the case of governmental grants it is even more difficult to explain spending tax payers' money abroad. Questions around funding have become increasingly more difficult for NGOs during last decades.

4.2 LACKING A 'BIG PICTURE'

Several interviewees from both sides of the border were concerned that state/provincial politicians and administrators do not look far enough ahead, nor engage in long term planning from an environmental point of view. Respondents were concerned that "there is not much shared vision, with the whole (cross-border) region in mind." One said, "Even our ecosystem maps stop at the border." People with a scientific background stressed that only very recently joint data collection and analysis methods have begun to be used in water quality monitoring. Several interviewees stated that there should be jointly agreed-upon management and action plans to improve the ecosystem health of the transboundary watershed. Respondents often noted that one likely reason for the absence of joint management is that politicians have no motivation to communicate about the cross-border region and cooperation as their constituent voters are not on the other side of the border and their local electorate wants them to solve issues locally.

Some respondents were unhappy that the cooperation that does exist focuses mainly on trade, energy, and transport topics, saying, "Governmental representatives at the regional level rarely come together to agree on environmental protection measures."

However, it is not only politicians who lack the "big picture." One respondent involved with educational issues said how surprised she is every time she is confronted with how little people know about the whole marine ecosystem. "When I ask young people to name a Salish Sea island or settlement from the other side, they don't know any." Also a recent study conducted by the SeaDoc Society and Oregon State University reveals that only 5 percent of people in Washington and 14 percent of British Columbians can identify the Salish Sea—as the marine ecosystem that spans the United States–Canada border and includes both Seattle and Vancouver (Sea Doc Society, 2019).

Some respondents thought that there are many local-scale, small initiatives, which are often duplicated or are not supported with sufficient publicity. Thus better coordination would be helpful. On the other hand, some also said that grassroots projects should be organic and dynamic without much coordination from upper level authorities.

On the positive side, many respondents believe that the cohesive concept of the Salish Sea (officially used since 2009/2010) might hopefully create a greater sense of shared identity in the region, raising awareness of common issues.

4.3 SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY

Several interviewees said that cross-border cooperation, contacts, and initiatives decreased over the past few decades, especially after 9/11. A few respondents were concerned that the

current political climate is not favorable for improving transboundary cooperation because of the politicization of all matters surrounding border areas, and general sovereignty and security concerns in the U.S. and Canada. Quite a few respondents pointed out that the two countries do not want to have too close relations or harmonized policies, and that especially the Canadian side "is sensitive to get too close to U.S."

4.4 PRACTICAL IMPEDIMENTS: BORDER CROSSING AND TRANSPORTATION

Several interviewees named concerns regarding border crossing as an obstacle for cooperation, particularly for people from certain ethnic backgrounds (e.g. Central and South American identities). Due to contentious immigration debates and policies in the U.S. and racial tensions more generally, there are concerns that people with certain ethnic backgrounds will have trouble crossing the border or will not be able to enter or reenter the U.S. or Canada.

Several people also said that they do not want to cross the border often because of border bureaucracy, customs issues, waiting times, or other obstacles due to administrative/legislative differences. Also, disagreement with President Trump's (environmental) politics was named as a reason for less cross-border travel.

FIG. 3: SIDNEY, BC–ANACORTES, WA FERRY STOP (FRIDAY HARBOR, U.S. SAN JUAN ISLANDS)

SOURCE: PHOTO BY M. SÄRE

Another concern are marine transportation challenges. There is no cross-border ferry connection between the San Juan Islands in the U.S. and the Gulf Islands in Canada. The ferry between Vancouver Island and Anacortes in Washington State runs infrequently, and not at all during the winter. One respondent mentioned that it used to be possible to hire a water taxi to travel between U.S. and Canadian islands, but security concerns and the amount of paperwork and time required for border crossing formalities makes it less feasible now. Another San Juan Islands resident said that "old-timers remember when it was easier and more worthwhile to

take a small boat to Victoria [in Canada], than to shop or do business on the U.S. mainland. In many ways, our two countries have grown farther apart since the 1970s."

Responses on impediments to transboundary collaboration suggest that for community members and NGOs, the border has become tighter and more difficult to cross. In several ways, communities on different shores or islands of the Salish Sea have grown farther apart in the last decade. This does not, however, seem to be a primary concern for local politicians.

Funding for NGOs	Lacking a 'Big Picture'	Sovereignty, Security & Logistics
No governmental grants for transboundary work	Lack of long term and basin-wide planning from regional politicians; no joint data collection	Border crossing, customs clearance are increasingly bureaucratic: especially when using water ways and for people with immigrant backgrounds
Difficult to use individual donations for transboundary work / explain it to tax payers	Lack of knowledge of people on the whole Salish Sea	No desire to be too similar or identified as one (mainly by Canadian side)

FIG. 4: MAIN IMPEDIMENTS TO COOPERATION

5. BALTIC SEA COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

For comparison, I will discuss transboundary marine governance and involvement of civil society in the Baltic Sea region in northern Europe (Map 2). The Baltic Sea basin covers 377,000 km², bordering eight EU countries: Germany, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Russia. Compared with the Salish Sea Basin, which has 18,000 km² and two riparian States, the Baltic Sea has many more stakeholders interested in transboundary governance.

The Baltic Sea area has been identified as a pioneer of transboundary governance, reflecting the dynamic development of the network society (see below for further details) and various forms of environmental cooperation during recent decades (Tynkkynen, 2013).

At the same time, the Baltic is considered one of the world's most polluted seas, resulting in a sharp contrast between the formally successful governance system and the actual state of the Sea.

The World Wide Fund for Nature lists the Baltic Sea's main threats as unsustainable shipping and fishing, marine litter, and especially eutrophication (World Wildlife Fund, 2018). Slow water exchange with the North Sea makes it an almost land-locked water basin, draining through a large number of rivers and causing an accumulation of pollutants.

The region is special also for the very different backgrounds of the states in the basin — just 30 years ago the Baltic Sea was divided by the so-called Iron Curtain between the Soviet Union (and its satellite Poland) and the "West." There are "old" established democracies such as Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, as well as new EU countries like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (which re-gained its independence in 1991) and also Poland, which all have nascent civil society experience. At the same time, in Russia, democratic efforts towards are more open society have faced ongoing threats and challenges during last decade. For example, Freedom House rates Russia's civil liberties at 6 points and the other Baltic Sea

FIG. 5: BALTIC SEA

SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA 2020

countries at 1 or 2 in the scale 1-7 and where 1 marks most and 7 least civil liberties (Freedom House, 2018). Also, the situation of Russian NGOs, who want to be involved in international work has been much more restricted in the last decade, especially after 2012 when Russian NGO legislation was adopted, which requires all NGOs that receive foreign funding to register with the authorities as "foreign agents" (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law [ICNL], 2019).

The European Union, acknowledging the importance of the region, adopted the Baltic Sea Region Strategy (EUSBSR) in 2009 as the first macro-regional plan of the Union, followed by other plans for Danube, Alpine, Adriatic, and Ionian regions. The EUSBSR aims to mobilize all relevant EU funding and policies, as well as coordinate the actions of the European Union and member countries, regions, pan-Baltic organizations, financing institutions, and non-governmental bodies to promote a more balanced development of the area.

The strategic goals for the Baltic Sea Region include protecting the Sea, connecting the region, and increasing prosperity. The EUSBSR report names several achievements so far, including cooperation between farmers to reduce eutrophication and improved planning for transport infrastructure, greater involvement of Russian partners in areas like environmental protection, water quality innovation, and also improved cooperation between regions and other partners (European Commission, n.d.[b]).

The strategy focuses on good cooperation with non-EU neighbors, specifically with North-West Russia. Because other Baltic Sea region countries are EU members, they are bound to implement EU policies and regulations, such as the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) aiming to reach compliance status for European surface and groundwater through integrated river basin management. Importantly, the new Russian Federation Water code took integrated river basin management as its main principle, which makes setting up joint water management goals and plans easier. It should be noted that EU WFD sees improved public participation as a means to increase the transparency of environmental policies and citizens' compliance with them.

5.1 NETWORK SOCIETY

Since the end of the Cold War several new forums of sustainable decision-making have been introduced in the Baltic Sea area, offering a rich set of policy networks, including highly institutionalized intergovernmental cooperation, networks and unions of towns, enterprises, networks of scientists, or civil society networks. The Baltic Sea region multi-stakeholder cooperation practice can also be described as a network society, which allows for more diversity and experimentation in decision-making by emphasizing public participation practices more than top-down state governance (Tynkkynen, 2013). The term network society was first coined by Jan van Dijk in 1991 and he defines the network society as a combination of social

and media networks that shape its prime mode of organization and most important structures at all levels— individual, organizational and societal (Dijk, 2006).

Several basin-wide intergovernmental management organizations, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States or Nordic Council of Ministers, have been in place for decades. One of the most important treaty-based intergovernmental organizations between Baltic Sea countries and the EU is the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM, 2018). HELCOM aims to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution through intergovernmental cooperation. NGOs have been granted observer status in HELCOM and stakeholder participation is facilitated through annual forums and other activities. There are also networks of (sub) regions such as the Baltic Sea States Sub-Regional Cooperation—a political network for decentralized authorities—or Union of the Baltic Cities.

Similar to the Salish Sea region, scientific networks are important, and science has played a central role in bringing eutrophication of the Baltic Sea to the public sphere (Pihlajamäki & Tynkkynen, 2011). Scientific networks, such as Baltic Earth, focus on environmental research in the Baltic Sea basin, acting as a common science, communication, and data integration platform.

Finally, multiple NGO networks are working for the benefit of the Baltic Sea environment, such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Coalition Clean Baltic, Friends of the Baltic and numerous national or grassroots level NGOs, which started to boom after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Environmental NGOs such as the WWF regularly campaign for the Baltic Sea environment and are active in cooperation within intergovernmental institutions. Non-state actors are also members of the bilateral water commissions; for example, several NGOs participate in the Estonian-Russian Intergovernmental Commission working group on integrated water resources management (Peipsi Center, 2017).

Some studies, however, show that civic activism in post-socialist countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) are much lower than in Nordic countries, especially in Finland and Denmark (Ellison & Pollock, 2014). While the number of people actively involved in some NGO or volunteering work reaches 60-70% in the U.S. and Canada, in Eastern European countries it is around 15-30% (McCloughan, Batt, Costine, & Scully, 2011).

There are some similarities but many differences between civil society activities in the Baltic Sea region and the Salish Sea region–of course the main problem areas and challenges are also different. Baltic Sea NGOs do not work so much with scientific and technical projects; awareness-building and educational activities, shared identity efforts, and sense-of-place work are more prevalent in the Baltic Sea. Some examples include a Central Baltic program-funded, multi-stakeholder project called "Modern and attractive small ports network through cross-border interactive information system, joint marketing and improved port services" (Interreg Central Baltic, 2018); and Nordic Council of Ministers projects like "Russian and Nordic NGOs building bridges" or "Healthy River–Healthy Me–Healthy Sea: Joint actions for common

challenges" (Nordic Cooperation, 2018), with a large portion of funds meant for networking activities between local stakeholders.

Environmental policies in the Baltic Sea region are shaped by a complex multi-level governance system, where the European Union, HELCOM, and nine independent states participated together with national and regional institutions, NGOs, and the private sector for the benefit of the region. With an increasingly complex society involving many actors, there are of course many identifiable challenges, mainly related to new spaces of politics, radical uncertainty, and the increased importance of trust-building and communication (Tynkkynen, 2013; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). However, despite the institutional diversity of transboundary governance of the Baltic Sea, the environmental problems (mainly eutrophication), still remain very critical.

5.2 EU SUPPORT FOR INTER-REGIONAL CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES

Cross-border cooperation in Europe's border regions has been built up through a combination of local initiatives and supportive measures implemented by national and EU institutions, resulting in a complex multilevel framework of institutions, political associations, and incentive programs (Scott, 2017). The EU provides substantial grant funding to different policy makers in the area of regional integration and civil society engagement, and supports cross-border cooperation networks. To stress the importance of civil society, the European Commission Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis stated while revealing plans for a new Justice, Rights, and Values Fund 2021-2027, that "non-governmental organizations have a huge potential to promote European values, they operate close to the citizens" (Zalan, 2018). Thus, NGOs are seen by the European Commission as partners in various fields of public policy implementation.

The NGO funding sources in Europe are quite different from those in Northern America: in the EU, many organizations rely more on governmental grants and less on private donors. For example, in a 2018 study among Finnish NGOs, 90% received government funding in the past year, but they also admit that government grants have become more difficult to access (European Funding Association, 2018). In several new EU countries, NGOs can be described as aid-dependent, in that almost half of their finances come from different European Commission– or international organization grant–programs and not through private fundraising or services. In post-Soviet states, the low rates of giving, volunteering, environmental civic participation or activism in general, can be attributed to a lack of participative values, mistrust in democracy and governments, but also to less-developed entrepreneurial values (Voicu & Voicu, 2009). However, EU financial support has been generous through thematic and geographic programs, in which environmental topics have been prioritized, as have multi-stakeholder regional networks. Interregional Cooperation/Programme Interreg has 107 cooperation sub-programs functioning at either the cross-border, transnational or interregional levels (Interreg Baltic Sea

Region [IBSR], 2018). For example, the Interreg Baltic Sea Region transnational program (2014-2020) awards €282.4 million for innovative, more accessible, and sustainable Baltic Sea region goals. There are also several cross-border cooperation programs in the region, such as Estonia–Russia, Latvia–Russia, and Kolarctic, to which regional and local authorities, NGOs, small and medium enterprises, and schools can apply for their joint projects.

The EU LIFE program is focused on nature, biodiversity, and climate change topics for the period 2014-2020; €3.4 billion is offered for state and non-governmental organizations, NGOs and public bodies, and Horizon 2020 also offers support mainly for scientific and research organizations.

As has been illustrated, the Baltic Sea non-state actors can choose among a variety of funding opportunities for their international work but this is not quite the same for non-EU member Russia. Funding through several EU programs to Russian partners has been restricted because of the EU's sanctions on Russia after the aggression against Ukraine in 2014. In 2014 the Nordic Council of Ministers' information offices in North-West Russia were also closed and several Nordic-Russian grant programs were put on hold. However, in 2017 Nordic countries reestablished cooperation with Russia (Breum, 2017); in February 2018, after years of persistent negotiations, the Russian Federation and the European Commission signed the Financing Agreement of Interreg Baltic Sea Region Program which boosts the participation of Russian partners in transnational cooperation projects around the Baltic Sea (IBSR, 2018).

As discussed above, this multiplicity of European funding frameworks results in potentially negative side-effects for the non-governmental sector. One of the largest vulnerabilities for civil society organizations is financial instability and increasing dependency on grants, which raises questions of NGO autonomy and credibility. By giving donors increasing levels of influence, NGOs may sacrifice autonomy and in some cases even their core mission and values (NGO Monitor, 2016). Another often-named issue is the overlap of some support programs, functions and activities of NGOs, research organizations, and municipalities.

In recent years, the Baltic Sea region has faced difficulties in promoting cooperation with Russia under the current political conditions, in which fundamental conflict regarding values and principles exist (Ekengren, 2018). Still, national governments and EU program support has managed to achieve an extensive stakeholder network, so that governmental, scientific, and civil society organizations can work towards jointly established sustainable Baltic Sea basin goals; hopefully these efforts will also help to improve the health of the ecosystem.

Comparing the Baltic Sea region with the Salish Sea, more examples exist of pan-Baltic networks and unions of NGOs, towns, scientific organizations, and SMEs, whose work is strongly supported by national and EU policies and grant programs. NGOs in the Salish Sea region rely mainly on private donors while Baltic Sea NGOs depend on EU and governmental grants. In Europe, support for cross-border cooperation is mainly motivated by a desire to build a common European identity, which is not the case in Canada—U.S. relations. To the

contrary, Canadians have expressed the desire to maintain a distinct identity and have concerns about too much integration.

Civic environmental engagement in the form of protests and action groups against environmentally unfriendly activities of companies or governments is more energetic in the Salish Sea compared with the Baltic Sea, especially among the Eastern European countries. Baltic Sea countries currently also face difficulties in promoting cooperation with Russia under current political conditions, and conflicts regarding democratic values and principles.

Both in the Salish Sea and Baltic Sea region, universities and the scientific community can be named as the leaders of transboundary cooperation. The most widely known effort in the Salish Sea is the multi-stakeholder, cross-border, biennial Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference, administered by the Salish Sea Institute at Western Washington University. My research suggests that universities and research institutes in the Salish Sea basin could take an even bigger coordinating role in promoting cross-border and community cooperation.

6. CONCLUSIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There are transboundary watersheds all over the globe where community members from different shores of rivers, lakes, or seas are concerned about the healthy ecosystem of their body of water. Governance systems, policies, and local stakeholders—or community engagement in transboundary water management—can be quite different from one country to another, depending on political regimes, interstate relations, histories of civil society, and more.

This paper has analyzed the role of NGOs in transboundary environmental management and activism, and their cross-border collaboration practices in the Salish Sea region on the U.S.—Canada border. My research showed that there are a large number of NGOs working on common problems in the water region, including on oil spill prevention, fisheries, or orca protection. Washington State and British Columbian NGOs and environmental groups have a good understanding of their colleagues' work across the border and informal networks function well.

In 2018, there was a sharp rise of civic environmentalism, largely in response to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project, and towards orca protection. In several cases, campaigners received support from the other side of the Salish Sea or made joint statements. Quite often NGOs have formed partnerships with Canadian First Nations and U.S. Tribes, especially in advocacy work. Indigenous representatives are often members of various inter-regional task forces, such as on oil spill prevention and response, while it is less common for environmental NGOs to be involved in those transboundary governance mechanisms.

Despite active NGO work around the Salish Sea, there are few NGO-to-NGO partnerships that are jointly planned and funded. The few existing cross-border NGO projects that do exist are mostly technical ones, with scientific research or conservation as the main component. My interviews with non-state stakeholders showed that these groups are also concerned about the lack of jointly agreed-upon biodiversity and water management protection measures, such as protections for endangered Southern Resident orca whales.

Fundraising happens separately on each side of the border. The absence of public and private funding for cross-border cooperation and general policy support for transboundary and basin-wide cooperation is a major obstacle for non-profit cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Universities can play a neutral but strong stakeholder role for leading processes to promote transboundary collaborations, including with environmental NGOs and local communities.

- The Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference could devote sessions specifically for NGOs to help develop community-led cross-border cooperation, perhaps with a long-term goal to have a specific conference for Salish Sea NGOs in the future.
- For NGOs focused on environmental education, educators and leaders could plan a joint conference to discuss possible education programs and the development of shared online materials.
- Greater support for initiatives like the Salish Sea Day of Action could help to promote the development of a transboundary Salish Sea identity.
- Develop a grant program with major donors and funders for NGO- and community-led cross-border cooperation projects.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Introductory questions
    - Type of organization (NGO, educational or research institution, city/provincial council etc.)

- Main stakeholders
    - Who are the main stakeholders working with Salish Sea issues?
    - What kind of citizen groups or NGOs do you know that are working on the Salish Sea topics? Any of them also at the transboundary level?
    - Do you know if NGOs are involved in any International Joint Committee / other transboundary working groups?

- Funding
    - Who are the main funders for NGOs working with Salish Sea topics?
    - What type of projects are funded (technical, educational, awareness etc.)? Any cross-border projects?
    - What type of NGOs get funding (size, operational/campaign NGOs, volunteers/paid staff)?

- Cross-border cooperation
    - How would you rate in general Salish Sea cross-border cooperation at the state/provincial level and the local, people-to-people level?
    - Do you know NGO partnerships and projects between British Columbia/Washington State organizations?
      What are the main institutional arrangements and obstacles/challenges for environmental cross-border cooperation?
    - Do you want to share any best cross-border cooperation practices in the Salish Sea region?

- Challenges
    - What kind of joint activities should be done to improve the status of the Salish Sea?
    - What are the main problem areas / challenges for cross-border cooperation?