

# BALTIC SEA REGIONAL INTEGRATION: WATER PROTECTION, UNIVERSITY CO-OPERATION - AND AGRICULTURE?

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## **Abstract:**

*Research on Baltic Sea region building processes emphasizes the discursive elements of the emergence of the region in the beginning of the 1990s, yet lacks the analysis of policy-specific developments of regional integration around the Baltic Sea. My article argues that the neo-functional approach opens useful insights in order to understand these developments. Starting from marine environment protection as a nucleus of regional integration, I demonstrate spill-over effects to the field of education policy and higher education co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region. Following this, I analyze why there are no spill-over effects to the adjacent policy area of agriculture up to now.*

## **Rezumat:**

*Cercetările cu privire la procesele de construcție regională din arealul Mării Baltice evidențiază elementele discursive ale apariției regiunii la începutul anilor 1990, dar nu analizează evoluțiile politice specifice ale integrării regionale în jurul Mării Baltice. Articolul meu susține că abordarea neo-funcționalistă deschide perspective utile în scopul de a înțelege aceste evoluții. Pornind de la protecția mediului marin ca un nucleu de integrare regională, am demonstrat efectele colaterale de cooperare în domeniul educației și ale învățământului superior în regiunea Mării Baltice. După aceasta, am analizat cauzele pentru care nu există efecte colaterale în zona adiacentă a politicii agricole până în prezent.*

**Keywords:** Baltic Sea Region, Neo-Functionalism, Regionalization, Spill-over, Agricultural policy

## Introduction

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in the end of the 1980s, the Baltic Sea Region is regarded as a pioneer within the *Europe of regions*. In the 1990s, the regional networks of state and nonstate actors were in the focus of the scientific and political interest in order to establish democracy and prosperity in the whole region. After the EU eastern enlargement 2004, the question of a meaningful level of regional integration below the (geographical) level of the EU was the main question of the regional dialogue around the Baltic Sea. The adoption of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in 2009 brought a fresh impetus into this discourse and the process of regionalization in the Northeast of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

On scientific level, most scholars used the constructivist *region building* approach in order to analyze the regional development on theoretical level. The approach emphasizes the role of (linguistic) symbols and an emerging dialogue on the region as the main feature of regionalization.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the region building literature on the Baltic Sea Region misses to a large extent the analysis of policy-specific developments of regional integration. There is a lack of investigations on regional integration after the Baltic Sea Region was “talked and written into existence”, as one of the most prominent advocates of the approach, Iver B. Neumann, described the formative moment in the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

In my article, I argue that the neo-functionalist approach helps to fill this gap. In accordance with some current research on the Baltic Sea Region<sup>4</sup>, I assume the main idea of the approach, the *spill-over* effects, as a useful instrument to analyze not only the European integration, but the Baltic Sea regional integration, too. Of course, I do not argue that we have a kind of Baltic Sea supranationalism in the way neo-functionalists anticipate(d) for the case of Europe. Yet, I assume that we have – at least in some policy fields

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview cf. Stefan Ewert, *Region Building im Ostseeraum. Zur Rolle der Hochschulen im Prozess der Regionalisierung im Nordosten der Europäischen Union* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2012a), 19-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-37.

<sup>3</sup> Iver B. Neumann, *Regions in International Relations Theory. The Case for a Region-Building Approach* (Oslo: Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institut, 1992), 15.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Michael North, Barnard Turner, “The Baltic Sea and South China Sea Regions. Incomparable Models of Regional Integration?”, in *Asia Europe Journal* 8/3 (2010): 274; Stefan Gänzle, Kristine Kern “Macro-regional Strategies: A New Mode of Differentiated Integration in the European Union”, Paper prepared for presentation at the *CEPSA Annual Conference* (2011) Vienna, 3.

– a certain degree of regional integration on the level of the Baltic Sea Region and that there is a certain mechanism of spill-over effects to other, adjacent policy fields, too.

In my paper, I firstly introduce the neo-functional approach as my theoretical starting point. Secondly, I describe the water protection policy as a kind of (functional) nucleus of Baltic Sea regional integration. The protection of the common good – the ecological status of the Baltic Sea – is one main challenge of the region and a central reason for the requirement of Baltic Sea regional integration within the EU. Thirdly, I analyze the spill-over effect to higher education policy, whereas I ask in the following section why we do not have spill-over effects in the field of agricultural policy. In the end, I give a short conclusion and an outlook.

### **Regional Integration – A Neo-functional Approach**

In the wide range of empirical-analytic theories of regional – and especially European – integration, the neo-functionalism is regarded as the “forefather” of all these approaches.<sup>5</sup> In the following, I will firstly argue that the approach in the “classical” sense of Ernst B. Haas delivers an insightful heuristic in order to understand integration processes in the Baltic Sea Region. Secondly, I follow Dieter Wolf and argue that – despite all critics – the neo-functional approach is an important contribution as long as regional integration proceeds.<sup>6</sup> Neo-functionalism considers regional integration as a dynamic process with *engines* and *brakes* and opens useful insights to understand the somehow lopsided development and intensity of integration in the Baltic Sea area.

Regional integration takes place if decisions are made collective for certain policy fields within this region.<sup>7</sup> For neo-functionalists, the starting point of regional integration is the awareness of political elites and interest groups that in a specific policy field, functional constraints and cross-border interdependencies require cross-border – and mostly technocratic and “non-political” – solutions. Experts rather than “high politicians” are invited to

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<sup>5</sup> Dieter Wolf, „Neo-Funktionalismus“, in *Theorien der Europäischen Integration*, eds. Hans-Jürgen Bieling, Marika Lerch (Wiesbaden: VS, 2012), 55-76.

<sup>6</sup> Dieter Wolf, „Neo-Funktionalismus“, in Bieling, Lerch, 71. Cf. Philippe C. Schmitter, “Neo-Neofunctionalism”, in *European Integration Theory: Past, Present, and Future*, eds. Antje Wiener, Thomas Diez (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 72.

<sup>7</sup> Finn Laursen, “Theoretical Perspectives on Comparative Regional Integration” in: *Comparative Regional Integration*, ed. Finn Laursen (Aldershot et al.: Ashgate, 2003), 6.

work on these solutions and co-operate within new built institutions on regional level. Due to the sectoral interdependencies, these co-operations require co-operations in other policies, too. The expansive logic of sector integration creates the so called *spill-over* effects.<sup>8</sup> While in the beginning of the integration process, spill-over effects occur mainly in “nonpolitical” fields, they expand to contested policies later on.

Despite the technocratic logic behind the expansion of regional integration, neo-functionalists emphasize the necessity for “changes in the attitudes and behavior of governments, parties, and, especially, labor and business interest groups”<sup>9</sup> for the occurrence of spill-overs. The central role of the interest group pluralism and the need for changes in the attitudes lead to the incremental character of the integration process. Haas points out:

“A spill-over into as yet unintegrated economic areas and a concern over political techniques appropriate for the control of new and larger problems is manifest. And in the process of reformulating expectations and demands, the interest groups in question approach one another supranationally while their erstwhile ties with national friends undergo deterioration. At the level of political parties a similar phenomenon takes place. Here the spill-over makes itself felt by the desire to control the new administrative organs (...). Finally, the spill-over process asserts itself in the relations among civil servants, national government offices (...) and technical advisers”<sup>10</sup>.

The crucial role of the elites and interest groups<sup>11</sup> helps to understand why we have policy fields as “engines” of regional integration and other fields as “brakes”. There is no economic or technocratic determinism for spill-over effects, but they are depending on the attitudes of the elites behind. Some ten years later, Joseph S. Nye made use of both mechanisms to differentiate two ideal-typical forms of spill-over. Following Haas, he describes “linkages between problems arising out of their inherent technical characteristics” on the one hand and “linkages deliberately created or

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<sup>8</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces, 1950-1957* (Notre Dame: University Press, 2004 [1958]), 283-317.

<sup>9</sup> Desmond Dinan, “Foreword”, in Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces, 1950-1957* (Notre Dame: University Press, 2004 [1958]), \*x.

<sup>10</sup> Haas, 313.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 17-18.

overstated by political actors” on the other<sup>12</sup>, calling the latter “cultivated spill-over”.

To sum up: For neo-functionalists, regional integration happens if problems takes place across borders and elites within a region find together to work on technical solutions of these problems. The cross-border co-operation – e.g. of standard setting – requires a co-operation at the same regional level in other sectors, too. If elites agree to co-operate, so called spill-over effects occur, making regional integration to an incremental process. Even if certain developments may disturb incrementalism, some forms of “thresholds” avoid spill-backs<sup>13</sup>, making regional integration to a long-run process.

In the next sections, I will argue that neo-functionalism may give some useful insights into the starting point of regional integration within the Baltic Sea Region and the developments in certain policy fields.

### **Marine Environment Protection – the Nucleus of Baltic Sea Regional Integration**

If we use Haas` concept of spill-overs as a heuristic in order to analyze the development in the Baltic Sea Region, and if we look for an analogy to the policy field of coal and steel as a nucleus for the integration process in Europe, we may start from water protection as the basic policy field of regional integration in the Baltic Sea area. Marine environment protection is the strongest regulated field on regional level around the Baltic Sea.<sup>14</sup> The collective, regional decision making within this policy is a clear indicator of regional integration. Due to the high vulnerability of the ecosystem Baltic Sea<sup>15</sup>, programmes to protect the Baltic Sea were created

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph S. Nye, “Comparing Common Markets: A Revised Neo-Functionalist Model”, in *Regional Integration: Theory and Research*, eds. Leon N. Lindberg, Stuart A. Scheingold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971),200.

<sup>13</sup> Haas, xxiii-xxx.

<sup>14</sup> Nikolaus Werz et al. *Kooperation im Ostseeraum. Eine Bestandsaufnahme der wissenschaftlichen und politischen Kooperation unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der neuen Bundesländer* (Rostock: Universität, 2005), VI.

<sup>15</sup> The special sensibility and vulnerability of the ecosystem Baltic Sea results inter alia from its semi-closed position with an only narrow connection to the North sea and the Atlantic Ocean and the high population density of the water catchment area, leading to a high nutrient and toxic substances input. Despite all successes in the enhancement of the ecological status, the Baltic Sea must still be regarded as “one of the most polluted seas in the world”. Lothar

already in the 1970's and made marine environment protection to a core topic in the region.<sup>16</sup>

In 1974, the Baltic Sea littoral states signed the *Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area* (Helsinki Convention), being the first convention for a certain marine area worldwide which embraced all different kinds of pollution and subjected these to regulations.<sup>17</sup> As an institutional frame, the Helsinki commission (HELCOM) was created.<sup>18</sup> The awareness of the fragility of the marine environment can be seen as the driving force for the littoral states of the then three different blocs (the Warsaw pact in the East and the South of the Baltic Sea, the NATO members in the West and the neutral states in the North), even though especially Finland had also political incentives for co-operation. Finland's hope was the creation of trust between the competing blocs within the convention and commission, leading not only to the enhancement of its own security, but also to the improvement of its status and influence in the region.<sup>19</sup> With the Helsinki Convention, the Baltic Sea Region became a pioneer in the field of international environmental protection. Coincidentally, the regional co-operations within this policy field developed to engines of integration between the East and the West.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1970s and 1980s, regional co-operation on marine environment protection was distinguished by its intergovernmental character. Yet, starting in the early 1990s, a lot of transnational and non-

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Gündling, "International Cooperation in Nature Conservation in the Baltic Sea Area", in *Naturschutzrecht im Ostseeraum*, ed. Erk Volkmar Heyen (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1998), 225.

<sup>16</sup> Erk Volkmar Heyen, *Naturschutzrecht im Ostseeraum* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1998), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Ehlers „Das revidierte Helsinki-Übereinkommen“, in: *Meeresumweltschutz für Nord- und Ostsee*, eds. Hans-Joachim Koch, Rainer Lagoni (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2003), 104.

<sup>18</sup> For the conditions of HELCOM's emergence and development, cf. Tuomas Räsänen, Simo Laakkonen, "Institutionalization of an International Environmental Policy Regime: The Helsinki Convention, Finland and the Cold War", in *Governing a Common Sea. Environmental Policies in the Baltic Sea Region*, eds. Marko Joas, Detlef Jahn, Kristine Kern (London: Earthscan, 2008), 43–59. For a positioning of HELCOM in the governance system of the Baltic Sea Region, see Kristine Kern, Tina Löffelsend, "Governance beyond the Nation State: Transnationalization and Europeanization of the Baltic Sea Region", in *Governing a Common Sea. Environmental Policies in the Baltic Sea Region*, eds. Marko Joas, Detlef Jahn, Kristine Kern (London: Earthscan, 2008), 115–141.

<sup>19</sup> Tuomas Räsänen, Simo Laakkonen, "Institutionalization of an International Environmental Policy Regime: The Helsinki Convention, Finland and the Cold War", in Joas, Jahn, Kern, 44–48.

<sup>20</sup> Detlef Jahn „Die lokale Agenda 21 im Ostseeraum“ in *Politische Systeme und Beziehungen im Ostseeraum* eds. Detlef Jahn, Nikolaus Werz (München: Olzog, 2002), 205.

governmental initiatives came on the scene.<sup>21</sup> Organizations and networks like the *Coalition Clean Baltic*<sup>22</sup> brought mainly national NGO's of the littoral states under one heading in order to enhance the ecological status of the region. There are good reasons to argue that these initiatives – despite all ongoing problems of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea – were clearly successful in this respect.<sup>23</sup> The intergovernmental network of HELCOM succeeded to keep its leadership status, becoming a “center of many centers”<sup>24</sup>. Thus, HELCOM's success is twofold: Its activities reduced the nutrient and hazardous substances input into the Baltic Sea, and it became a nucleus of regional integration around the Baltic Sea.

The HELCOM activities within the policy field are mainly the monitoring of pollution, a standard setting and the adoption of recommendations.<sup>25</sup> Although these recommendations are not legally binding, their impact on the national legislatures is distinctly high.<sup>26</sup> The standard setting is partly notable stronger than in the EU in general. For example, the “HELCOM requirements, particularly for phosphorus discharge from WWTPs [waste water treatment plants, SE], are twice as strict as similar provisions of the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive”<sup>27</sup>. Part of the monitoring programme is the identification of so called *hot spots* of nutrient and toxic substances input by the HELCOM in collaboration with local and regional experts. Even if the improvement of the situation by closing these hot spots is surely not only result of the HELCOM activities, the fact that “half of the identified hot spots have been removed from the list

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<sup>21</sup> The term ‘transnational’ refers to the co-operation of public and private actors in cross-border activities. Cf. Stefan Gänzle, “Introduction: Transnational Governance and Policy-Making in the Baltic Sea Region” *Journal of Baltic Studies* No. 42/1 (2011): 4. See also Carsten Schymik, “Networking Civil Society in the Baltic Sea Region”, in *Civil Society in the Baltic Sea Region*. Eds. Norbert Götz, Jörg Hackmann (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 227.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. [www.ccb.se](http://www.ccb.se), 22.11.2013.

<sup>23</sup> Stacy D. VanDeever, “Networked Baltic Environmental Cooperation” *Journal of Baltic Studies* No. 42/1 (2011): 37-55. Cf. Kristine Kern, “Governance For Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region” *Journal of Baltic Studies* No. 42/1 (2011): 21-35.

<sup>24</sup> VanDeever, 39.

<sup>25</sup> The HELCOM publishes annually a report on its monitoring and steering activities, cf. e.g. HELCOM, *HELCOM Activities 2011 Overview* (Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 132, 2012), Helsinki.

<sup>26</sup> Kristine Kern, Tina Löffelsend, “Governance beyond the Nation State: Transnationalization and Europeanization of the Baltic Sea Region”, in Joas, Jahn, Kern, 122-123.

<sup>27</sup> HELCOM 2012, 29.

after investment and remediation projects were carried out”<sup>28</sup> demonstrates the success for HELCOM.

Since the 1970s, the steering mechanisms of HELCOM experienced a continuous improvement of deeper monitoring, stricter standard setting etc. This happened not only with the adoption of the new convention in 1992 which was in need due to the new situation after the fall of the Iron Curtain, but is more or less an incremental development. New forms of steering were adopted, new projects added. One good example is the adoption of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) in 2007 and the preparation of National Implementation Programmes (NIP) by the member states.<sup>29</sup>

To sum up, we clearly see two developments described by Haas for the case of the European integration also in our case of the Baltic Sea region. Firstly, the adoption of the Helsinki convention and the building of the HELCOM institution was a reaction to a rather technical stimulus: the question of how to decrease the pollution into the Baltic Sea and how to govern this effectively. Cross-border interdependencies were the starting point of regional co-operation. And secondly, the development of the institution, its activities and the co-operation with other networks is rather incremental and carried out by experts of marine ecology to a large extent.

### **Spill-over to University Co-operation**

Water protection policy with regard to a common sea features strong interdependencies between the littoral states as well as to other policy fields. No single riparian state can act effectively to protect the marine environment if the other states do not so. This is the basic assumption of the adoption of the Helsinki Convention during the Cold War in the 1970s. Yet, the policy interdependencies are equally important. For instance, effective water protection needs the creation and diffusion of knowledge. Political measures like monitoring and standard setting require the knowledge about the specific ecological situation of the sea to be protected, and they require professionals and experts in the littoral states to implement these measures.

In the policy of higher education and academic co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region, we can find distinct indicators of such a spill-over. This is especially true for the time after the fall of the Iron Curtain. One good

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 9-11.



example is the foundation of the *Baltic University Programme* (BUP) as an academic network in 1991. Next to the support of the democratization process in the new democracies of the region, the network focused on water protection and sustainable development from the very beginning.<sup>30</sup> Today, around 225 universities are involved in the programme – the number of participating higher education institutions is an indicator of BUP's success in itself.<sup>31</sup> Besides the coordination of research projects, the development of common curricula and textbooks and the introduction of the local faculty members into these courses is the main activity of the BUP.<sup>32</sup> As a result, we have some kind of regional integrated curricula in subjects like *Sustainable Water Management, Environmental Management* or *A Sustainable Baltic Region*.<sup>33</sup> If the Baltic Sea Region is regarded as “a pioneer in the introduction of new modes of governance”<sup>34</sup>, the BUP is an outstanding example of these governance forms and their impact in the region.<sup>35</sup>

As my empirical analysis of the regional integration of higher education institutions in the three Baltic States and the German Bundesland Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has shown, the partaking universities of the BUP (as well as of the second large academic network in the region, the *Baltic Sea Region University Network BSRUN*) are systematically stronger embedded in the region in terms of teaching and research than other universities.<sup>36</sup> These networks can build a basis for a regional integrated higher education area. Such an area is assumed by academic region builders as well as the regional political organizations in the Baltic Sea Region as a

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<sup>30</sup> Werz et al., 131.

<sup>31</sup> Due to the focus on marine environment protection, universities from states of the Baltic Sea water catchment area which are no direct littoral states (like Belarus and the Ukraine) take part as well.

<sup>32</sup> BUP, *Catalogue 2008/2009: Organisation and personnel*, (Uppsala: University, 2009), 8.

<sup>33</sup> BUP, *Courses and Education*. <http://www.balticuniv.uu.se/index.php/current-courses-2> accessed November, 16, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Marko Joas, Detlef Jahn, Kristine Kern “Governance in the Baltic Sea Region: Balancing States, Cities and People”, in *Governing a Common Sea. Environmental Policies in the Baltic Sea Region*, eds. Marko Joas, Detlef Jahn, Kristine Kern (London: Earthscan, 2008), 6.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Stefan Ewert “Governance – an Analytical Concept to Study the Baltic Sea Region?” in: *Beyond the Sea. Reviewing the manifold dimensions of water as barrier and bridge* eds. Heta Hurskainen, Marta Grzechnik (Köln: Böhlau, forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> Stefan Ewert, “Higher Education Cooperation and Networks in the Baltic Sea Region: A Basis for Regionalization and Region Building?” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, No. 43/1 (2012b), 95-116.

forerunner of regionalization and the emergence of a regional identity.<sup>37</sup> Hitherto, there is no empirical evidence of a nascent Baltic Sea regional identity, emerging from higher education co-operations. Yet, one might argue that the networks create a common ground for regional awareness and changing attitudes in the neo-functional sense.

For sure, the academic networks act as interest groups within the region. For instance, they apply for financial support for certain projects or – especially in the 1990's – forced the littoral states to establish a regional academic recognition scheme. Regional political organizations like the *Council of Baltic Sea States* (CBSS) or the *Nordic Council of Ministers* (NCM) took this latter demand on their agenda and built corresponding working groups.<sup>38</sup> In terms of financing, especially the *NORDPLUS Neighbour* and *NORDPLUS Higher Education* programmes of the NCM became important sources for Nordic-Baltic academic projects.<sup>39</sup> Like in the case of the ERASMUS programme on European level,<sup>40</sup> we have a joint decision-making process on supranational level on the financing of higher education activities.

Finally, the idea or even necessity of spill-overs is expressed in the *Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region*, adopted in 2009 by the European Union. In the strategy, one priority is given to water protection initiatives and maritime safety as a precondition for regional development. The strategy includes two university co-operation projects in order to enhance the attractiveness of the region.<sup>41</sup> Beyond that, an analysis of the consultation process which took part in advance of the strategies adoption emphasizes the stakeholders view that education and research networks “touch upon all priority areas, be it educational programs to foster environmental awareness,

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<sup>37</sup> For an overview cf. Ewert 2012a, 29-72.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. HØGUT, *Report on the Potential for Creating a Nordic-Baltic Space for Higher Education and Training* (Copenhagen: NORDEN, 1999); CBSS “Communiqué of the 6th Ministerial Session of the CBSS, Riga, 2-3 July 1997, <http://www.cbss.org/documents/cbsspresidencies/5latvian/dbaFile515.html>, accessed August 20, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. NORDPLUS, *NORDPLUS Framework Programme 2008-2011, Handbook 2009* (Copenhagen: NCM).

<sup>40</sup> Eric Beerens, “The Emergence and Institutionalization of the European Higher Education and Research Area” *European Journal of Education* 43/4 (2008): 407-25.

<sup>41</sup> EU-Commission, *Commissions Staff Working Document Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, ACTION PLAN*, [COM(2009) 248 final].

research in maritime safety and security, or measures designed to promote region branding”.<sup>42</sup>

To sum up: If we take water protection policy as a nucleus of Baltic Sea regional integration, one can clearly see some spill-over effects to the field of higher education policy. They are based on the technical need for knowledge about the specific ecological situation of the Sea and its dissemination as well as some “cultivated” exchange with the universities as places of a regional discourse.<sup>43</sup> University networks act as academic interest groups on regional level, and they might deliver a common ground for changing attitudes and an emerging regional awareness.

### **And Agriculture?**

Even if the efforts to enhance the ecological situation of the Baltic Sea are successful in terms of the shutdown of the *hot-spots* of nutrient and hazardous substances input,<sup>44</sup> the marine environment is still distinctly fragile. This is largely due to the high pollutant input via the so called “diffuse sources” into the Baltic Sea. The main source of this kind of input is farming. “A rough estimate is that agriculture accounts for almost half of the total loads of nitrogen and phosphorus to the Baltic Sea”.<sup>45</sup>

Agriculture and agricultural policy around the Baltic Sea follow the *paradigm of productivism* to a large extent. This paradigm emphasizes the goals of food provision and the compensation of structural income differences between agriculture and other sectors. The competing *paradigm of multifunctionality and sustainability*, on the other hand, stresses the provision of public goods by agriculture and fosters the positive environmental effects like the ensuring of biodiversity by farming.<sup>46</sup> Since the accession of Poland and the Baltic States to the EU in 2004, almost all farming activities in the water catchment area of the Baltic Sea are governed

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<sup>42</sup> Carsten Schymik, Peer Krumrey, *EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Core Europe in the Northern Periphery?* (Berlin: SWP Working Paper, 2009), 15.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Kazimierz Musiał, “Education, research and the Baltic Sea Region Building”, in *Approaching Knowledge Society in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Kazimierz Musiał (Gdansk/Berlin: BaltSeaNet, 2007), 42.

<sup>44</sup> HELCOM 2012, 26, 30.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>46</sup> Bruce Muirhead, Reidar Almås “The Evolution of Western Agricultural Policy Since 1945” in *Rethinking Agricultural Policy Regimes: Food Security, Climate Change and the Future Resilience of Global Agriculture* eds. Reidar Almås, Hugh Campbell (Bingley et al.: Emerald, 2012), 23-49; OECD, *Multifunctionality. Towards an Analytical Framework* (Paris: OECD, 2001).

by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU. Yet, even if we have a kind of incremental “paradigm shift” in the CAP from productivism to multifunctionality and sustainability on functional and semantic level,<sup>47</sup> productivism is still the dominating paradigm in EU and in the Baltic Sea littoral states.

For example, the extension of industrial animal husbandry in Poland, the Baltic States, but also Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in Germany during the last years clearly follows the logic of productivism. For the efforts to enhance the ecological status of the Baltic Sea, this development is strongly counterproductive. Especially the slurry, produced in the stables, but brought onto the fields as liquid manure is a main source of eutrophication in the rivers and the Baltic Sea, leading to an algal growth and – in the end – to an expansion of dead zones in the sea.<sup>48</sup>

Although agricultural policy in the Baltic Sea Region is structured by the CAP to a large extent, there is a certain *maneuvering room* for the littoral states to steer agriculture in order to protect the marine environment. E.g., the water and building legislation on national or even subnational level open possibilities for water protection via agriculture. The permission of animal husbandry is one example, the definition of water protection belts with a ban of fertilizer use around streams and rivers another one. Yet, empirically observable is a converse development: For instance, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania reduced the minimum definition of these belts from seven to three meters in 2007 in order to enhance agricultural production possibilities.<sup>49</sup>

My interim conclusion for the field of agriculture: There is obviously a functional incentive for spill-over from water-protection policy to the adjacent agricultural policy in the Baltic Sea Region in order to protect the marine environment. There is the technical knowledge about the reduction of nutrient input via agriculture,<sup>50</sup> and there is an agricultural policy

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<sup>47</sup> Martin Petrick “The co-evolution semantics and policy paradigms: 50 years of Europe’s common agricultural policy”, *Intereconomics*, 43/4 (2008), 246-252.

<sup>48</sup> HELCOM, *HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan*, adopted by the HELCOM Ministerial meeting, (Krakow, 2007).

<sup>49</sup> LMS Landwirtschaftsberatung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern *Neuregelung der im Wassergesetz des Landes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Landeswassergesetz) enthaltenden landesspezifischen Abstandsregelungen zu Gewässern beim Düngen*, [http://www.lms-beratung.de/upload/59/1254386642\\_23074\\_10851.pdf](http://www.lms-beratung.de/upload/59/1254386642_23074_10851.pdf), accessed November 22, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> HELCOM 2012, 16.

paradigm which fits to these measures. The littoral states have the legislative possibilities for an integrated agricultural policy in the Baltic Sea Region within the CAP – but in fact, there is no spill-over and no regional integrated agricultural policy. And even if we have some HELCOM activities in the field of agriculture and interest groups like the Coalition Clean Baltic which put this field on their agenda, we have – unlike the wastewater treatment plants requirements mentioned above – no stricter standard setting etc.

My hypothesis is that this is largely due to the fact that the policy integration on the geographical level above – the European level – is distinctly high. Agriculture is probably the sector with the highest level of European integration and harmonization. Thereby, the CAP auf the EU is not adjusted to the regional conditions around the Baltic Sea.<sup>51</sup> The EU eastern enlargement in 2004 appeared as a kind of “overrun” of the incremental development of regional integration in the Baltic Sea Region in the sense of the neo-functionalists. Defenders of the paradigm of productivism – mainly the interest groups of the conventional agriculture – have the possibility to argue against proposals to adjust agricultural policy to the situation of the Baltic Sea. They just have to claim equality for all farmers within the CAP framework. For environmental protection groups, on the other hand, it is hard to get public awareness between the level of Europe and the national states and to start a regional dialogue on water protection and agriculture.

Contrary to the main argument of Dorette Corbeys *dialectical functionalism*, stagnation of integration appears here not in an adjacent policy area where member states are willing to safeguard national competencies,<sup>52</sup> yet in a field with a strong level of integration on the (geographical) level above. The interdependencies between the water protection policy and agricultural policy on the Baltic Sea regional level are obvious, but a “cultivated spill-over” does – contrary to the case of higher education co-operation – not take place.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Schymik, Krumrey 2009, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Dorette Corbey, “Dialectical Functionalism: Stagnation as a Booster of European Integration” *International Organization* 49/2 (1995): 263-269.

<sup>53</sup> It is remarkable that we have a kind of regional academic dialogue on agriculture and projects like a ‘ecosystem health and sustainable agriculture’ course within the BUP and strong links between agricultural universities in the Baltic Sea Region (Ewert 2012b, 108-109), but, up to now, no integrated agricultural policy in practice.

To sum up again: We can observe a certain level of regional integration in the Baltic Sea Region and a certain level of common decision-making in the field of marine environment protection and – partly derived from that – in the field of higher education co-operation. Even if the level of common decision making is rather small, it has an influence on the main regional challenge – the enhancement of the Baltic Sea’s ecological status. And it clearly is an indicator of regional integration. Contrary, within the field of agriculture, there is no decision making on Baltic Sea regional level. I argue that one reason for this observation is the level of policy integration of the CAP which inhibits regional integration on the geographical level below.

### **Conclusion and outlook**

To make it more general: The example of Baltic Sea regional integration shows from a neo-functional perspective that in a regional integration process on two geographical levels, technical spill-overs on the lower level can be hampered by a high level of integration in a certain policy field on the geographical level above, even if the decisions made collective on the upper level are dysfunctional on the lower one.

Mainly, this is due to the absent cultivated spill-over. Here, neo-functional arguments coincide with the constructivist region building approach and its interpretation of Baltic Sea regionalization.<sup>54</sup> Both approaches emphasize the role of elites in integration processes and the relevance of regional dialogues. And while the region building research in the Baltic Sea region could observe the discourse on the Baltic Sea Region on academic level,<sup>55</sup> opening the floor for the technical spill-over from water protection to education co-operation described above, there is no strong dialogue between agricultural policy elites on this level.

Yet, there might be some stronger integration process in the future due to current developments in the CAP. With the strengthening of the *second pillar* of the CAP (rural development), the CAP experiences a kind of

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<sup>54</sup> Ernst Haas himself argued later that his neo-functionalism is a kind of ‘pragmatic constructivism’ (Haas, \*xxvi) and closed the gap between liberal and constructivist approaches on that way.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ewert 2012a, 43.

“re-nationalization”.<sup>56</sup> This de-integration on European level gives more power in the policy field to the nation states and – e.g. in the case of Germany – the subnational units. The ecological pressure may boost the littoral states of the Baltic Sea to use this new and extended competencies to adjust agricultural policy to the ecological requirements of the Sea.<sup>57</sup> Farmer’s interest groups lose the argument of European equality, while environmental NGO’s have a new stage of activity. Surely, this would be a totally unintended effect of the re-nationalization of the CAP. But it might be a hope for the Baltic Sea and the efforts to protect the marine environment in the region.

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<sup>56</sup> E.g. Elmar Rieger „Bauernverbände. Agrarische Interessenpolitik, institutionelle Ordnung und politischer Wettbewerb“, in: *Interessenverbände in Deutschland*, eds. Thomas Winter, Ulrich Willems (Wiesbaden: VS, 2007), 310.

<sup>57</sup> For a stronger perception of states as crucial actors in neo-functionalism cf. Corbey 1995.

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