Author(s):   Ritvala, Tiina & Salmi, Asta

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Value-based network mobilization:
A case study of modern environmental networkers for the Baltic Sea

Tiina Ritvala
Aalto University School of Economics
Department of Marketing and Management
E-mail address: tiina.ritvala@hse.fi
Tel.:+358 40 3538352

Asta Salmi
Aalto University School of Economics
Department of Marketing and Management
E-mail address: asta.salmi@hse.fi

ABSTRACT

This article addresses current environmental issues by taking a network perspective to examine the initiatives to solve them. Previous investigations of network dynamics and mobilization concern the business context, but we broaden the analysis to the societal networks wherein business is embedded. Our aim is to investigate the early emergence of collective action around a common issue. We analyze the network mobilizers, who promote the issue and its solutions, and the mobilization mechanisms that they employ. We have conducted a case study that examines three initiatives to save the Baltic Sea, all involving business, governmental, and civil society actors. This rich case material leads us to formulate a conceptual model of value-based network mobilization. The mobilizing actors, values, and relationship sediments emerge as important factors in creating issue networks. Our key contribution is to show how the environmental (and societal) issues bring new types of actors to networks and change the rules of the game. We propose that 'modern environmental networkers' should become more important in the future, and that business firms need to develop their skills in playing the new games with these new actors.

Key words: mobilization, environment, networking, common issues, value-based networks

1. Introduction

> *"People of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happen to things."* Leonardo da Vinci, Quoted by Chairman of IBM EMEA Larry Hirst at the Baltic Sea Action Summit February 10th, 2010, Helsinki

The most pressing and complex contemporary societal issues can only be solved by extensive, often international, cooperation between different kinds of actors. One of the issues, which has raised increasing concerns, is the state of the Baltic Sea. While on a global scale the Baltic Sea is relatively small, it is one of the world's largest bodies of brackish water. It is the youngest sea on the planet, has an ecologically unique ecosystem with shallow bays, which makes it highly sensitive to the environmental impacts of human activities. Many actors, including governments and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the WWF (World Wide Fund For Nature) have for decades worked with the protection of the Baltic Sea. Alongside these traditional players, new types of actors (for example, private foundations with political and business connections) try to tackle the issue with new ways by mobilizing actors on broad fronts to join the efforts. Currently, there is little understanding of these new ways of mobilization or of mobilization outside the business field. Our analysis will address these gaps.

We resort in this article to the network approach due to its potential for a holistic analysis of the dynamics, which can cover multi-level, multi-actor and long-term phenomena. Environmental problems are often addressed as technical processes and studied with quantitative analysis of technical data, while there is a need for social systems analysis (Hoffman, 2003). Our analysis of a societal issue directs attention to the actor level of networks in particular. However, as resources and activities are essential parts of networks, as advocated by the ARA-model of business networks (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995), we shall consider the dynamics between all these three elements.

Our analysis builds on the emergence of new relationships and networks around the common issue – the issue network. We see an issue network as a loose, temporary coalition of multiple actors that emerges around a common issue to influence existing behavior through collective action(s) (Dahan, Doh, & Guay, 2006), wherein network relations are key transmitters of change. In addition to network studies, we incorporate ideas from the literature on institutional entrepreneurship (Fligstein, 1997; Wijen & Ansari, 2007) to better understand how actions in issue networks may result in institutional change. Our investigation of issue network mobilizers, and of why and how (business) actors join the processes, extends earlier studies that concentrate on mobilization in business networks (Araujo & Brito, 1998; Brito, 2001; Lundgren, 1992; Mouzas & Naudé, 2007).

Our aim is to build theory on the early emergence of (collective) action around a common issue. We analyze the role of network mobilizers in promoting the issue and its solutions, as well as the mobilization mechanisms that are being used. We concentrate on the characteristics and activities of network mobilizers and how they engage business and other actors to issue solving. The key contribution of the paper is a rich case study of early network mobilization based upon which we build a conceptual framework of value-based mobilization. A focus on an environmentally related problem means that our study has wide applications – environmental concerns are bound to increase in importance, not only in the Baltic Sea region, but also globally.

The paper is structured as follows. We first review the literature and discuss our theoretical basis. Thereafter follows a section that presents the methodology, data sources and analysis of our study. Next we discuss three initiatives by three mobilizers around the issue of saving the Baltic Sea, and analyze their key outcomes and processes. The empirical results lead us to propose two new concepts: value-based mobilization and environmental networkers. Our conceptual model on value-

based mobilization is presented in the fifth section. The final section presents the key contributions and implications for future studies.

2. Theoretical basis

We anchor our study to the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) research tradition. However, we shift the focus of analysis from predominantly business networks to networks covering multiple types of actors, such as political (Hadjikhani, Lee, & Ghauri, 2008; Welch & Wilkinson, 2004), and those from the civil society, and analyse network developments around a contemporary issue. Our research thus contributes to 'opening the network' (Golfetto et al., 2007, p. 845) to a complex societal setting by paying attention to broader institutions and networks wherein business is embedded.

2.1. Issues and institutional change

Solutions to societal issues (such as climate change and environmental pollution) call for changes in institutionalized rules, regulations, and practices. Problem solving for the common good, such as concerns about air and water, is particularly challenging due to collective inaction caused by the problem of the free rider (Olson, 1965). While many writers of common action are pessimistic about the ability of people to solve common good issues, there is evidence that collective inaction can be overcome by cooperation and the creation of new institutional rules (Ostrom, 2009). For such changes to happen, collective institutional entrepreneurship, i.e. the process of overcoming collective inaction and achieving sustained collaboration among numerous dispersed actors to create new institutions, is needed (Wijen & Ansari, 2007). This focus on collective action is different from most studies on institutional entrepreneurship which concentrate on the role and activities of few guiding

actors such as entrepreneurial individuals (e.g. Lawrence & Phillips, 2004) or powerful firms (e.g. Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006) in institutional change.

Previous case studies on institutional entrepreneurship in the context of heart disease prevention (Ritvala & Salmi, 2009; Ritvala & Granqvist, 2009), suggest that actors with wide connectedness across sectors play a key role in issue solving by bringing social and material resources together to form an issue network. In these studies, the issue solving has produced the seeds for a new business field, supporting the idea of Hoffman (1999) who argues that issues rather than markets or technologies drive industry emergence.

Dahan et al. (2006) define an issue network as a loose, issue-based coalition of a large number of actors with asymmetrical resources and power, who argue about policy options, values and norms in order to induce institutional change through collective action. It is a temporary network in which contacts fluctuate in frequency and intensity depending on the issue lifecycle. This definition shows the importance of having both several actors and heterogeneous resources, and also, points to the dynamics related to issue networks – they are by their very nature temporary. Our perspective to issue networks, while based on this definition, pays more attention to the *relationships* between the actors. Further, because it is virtually impossible to study entire issue networks, our analysis will concentrate on subsets of the overall network, on the 'issue-based nets' (Brito, 1999, p. 92). Aligned with the definition of issue networks, an issue-based net is a net of relationships amongst actors who are concerned with a particular issue through mutual or conflicting interests (ibid.).

We see that relationships act as important recipients and transmitters of change (Halinen, Salmi & Havila, 1999) in issue networks: actions of single actors are ineffective if they are not acted upon by other actors. On the other hand, Easton (1992, p. 24) notes that, 'any firm, however apparently

powerless, may initiate change if it can draw upon the resources of the whole network by virtue of the acceptability of the change'. Recognizing and acting on a common issue by an actor or a large number of actors necessitate mobilization, which breaks olds patterns of exchange and create new relationships (Lundgren, 1992).

2.2 Mobilization by network mobilizers

The emergence of issues networks relates to the fundamental question of the origin of networks, which has been earlier addressed in the context of emerging business networks and fields (Lundgren, 1995; Möller & Svahn, 2009). Network change and initiation is created by mobilization, which is more likely to occur during unstable periods when an issue is recognized by a large number of actors (Lundgren, 1992; Brito, 2001). It is a dynamic process of forming groups or other associations for the pursuit of collective goals where organisations interactively shape and develop the rules that constitute and govern their relationships (Brito, 2001; Mouzas & Naudé, 2007).

IMP scholars have addressed mobilization from the perspective of business actors (e.g. Mouzas and Naudé, 2007), and were early to note that to accomplish things and affect its business relationships a company needs to mobilize its partners (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995). The key managerial question has been posed to be: "who could be mobilized for what, by what" (Axelsson & Johanson (1992, p. 221). Brito (2002, p. 151) addresses mobilization in the port wine industry from the perspective of collective action. He proposes a new type of actor 'collective actor', i.e. 'a net of relationships created in order to cope with a collectively perceived and shared issue' (p. 156). Within business networks literature, the ultimate goal of a collective actor is seen to reinforce its members power and collective benefit within the overall network.

In mobilization, not only actors, but the interrelationships between actors, resources and activities are involved (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995). According to Easton (1992, p. 24): "any change in a network requires resources to be mobilized". Actors with heterogeneous resources may control the activities that are needed to combine the resources in a new way. Yet, actors not only need to have the necessary resources, but also the will and interest to deploy them. This will and interest is related to actors' internalized beliefs, their values. Values describe actors' enduring beliefs about how they ought to behave, they are prescriptions for behavior (Rokeach, 1973), for instance towards the environment.

Our reading of the network and institutional entrepreneurship literature leads us to search for specific actors who become interested in the issue and start inviting others, potentially via networks, to join the common efforts. The network mobilizers may use different mechanisms to attract interest and mobilize the resources of others. Earlier literature would suggest the importance of at least the following factors: framing of the issue, agenda setting and social networking. Recognition of the societal problem is at the heart of change. Therefore, framing, that is, the choice of particular words to formulate a problem or solution (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984), and related agenda setting, i.e. making the issue more salient in people's mind, (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007) is crucial. The media's power in setting issue agendas for the general public is well-known, and therefore, a key question for mobilizers would be to ask how to succeed in convincing the media to select the particular issue for presentation. Agenda setting is also acknowledged to be critical for influencing the birth of new business fields (Möller, *forthcoming*).

To reach other actors, network mobilizers resort to their personal contacts. Indeed, Partanen et al., (2008) argue that social capital, that is, a network of relationships possessed by an individual or a social unit (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Adler & Kwon, 2002) forms a critical precondition for

network mobilization. Each individual has his/her personal contact network, which is based on his/her personal history, family, friends, education, and earlier tasks in various firms and organizations. This network, labeled 'the relationship sediment' by Agndal and Axelsson (2002), provides a basis for interaction, and may be used for working on the emerging issue.

Our empirical study will address the question of how issue networks are mobilized in the context of the environmental state of the Baltic Sea. To draw together our review of the literature, we see that the different theoretical approaches contribute differently to our research question. Institutional theory shows the key role of individuals and the criticality of overcoming collective inaction, while also showing when and how actors may be motivated and capable of changing institutions in which they are embedded. The network perspective, in turn, shows the role of relationships as transmitters of change, and the criticality of addressing not only actors, but also resources and activities in the networks.

For us, it is an empirical question to identify the most important motivating factors (where does the interest and will of the mobilizers come from), the practical ways for mobilizing others (how do the mobilizers induce change), and the reactions and activities from the target organizations (why do other actors with different resources become involved). We investigate the contemporary activities of network mobilizers, but recognize that both historic backgrounds and expectations for future affect the networks and their formation.

3. Research Design, Data and Analysis

We chose to use a single in-depth case study because it is well suited to understanding of sentiments of actors and complex interaction processes, which are embedded in time (Woodside & Wilson,

2003; Quintens & Matthyssens, 2009). Single cases are often used to extend existing theories and to build new theories (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Siggelkow, 2007) and are commonly used to study network dynamics (Easton, 1995; Halinen & Törnroos, 2005). We have built the initial analytical frame from the earlier studies, but adopt an abductive approach (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Accordingly, there is close interaction between the empirical and theoretical areas and the framework may be redirected during the process. Hence, we join the increasing number of industrial marketing scholars who criticize the linear process of theorizing from case studies (Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, & Welch, 2010).

Our empirical case is the emerging issue network around a cleaner Baltic Sea. We selected this particular case because it represents a contemporary pressing issue the solving of which requires the mobilization of new types of networks across borders. This context provides us with a fruitful setting to study network mobilization around a common issue, and enables us to make new theoretical insights on mobilization mechanisms and the emerging network itself. Thus, the case was selected based on theoretical sampling (Patton, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Further, due to the public interest on the issue, it is well documented in the scientific and popular press, making data collection feasible.

Our case has three embedded units of analysis (issue-based nets) consisting of three distinctive initiatives to protect the Baltic Sea. Each initiative provides us with rich contextual data, which permits a closer look at the network mobilization processes. The first initiative is the pioneering work done by the John Nurminen Foundation in removing phosphorous in the wastewater in St. Petersburg in cooperation with Vodokanal, which is a municipality-owned, and one of the largest and most modern waterworks in Russia. The second initiative is the Baltic Sea Challenge campaign launched by the cities of Helsinki and Turku in Finland, which aims to mobilize different actors

around the Baltic Sea in order to build concrete action plans to protect the sea. The third initiative is the Baltic Sea Action Summit held in Helsinki in February 2010. The Baltic Sea Action Group was the key organizer of the summit, which brought together heads of state, ministers, and business and civil society leaders from eleven countries around the Baltic Sea. We studied each of these initiatives from their inception until March 2010 (2-6 years). Focus on the early developments of the initiatives allowed us to find common themes and patterns in network mobilization.

The main source of data for each initiative was in-depth interviews, which were supplemented with initiative-related documentation. For each initiative, interviews were conducted both with organizers of the initiatives (the network mobilizers) and with participating and non-participating organizations. We conducted fourteen in-depth interviews with nineteen people in Helsinki between February 2009 and March 2010 in order to discover the motivations to join the initiatives, mobilization activities, and relationship dynamics. The interviewees represented private foundations and other NGOs (in total 5 organizations, 8 people), cities and public bodies (3 organizations/people), as well as companies (6 companies, 8 people). The companies operated in the fields of shipping, water chemistry, growing media and fertilizers, metal processing, consulting, and technology provision. Two different interview protocols were used depending on whether the respondent(s) represented a network mobilizer or a target organization of mobilization efforts. The key interview themes were, depending on the perspective of network mobilizer or target organization, the following: the motivations for targeting an organization/participating in Baltic Sea initiative(s), communication within the initiative(s), activities and resources involved, and outcomes (business, environmental, and social). The interviews lasted between one and half and two hours, and all interviews were digitally recorded. Both researchers were present in the interviews, which contributed to a rich dialog between the data, concepts and researcher perceptions when conducting the analysis.

Additionally, we used 28 webcasts from the Baltic Sea Action Summit. All 28 speeches (simultaneous translation used for five speeches) were transcribed before analysis. This data captured visually the atmosphere, the sentiments involved, and the dynamics of the social interaction between high level decision makers when they publicly addressed the issue of a clean Baltic Sea. Such audio-visual records are seldom used within industrial marketing research despite their potential to provide a richer representation of reality (Borghini, Carù, & Cova, 2010). The speakers represented several countries: 9 Finnish, 3 Russian, 3 Swedish, 2 Estonian, 2 Norwegian, together with speeches from 9 other countries. The webcasts broadened our view, as they show how different types of actors from different positions and across countries present themselves and their intentions to tackle the issue.

Secondary sources of material include web page information (e.g. initiatives and signatories, Helsinki Commission, HELCOM), and documents (e.g. e-mail letters and seminar presentations of the initiatives, stakeholder magazines of companies, international and national journal articles). In addition, we rely on participant observation at two events held in Helsinki and related to the Baltic Sea Action Summit (BONUS Day;[1] BONUS169 – Joint Baltic Sea Research Programme 9 Feb. 2010, and Insight on the Baltic Sea Action Summit[2] 10 Feb. 2010). Participant observation data opened-up an interesting perspective of how researchers involved in major research programs concerning the Baltic Sea prepared a common voice on how research could be better used as a basis for policy decisions.

Given the complex research setting (overlapping and emerging networks at multiple levels) our data analysis consisted of a number of iterative steps. First, based on a careful reading of a wide range of documentation and interview data, we wrote narratives of the initiatives and constructed a chronology of the key events. During this phase, preliminary themes started to emerge from the data

[1] www.bonusday.fi.

[2] http://www.helsinki.fi/henvi/tutkimus/BSAS.htm

(values and social networks) and our reading of theory developed. Second, we watched, transcribed, and analyzed the webcasts of the Baltic Sea Action Summit. Thereafter, we continued conducting more interviews and refining our data analysis. After this, we compared our analysis of different data sources with the help of categories and concepts that emerged from the data. Finally, the refined themes and concepts were built into a theoretical model (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ryan & Bernard, 2002) on value-based network mobilization, which is presented at the end of the paper.

4. Modern Environmental Networkers and Value-Based Network Mobilization

4.1 Common concern

The Baltic Sea is in an alarmingly poor condition. Eutrophication, i.e. high nutrient enrichment, which stimulates the growth of algae, has long been recognized as the biggest and most serious threat to the Baltic Sea. Eutrophication leads to reduced water quality, which is reflected in blooms of potentially toxic blue-green algae. Eutrophication is a complex social and environmental issue, a consequence of human activity such as agriculture, community wastewaters, energy production and traffic (Helsinki Commission, 2004).

Table 1 lists the key events in the protection of the Baltic Sea and shows the richness of actors ranging from intergovernmental bodies to non-governmental organizations involved in the protection activities of the sea. HELCOM, made up of nine coastal countries and the EU, has been acting as the main environmental policy maker and watchdog for the Baltic Sea for close to 40 years by developing specific measures to protect and conserve its unique ecosystems. The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (2007), adopted at the ministerial meeting held in Krakow, is an ambitious program to restore the good ecological status of the Baltic marine environment by 2021. It acts as the road map for actors involved in the protection of the Baltic Sea.

ADD TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

Despite the large numbers of actors and activities, many challenges have hampered efforts to save the Baltic Sea. Most centrally, the country-level reduction targets of the Baltic Sea Action Plan were only adopted as 'provisional' and these are politically difficult to implement. The plan does not include strong commitments to specific agricultural measures, but restricts itself to recommendations and leaves decisions on such measures to national implementation plans. In addition, the global economic difficulties encountered since 2008 have increasingly brought internal tensions between exploitation and conservation of the sea. (Becker et al. *forthcoming*) Furthermore, the key question remains – how to get all countries to cooperate on the issue – because there is temptation to free ride. In summary, despite numerous actors and scientific evidence suggesting that the Baltic Sea is close to an ecological collapse, few concrete actions have been carried out. This background triggered new types of actors to turn words into actions for a healthier Baltic Sea.

4.2 Three initiatives for saving the Baltic Sea

Before the actual analysis we provide a synopsis of the three initiatives. The rationale for this is to direct greater attention to the embedded context within which relationships (Anderson, Håkansson & Johanson, 1994) and network mobilization occurs.

Phosphorous removal from urban wastewater by John Nurminen Foundation

The John Nurminen Foundation (JNF), established in 1992, has two focus areas: cultural activities focusing on maritime history and cartography, and the protection of the sea. In spring 2004 JNF, on the initiative by the Chairman of Board Juha Nurminen, a fourth generation entrepreneur and dedicated fosterer of maritime culture and the environment, decided to start a concrete project called

the "Clean Baltic Sea". The project concentrates on the reduction of eutrophication and enhancement of tanker safety. This was a pioneering civil society initiative started with Nurminen's own money and was followed shortly after with other private donors as well as company funding. A sign of deep engagement towards the sea was also expressed by the other individuals who worked *pro bono* for the foundation and its Baltic Sea initiative.

The foundation borrowed from business the rule of thumb of allocating activities where the best results can be achieved with the lowest cost. As a result, in 2005 the first target of the initiative was identified: chemical phosphorus removal from the three biggest wastewater treatment plants in St. Petersburg would cut phosphorus emissions by up to 70 percent, corresponding to 27 percent of the phosphorous load that is usable for promoting algae in the Gulf of Finland[3]. The ongoing project is a joint project with the water utility of the City of St. Petersburg – Vodokanal – whereby both partners finance half of the costs. It is noteworthy, that by the end of 2010, the three largest wastewater treatment plants in St. Petersburg will operate at the HELCOM target level on a voluntary basis (maximum wastewater phosphorus content of 0.5 mg/l), which is more strict than the EU wastewater directive. This is a remarkable result in a country that does not have any regulation for wastewater in terms of phosphorous content. The initiative and related construction projects have mobilized a broad network of actors in the construction and water chemistry industries. Establishing a relationship of mutual trust with CEO Felix V. Karmazinov of Vodokanal has been significant for the projects' success. Successful mobilization of high-level political decision makers to support the project, the President of Finland and the Governor of St. Petersburg in particular, has played a key role. High political pressure on wastewater treatment has also been reflected by the media's interest in the issue.

In 2008, JNF started work in Warsaw, Poland, the largest emitter of phosphorous and nitrogen to the Baltic Sea (in terms of quantity, not per capita), in co-operation with the Swedish private foundation,

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[3] http://www.puhdasitameri.fi/en/clean_baltic_sea_stpetersburg.html

Baltic Sea 2020. Recently, as a part of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, JNF became involved in a project named PURE (Project on Urban Reduction of Eutrophication, 2010-213)[4], which concentrates on selected wastewater treatment plants in Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, and Poland. As reflected in our interviews, and by the fact that it has a key role in channeling funding of this project partly financed by the EU, JNF has gained a status of legitimate actor. According to the words of our interviewee JNF has a "holy aureole" gleaming around it. This facilitates consensus-building and political will around the complex issue of a clean Baltic Sea.

Baltic Sea Challenge by the Cities of Helsinki and Turku

In June 2007 two Finnish coastal cities Helsinki and Turku, made a commitment to improve the state of the Baltic Sea by challenging over 700 actors including cities and city networks around the Baltic Sea. The idea was that this positive competition between the two cities would bode well both for the sea and for the attractiveness of the cities. The signatories of the initiative drafted their own action plans, whereby they listed concrete actions to improve the state of the Baltic Sea. By late 2009, approximately 160 actors had signed the challenge.

The impulse for the initiative came from the two city mayors who had brainstormed this idea and then engaged their city administrations and related networks. An interviewee explained to us:

> When the top management becomes committed, things starts to happen and not get labeled as environmentalism…This is a new approach which has awakened actors that one would never have imagined.

One of the key measures of the two cities' own action plans concerns wastewater from shipping. In 2008, in cooperation with the Port of Helsinki and Helsinki Water, the ferry companies were challenged to discharge their wastewaters at ports into the city sewer system without a separate charge. This is crucial as wastewaters of ships add significant amounts of phosphorous and nitrogen into the sea, and international law (MARPOL 73/78), somewhat strangely, permits the discharge of

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[4] http://www.purebalticsea.eu

comminuted and disinfected sewage at a distance of more than three nautical miles from the nearest land[5]. Interestingly, WWF also made an appeal in 2007 to ferry companies to stop the discharge of wastewater into the sea, but according to our interview data, these activities were not coordinated.

Although some of the challenged actors, such as Outokumpu, a global manufacturer of stainless steel, have warmly welcomed the initiative in order to "shoulder its responsibility for the Baltic Sea" (Outokumpu Annual Report 2009), some of the actors have refused to participate. In one interview non-participation was explained by referring to an existing partnership:

> We are not in other projects, because we've already had this cooperation with WWF for many years ─ neither will we have any reason to change.

As a part of the initiative, an international water seminar was organized together with JNF in Helsinki a day before the Baltic Sea Action Summit. The seminar brought together almost 150 actors primarily from cities, their waterworks and harbors, and financiers, and included participants from all coastal countries of the Baltic Sea and Ukraine and Belarus. Yet, extending the challenge to the whole Baltic Sea region has been met with some reservation, partly due to the economic downturn, but also partly because the idea of city mayors challenging other actors may seem too unconventional.

The Baltic Sea Action Summit by Baltic Sea Action Group

The Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG) was registered in March 2008 by Ilkka Herlin, Saara Kankaanrinta and Anna Kotsalo-Mustonen, all with a background in JNF, and a strong dedication to save the Baltic Sea. Ilkka Herlin is a member of the Herlin family, who control two Finnish globally operating listed companies. Herlin was among the first significant donors to the JNF's Clean Baltic Sea Project, and an unfailing friend of the sea.

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[5] http://www.imo.org/Conventions/contents.asp?doc_id=678&topic_id=258

While BSAG may be considered a sort of 'foundation spin-off', its focus on influencing the highest political decision makers, what our interviewee named "big boys", makes it quite distinct from JNF, which focuses on concrete projects. The key asset of BSAG is the founders' broad and complementary network of contacts, which reaches from political decision makers to business leaders, and distinguished scholars. This is reflected by its international advisory board, which includes among others, the President of Finland, and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Finland and Sweden.

In spring 2009, the Baltic Sea Action Summit (BSAS) initiative, a platform for heads of state, companies, NGOs, and individual citizens to protect the Baltic Sea through concrete actions, was launched by Herlin, and Finland's President Halonen, and Prime Minister Vanhanen. The initiative calls for a new type of moral and collaboration between public, private, and civil sectors to save the Baltic Sea. All participants of the summit formulated a commitment to actions that best 'marry their interests with their abilities'. The idea is that all commitments (over 140) are publicly visible[6], and that this transparency makes public screening possible. BSAG is responsible for monitoring the commitments and tries to ensure that all promises are kept. Similar to the Baltic Sea Challenge, the commitments must not be normal business of the commitment makers as one manager explained:

> It had to be something new, something that we commit – our gift to the Baltic Sea. It can absolutely further our business, and that's good, because it is the only sustainable way that we'll commit ourselves for a long term – It can't be nonsense.

Only one representative of each commitment-making organization was invited to the summit, and it was BSAG's wish that this would be at the Executive Director level. One interviewee comments that this was "awfully smart… If you think about it ─ suddenly CEOs start to speak about environmental protection. Ilkka Herlin got more of these activists, new influential activists."

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[6] http://www.bsas.fi/commitments/all-commitments

In brief, all three initiatives have acted in ways that have challenged earlier ways to tackle the issue of the poor state of the Baltic Sea. Common to each of these initiatives is challenging other actors, 'snowballing cooperation' from words to urgent action with concrete measures. We turn next to the question of what motivated these three initiatives, and why others wanted to joint in the efforts to save the sea.

4.3 Actors, values and social network mobilization

One of our interviewees describes the new type of foundations (JNF, BSAG), which act as network mobilizers, as "modern environmental activists" with influence, resources, will, and the ability to accomplish visible results quickly. These individuals are committed to the issue and are also ready to provide their face to it. One prime example is Ilkka Herlin, *BSAG Chairman,* who noted the following at the BSAS:

> I have fought for the Baltic Sea for over 20 years. So trust me: I have no illusions of this being an easy task... Our own commitment is plain: we will keep on working until the sea is clean. ...For us saving the sea is a way of life.

While doing good is easier for those with high socio-economic status, it is also easier for those having a value base that supports environmental charity. The central role of a *shared value base* and *emotional bond* to the sea emerged strongly both from the interviews and from the speeches given at the BSAS. A Director of one of the initiatives described to us:

> We kept a seminar where we said, that with these tiny things we can fix this…The atmosphere at the seminar was extraordinary – like in a religious movement where people stand up and say 'I believe'.

Value congruence was reflected as a form of "religion", and acted as a force for social change (cf. Manduro, 1982; Hoffman, 2003). The quote also reflects that there was an urgent need for concrete and focused efforts to save the Baltic Sea, stressing the role of the right timing in network

mobilization (Axelsson and Johanson, 1992). Another interviewee informed us about the importance of a shared value base:

> At the beginning I was surprised when I went to talk to them [potential donors] I got the exact same response – word for word: 'I remember when I as a child wading across the [clear] water'. I realized that it is in the collective memory of the whole generation in Finland. And now we are so concerned that we'll lose this.

The perceived value of the sea was frequently linked to hobbies connected with the sea. One of the key interviewees expressed it thus:

> Karmazinov, the CEO of Vodokanal, has a strong background in the sea and a navy history – I have a bit of this too. And with Carlson, we both happen to be eager cultivators of cartography – and through this connection we actually got him involved in this.

As another informant put it: "all these gentlemen are yachtsmen at least, meaning that they have experienced this sea quite deeply". Hobbies are one way to express identity, which has been suggested to drive mobilization (Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003), and social change in general (Hofman, 2003). In the mobilization of resources for the initiatives, weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) from school classmates or business acquaintances have also been meaningful. An interviewee explained to us:

> …it is the social network of my childhood [that has supported our initiative], they are people who have succeeded in their life. That was something I didn't realize beforehand.

To summarize, while earlier literature stresses that the network of relationships possessed by an individual is critical for successful network mobilization (Partanen et al., 2008), our findings stress the relational dimension (common norms), as a particular precondition and driver for network mobilization. A shared value base legitimizes the 'exploitation' of the relationship sediment (Agndal & Axelsson, 2002) for the common goal. It also acts as a kind of glue that connects individuals with heterogeneous backgrounds, from political decision makers to business leaders and researchers.

4.5 Business benefits

Value base and social networks are rarely sufficient to motivate business actors to join responsibility projects, particularly if extensive resources or long-term commitment are needed. Rather, concrete business benefits are required, as reported to us:

> Of course they [initiatives] create benefits for the Baltic Sea, for you, and for me, but they also create business opportunities for us.

Firms typically start the mobilizations process in order to find new business opportunities (Mouzas & Naudé, 2007). This challenge of the process is magnified when new opportunities are searched based on societal issues, as clarified to us:

> No one gets involved in the initiatives if there is no benefit…There needs to be a marketing benefit or monetary benefit…I think it is the old wisdom that an elephant needs to be eaten piece by piece. Pilot projects need to be found which prove that both environment and business will benefit.

Another benefit and motivator for teaming-up with the organizations behind the initiatives identified by the participating companies was that these organizations are widely considered as legitimate representative for environmental concerns as they are perceived not to have a vested interest in the issue. Legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) allows resource mobilization and gaining of access to the highest political level. Both Nurminen (JNF) and Herlin (BSAG) have succeeded in retaining this legitimation, although they are also major owners and Chairmen of the Board of logistics companies.

In terms of financial commitments, companies have made significant investments particularly in R&D, with the goal of producing environmental technologies, products, and services that are capable of producing significant new business. Companies have also replicated the idea of challenging other actors to participate and act for the common good of the Baltic Sea. For instance, the Kemira Group, organized the first Kemira Baltic Sea Summit in August 2009 in order to increase and coordinate research on restoring the Baltic Sea's ecological balance, and McKinsey & Company challenged its offices around the Baltic area to make commitments to protect the Baltic Sea.

Turning good will into meaningful results also necessitates political will from government actors, for instance, to secure financial resources, or to enforce regulations and sanctions. In the next section we analyze how the issue of a clean Baltic Sea was publicly framed in the speeches given at the BSAS.

4.3 Framing of the issue

The framing of the issue (poor state of the Baltic Sea) started when the network mobilizers first visually perceived the issue and realized its influence on them personally. In addition, over the years a large amount of scientific evidence about the poor condition of the Baltic Sea has accumulated. Therefore, time was ripe to ask for more actions; as was reflected in our participant observation notes and the joint statement of the research community at BSAS:

> It's good to keep in mind that we have enough scientific evidence and knowhow for political level actions.

To move further from perceptions of the issue, the mobilizers had to frame the issue and make it salient in people's minds (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). For instance, Ilkka Herlin showed his dedication towards environmental issues and also framed them by showing the magnitude of the problems in an interview published in a Finnish magazine[7]. He states that "globalization is about ecological globalization" and a "gigatrend" while globalization of economies is just "surface of the foam". As another example, the Challenge campaign of the cities approached the 100 largest companies by sending out an information letter of the issue and challenge, and also organized seminars to discuss the problems and their potential solutions. A key indication of the new type of activities adopted by the mobilizers is that they did not only express the problems, but also started an active search for concrete projects for various actors to adopt. Thus, in accordance with their strategies of efficient work, they started to formulate an agenda for action.

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[7] http://suomenkuvalehti.fi/jutut/terveys-ja-tiede/ilkka-herlin-itameren-puolesta

The next step in framing the issue seems to be its public expression. To investigate this public framing we have looked at the material from the webcasts. Our analysis of the speeches given at the BSAS brings two main themes to the fore: *values & moral responsibility* and *leadership & political will*. Table 2 presents excerpts from webcasts that illustrate these themes.

ADD TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

All speeches given by government, business and civil society leaders pointed out that protecting the sea is our moral responsibility for the generations to come. Moral responsibility is built on deeply rooted values and emotional bonds with the sea. Speeches also stressed that joint action and cooperation is needed to save the sea; no one country or organization can do it alone. This requires strong leadership and the political will to move from words to action. As the Prime Minister of Finland pointed out at the BSAS:

> This day is not about great words and statements. This is about concrete actions. Today we have taken the problem – the alarming state of the sea – and looked at solutions and actions that can change it. The strong commitment and political will is the first and necessary step, but it is action that makes the real difference in the Baltic Sea. Therefore, I repeat that the most important day is tomorrow when we start implementing our commitments.

In some speeches the monetary value of state and firm level investments to the development of sustainable solutions were also mentioned. However, it is difficult to assess whether these commitments already existed before the summit or what proportion of the sums mentioned directly link to projects around a cleaner Baltic Sea. Altogether, our analysis of the speeches given at the BSAS suggests that the issues raised and solutions proposed earlier by the 'modern environmental networkers' of the Baltic Sea were embraced and re-framed in the minds and words of business and policy makers. The encouraging results, measured both in terms of reduced nutrient loads and

successful collaboration across international borders, of the flagship project by JNF in St. Petersburg, acts as a model for future mobilization efforts.

5. A Model of Value-Based Network Mobilization

Figure 1 presents a visualization of our argument on value-based network mobilization. The trigger for individual actors has been a personal wakening, even a trauma, when seeing the toxic cocktail of blue-green algae and understanding that scientific evidence suggests this to be a permanent harm. This triggered the interpretation of the issue by the actors with a value base stressing personal responsibility for the environment and a strong socio-economic status that enabled doing good. By showing their strong commitment through making financial investments, and by framing the state of the Baltic Sea in media as a common issue worth urgent attention, these actors showed strong value-based leadership. They also provided a 'face' to the issue and kept it in the spotlight through innovative activities such as challenging other actors and organizing high level conferences and summits. High media visibility and public framing of the common issue enabled agenda construction.

ADD FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

These antecedents, along with enabling factors – social networks, business benefits, political will and shared value base (and moral responsibility) – enabled mobilization of very different types of actors. This required 'network capital', the form of social capital that makes resources available through interpersonal ties (Wellman & Frank, 2001), from network mobilizers. The relationship sediment was valuable for this purpose, as it reached people and actors outside and beyond the current task-related (Hallen, 1992) contacts. The exploitation of old (latent) relationships was legitimized by the

shared concern over the environmental state of the sea, suggesting that relationships between business and non-business actors are not only issue-related (Hadjikhani & Ghauri, 2001), but also value-related. Foreseeable business benefits, such as new business opportunities or image benefits, inspired business participation. Political will, on the other hand, reflected in the implementation of plans and regulations as well as public climate, was identified as a fundamental driver for all actors, i.e. for network mobilizers and target organizations alike.

The mobilization of target organizations started from the actor dimension. In the mobilization efforts the highest level decision makers were targeted in order to label the issue as strategic rather than environmental, and in order to ensure commitment to the needed resources. Previous social ties and a shared value base guided mobilization efforts towards particular highly respected organizations, which then mobilized their broader networks and created a form of domino effect in the broader organizational landscape. Thus, social incentives (Olson, 1965) drove value-based mobilization. The resource and activity dimensions follow actor mobilization with a time lag. Except for a few major projects, the first resource commitments tended to be rather modest and activities, such as the search for new business opportunities, somewhat unfocused.

Our model deviates in some fundamental ways from the earlier business networks literature. First, in our model, a social contract between a mobilizer and a target organization precedes any major resource mobilization or activity changes. This is different from the model of a network mobilizer proposed by Mouzas and Naudé (2007), who maintain that network insight, business propositions and deal precede social contract. These early public commitments of firms towards the issue also deviate from the argument put forward by Möller and Svahn (2009), who note that the birth of radically new businesses generally start unnoticed. In our case, firms (and other organizations) openly shared even their vague plans at a very early stage of development. Several companies

actively engaged in attempts to create innovative technologies and new solutions, and announced these initiations in public. These deviations are likely to be caused by the societal and moral nature of the issue, which encourage making a social contract or commitments between actors publicly. We thus argue that value-based network mobilization differs from the 'traditional' mobilization of business networks.

When it comes to the dynamics of issue networks in general, we note two contrasting developments. On the one hand, issue networks are temporary (Dahan et al., 2006) and should dissolve as the problem is solved and the issue thus loses its significance. On the other, societal and environmental issues are bound to be difficult to solve, and collaboration must be sufficiently sustainable (Wijen & Ansari, 2007) to actually bring along institutional change, that is change in the rules of the game. The competing forces for the ending and the endurance of issue networks points to their interesting role in restructuring other networks; as a result of issue networks, the other networks – such as innovation and business networks – may change their nature. Therefore, we would expect temporary issue networks, and in particular the relationships established by them, to broadly imprint other networks.

5. Theoretical conclusions

This article contributes to understanding change and dynamics in business networks. In particular, we add to the network mobilization literature (Mouzas & Naudé, 2007; Araujo & Brito, 1998; Brito, 2001; Lundren, 1992; Möller, *forthcoming)* by broadening the focus to complex issue-driven change processes. We expect that development in future societies, including the business sector, will be increasingly driven by complex issues. While we concentrated on the condition of the Baltic Sea, similar types of mobilization efforts exist, Al Gore's commitment to the Climate Project being a

prime example of a key individual acting as a mobilizer at a global level. Indeed, our empirical phenomenon brings more emphasis to the values and efforts of single mobilizers.

Conceptually, we advance the discussion on the interaction between network mobilization, values and relationship sediments. In particular, we suggest value-based mobilization as an important force for initiating change in business networks, through mobilizing actors. We follow earlier studies that analyze network dynamics by looking at how relationships change, how change may spread in networks, and how individual actors may initiate and react to change. With regard to the mobilization literature, we bring new dimension to the rules of the game that are followed; shared value base or ideologies may function as an important starting point and enabler of network changes. We propose, that in the case of societal issues, more diversified rules of the game need to be adopted and new types of influential actors emerge. Thus, we illustrate institutional change, which gives new roles to old and new network actors. Our study shows that many companies have also become interested in, and are actively taking part in the new societal developments – aside of, or because of their business interests.

We extend studies on institutional entrepreneurship by showing the key role played by networks in institutional change. We put forward the notion that, besides political skills (Fliggstein, 1997), institutional entrepreneurs need political and business networks to further their issue by challenging actors beyond their sphere of direct influence. Institutional entrepreneurship may thus be conceptualised as the vision and capability to mobilize non-obvious relationships between actors, i.e. new types of networks. Our study shows that relationship sediments and their innovative use may act as key resources when activating other actors. In order to change the (institutional) rules, it is particularly important to engage those with influential positions. The key individuals in our study cleverly used shared values to bring together people with different backgrounds to act positively for

a common concern. We characterize these exceptional initiating individuals as modern environmental networkers. These networkers differ from 'collective actors' (Brito, 2001) in that they operate at level of society rather than concentrate on the business sector.

6. Managerial implications and future research directions

Our study shows that issue networks affect business actors in many ways, giving rise to several managerial implications. Without exception our interviewees pointed out that environmental issues are currently 'in the air', which was an important reason for them to join in. Participation may enhance the company image as a responsible actor, but more importantly, it can potentially bring some pioneering advantages. Being part of such initiatives, sensing and acting on weak signals may grant a forerunner position in radically new businesses. Some companies seem to be ahead of others, because the commitment activities were a direct continuation to their earlier projects and related to their core business. The study also shows that even smaller actors may produce measurable results. This once again shows the power of networks, where joining the forces brings new opportunities. As the initiated projects are risky and the payback period of (environmental) investments is uncertain, some companies are still reluctant to act. However, our interviews with the companies show us more potential than problems in taking advantage of the emerging environmental issues and linking them with on-going and new businesses. Our empirical data also implies that the next generation of leaders, to a greater degree, achieve job satisfaction by doing good. Given the increasing concern on environmental and societal problems, and rivalry over personnel, this area of how and why business firms become involved is worth much more focus by practitioners and researchers.

Fundamental rules for interaction are changing. Business firms are increasingly involved in societal issues and therefore, the research community needs better tools to analyze and understand complex

networks composed of business, political and civil society actors. Our study illustrates behavior where individuals do not hesitate to link interpersonal and inter-organizational networks more closely together for a common good. These types of value-based changes in networks are phenomena offering interesting avenues for theory building, for instance in combining the network approach with literature on value-based leadership, discussed by organization theorists. Further studies may also extend the analysis into the international direction and investigate how the different institutional contexts influence issue formation.

In closing, the pressing contemporary issues that call for both local and global action are largely social by nature. So far, IMP scholars have stressed change and dynamics in business networks, focusing, on the economic and technological factors that cause network dynamics. Our study investigated social factors; which will also have economic and technological outcomes at some point. We argued for the strong role of shared values and emotional bonds for successful mobilization of issue networks. Nobel Prize winning economist Elinor Ostrom (2009) underlines the development of social norms and moral sentiments in solving collective action problems. We urge scholars to investigate how broader moral sentiments affect behavior in business networks, and network mobilization in particular. For further studies on industrial network mobilization processes, it is important not to limit investigation only to the perspective of firms and private interests. In addition to vertical and horizontal business relationships, an understanding of the texture of socio-political networks is crucial if we are to better understand the dynamics of business networks.

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Table 1.

Chronology of the key events in the protection of the Baltic Sea

Year	Event	Contents and Importance
1974	Helsinki Convention signed by then the seven Baltic coastal states in Helsinki	For the first time ever, all sources of pollution of the sea were made subject to a single convention.
1990	NGO Coalition Clean Baltic established in Helsinki	A joint lobbying organization established to influence decision-makers and raise environmental awareness at grassroots level.
1992	Revised Helsinki Convention signed	A new convention signed after political changes by all coastal states of the Baltic Sea and the EC.
1992	Baltic Sea Environmental Declaration given in Helsinki	Environment ministers and high representatives of Governments assemble at diplomatic conference and give the Baltic Sea Environmental Declaration.
1992	Council of the Baltic Sea States established by the regions' Foreign Ministers in Copenhagen	A political forum for regional intergovernmental cooperation established.
1993	Establishment of the concept Baltic Sea pollution hot spots by HELCOM	Listing of the biggest point sources of pollution around the Baltic Sea. Public interest emerges in curbing pollution in the Baltic Sea region.
1994	Establishment of the Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPAs) by HELCOM	Creation of a network of areas to protect vulnerable habitats and species.
1996	Baltic Strategy for Port Reception Facilities	Ship-generated waste addressed for the first time.
1996	Initiation of the Baltic 21 by the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea countries	Regional expression of the global Agenda 21 adopted by the United Nations "Earth Summit" to promote regional sustainable development.
2001	HELCOM Copenhagen Declaration	Ministers adopt a new package to improve maritime safety.
2001	Baltic Sea NGO Forum established in Copenhagen	Strengthening of civil society in the Baltic Sea area involving annual NGO forums.
2003	WWF Finland established voluntary oil bridgades	Grassroots infrastructure to combat oil in case of oil spills and catastrophies.
2005	Baltic Sea was designated the status of Particularly Sensitive Sea Area by International Maritime Organization (IMO)	Protective measures to control international maritime activities.
2007	Adoption of the Baltic Sea Action Plan in the HELCOM ministerial meeting held in Krakow	Multilateral ministerial declaration, the key instrument followed by key stakeholder in the protection of the Baltic Sea.
2007	WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme established	Joint program with national WWF offices and partner organizations around Baltic Sea to achieve full biodiversity of the sea.
2008	Russian chairmanship of HELCOM	Russia takes a visible role in the protection of the Baltic Sea.
2009	EU Baltic Sea Strategy accepted by the European Council	Key focus on environmental issues and better coordination of activities.
2010	HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in Moscow	Ministers review progress and present national implementation programs regarding HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Source: This table was compiled from various sources including Helsinki Commission (2004, 2007)

Table 2.

Key Themes

Theme	Excerpts from webcasts
Values & Moral Responsibility	The Baltic Sea literally feeds our peoples. Now it is time for us to repay our debts to it and to take care of its condition. This is our commitment to future generations. *-Prime Minister of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin* Every morning I am greeted not only by my family members. When I look out my bedroom window I am greeted by the sea, our see, the Baltic Sea. And it is so since my childhood... I am certain that it is in our power to be proud, not to be ashamed, before our children. *-President of Latvia Valdis Zatlers* We believe that those who would follow our footsteps, those for whom we work to make the Baltic Sea cleaner should be different from us. So that their consumer behavior in environment should be changed to become harmonic with nature. *-CEO of Vodocanal St. Petersburg Felix Karmazinov* I have to congratulate you for being here - you will not be remembered as the ones who let the Baltic Sea die. *-Chairman of Royal Dutch Shell and BSAG Jorma Ollila* We want to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. *- Chairman of European Cruise Council David Dingle* The values of the Baltic Sea are deeply rooted in our souls. The health of it is an issue I am personally very committed to. I know what I am talking about. I have been living close to the Sea every summer for 60 years. *-King of Sweden Carl XVI Gustaf*
Leadership & Political Will	When the world banking system was on the brink of a collapse, on myriad days, vital decisions were made and political actions were taken to save the system. When the emergency is considered big enough actions and political decision came quickly. Let us show that we can do the same for the Baltic Sea. *- BSAG Secretary General Saara Kankaanrinta* In Estonia, the Baltic Sea is referred to as 'Läänemeri' – the 'sea to the West'. In Finland, the same sea is called 'Itämeri' - the 'sea to the East', which is also the translation in the Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Icelandic and German languages. Although the Baltic Sea is geographically located to the west of both Estonia and Finland, these names reflect the historical changes around its coasts. Since the rule of the Vikings, our Mare Nostrum has constantly been used as an arena for power games between different actors… Our sea, any sea, cannot be divided, locked or corked up. We all have to take care of our home sea, which is extremely unique and vulnerable on the world scale as well! This is what we share for better or for worse.*- Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia Andrus Ansip* Technology is not the issue in resolving the problems that we face in the Baltic Sea. In all my conversations with government and business leaders the questions I hear are about leadership. How do we build consensus? How do we start? How do we collaborate across international borders? Progressive world leaders like those that we've seen today don't wait for international legislation to be passed. They reach out, take the initiative, and drive change. Change that reduces their carbon footprint and increases their community's economic vitality. 500 years ago Leonardo da Vinci says people of accomplishment act in a different way: they don't wait things to happen to them, they go out and happen to things. Like all of you I believe that nothing is inevitable. So today, let us ensure that no one in this room ever has to say to their grand children: I knew the European Dead See when it was known as the Baltic Sea.*- Chairman of IBM EMEA Larry Hirst*

Figure 1.

A model of value-based mobilization of issue networks