



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

MASTER THESIS IN
EUROPEAN STUDIES

Skilled, interested, and governmental – the average participant

A case study of participation opportunities in the EU
Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

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Abstract

Do all actors have equal opportunities to participate in multi-level governance arrangements? As the first EU macro-regional strategy, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is an interesting and important case for studying actors' participation opportunities in multi-level governance arrangements. This thesis undertakes to identify factors that are favourable for an actor's opportunity to participate, by studying the case of the EUSBSR. The findings serve to open up discussions concerning equal opportunities to participate, which is fundamental for legitimacy. It is concluded that there is a strong overrepresentation of national governmental actors, and it is their strong position in society that seems to be the favourable factor for their opportunity to participate. Furthermore, experience, in addition to expertise, also appears to be a favourable factor. Yet, it seems crucial that an actor perceives itself as affected, and especially by the issue, if it is to participate at all. Further research concerning the effect of affectedness, as well as concerning the concept of expertise, is therefore proposed.

Keywords: macro-regional strategies, participation, multi-level governance, legitimacy, Baltic Sea region, affectedness

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List of abbreviations

ACA	Academia
EU	European Union
EUA	European Union Institution/agency
EUSBSR	European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
FPL	Flagship Project Leader
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
IO	Interest Organisation
MLG	Multi-level Governance
NCP	National Contact Point
NGA	National Government Agency
NGC	National Government Company
NGRI	National Government Research Institute
NMIN	National Ministry
PAC	Priority Area Coordinator
PC	Private Company
SNA	Sub-national Authority

1. Introduction

Traditional democratic ideals are challenged in today's globalised society where governance structures have become more and more complex. Actors from multiple levels and multiple sectors are involved, in order to attain effective governance of common issues that can no longer be solved by within the nation state. Multi-level governance (MLG) is one concept which embraces this phenomenon. One of the democratic challenges concerns ensuring that all actors have reasonable equal opportunities to participate, and having their interests represented. Upholding these fundamental democratic principles is necessary for the legitimacy of the governance of those arrangements.

One case which corresponds with this notion of complex forms of governance is the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). The EUSBSR is the first EU macro-regional strategy and the aim of the strategy is to save the sea, connect the region and increase prosperity (European Commission, 2012a). The initiative is a reaction to the fact that the eight EU member states in the region face several common challenges as well as opportunities. The conviction has been that these challenges and opportunities can be met by better coordination, and by more efficient use of resources and networks that already exist in the region (European Commission, 2012b).

The strategy is therefore built on the three no's principle: no new funding, no new legislation, and no new institutions. It has also been emphasised that extensive stakeholder participation is crucial for the success of the EUSBSR, and hence MLG has been integrated in its structures (Council of the European Union, 2011). Broad participation is requested both for the development of the strategy and for its implementation through the various flagship projects in the EUSBSR Action Plan (European Commission, 2012a).

Responsibilities and tasks for the strategy's coordination and development have thus been divided upon a great number of actors. Worries have been raised concerning the feasibility of implementing the strategy given its complex, or lacking, structures (Bengtsson, 2009; Schymik & Krumrey, 2009), as well as concerning the actual involvement of a multitude of actors (Stocchiero, 2010). In addition, the Council has requested improvements concerning visibility; clarification and strengthening of roles; and development of evaluation criteria (Council of the European Union, 2011).

The Commission has had the overall coordination responsibility since the beginning, and responsibilities, roles, and tasks have emerged gradually (European Commission, 2012a).

Among the key implementing stakeholders are the flagship project leaders (FPL) (Council of the European Union, 2011). It is not fixed who can be an FPL, and the criteria are quite general. In essence, it is open for all types of actors to become a FPL. Giving a precise answer to who is a stakeholder, and who is implementing the EUSBSR, is in principle impossible to do. This raises further questions concerning the governance of the EUSBSR. Who are the participants of the EUSBSR? Who are the FPLs, and what type of actors do they represent? Do these actors have anything in common? Clarifying these uncertainties is crucial for the legitimacy of the EUSBSR, and this is where this thesis departs.

This thesis approaches the EUSBSR as a MLG arrangement from a legitimacy perspective. In order to answer the questions above, theories and previous research concerning participation opportunities are applied to the most visible and concrete component of the EUSBSR – the Action Plan and its flagship projects. The purpose is to gain an understanding of what factors that seems to be favourable for an actor's participation in the EUSBSR, in order to open up a discussion regarding how legitimate the EUSBSR is from a normative perspective.

1.2 Disposition

This thesis has the following structure. First, the research question and aim of the study is laid out, and a background to the EUSBSR is given. Thereafter, the theoretical framework follows, including both a discussion concerning legitimacy and MLG, as well as previous research concerning actors' participation opportunities. In the third chapter, research design, case study method, and other methodological considerations are addressed. Next, concepts derived from previous research forms the basis for the analytical framework. In the fifth chapter, empirical findings are presented in table form, and are thereafter analysed. The thesis concludes by answering the research question, and by making recommendations for further research.

1.3 Research aim and research question

This thesis aims at contributing to the discussion concerning normative legitimacy of MLG arrangements. It undertakes to identify factors that are favourable for an actor's opportunity to participate, by studying the case of the EUSBSR. The finding serves to open up discussions concerning equal opportunities to participate.

It makes a theoretical contribution by adding to and developing existing theories of participation opportunities. It also fills an empirical gap concerning research on the EUSBSR and EU macro-regional strategies.

The following main research question is posed:

What factors seem to favour an actor's opportunity to participate in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region?

The main research question is answered through five sub-questions.

- Who are the actors participating in the EUSBSR?
- What resources do the participating actors have?
- What position in society do the participating actors have?
- What access to information and channels of influence do the participating actors have?
- How affected are the participating actors by the EUSBSR as a transnational cooperation project in the Baltic Region, and/or by the issue of the Priority Area in question?

The first sub-question is answered in by the identification of flagship project leaders (FPL) presented in appendix 2, as well as by the categorisation of actor type and nationality in chapter 5.1. The remaining sub-questions are answered by the empirical analysis of eight FPLs, which is presented in appendix 3, summarised in chapter 5.1, and discussed in chapter 5.2.

This thesis does not intend to answer whether the governance structures of EUSBSR are normatively legitimate or not. The aim is to open up for a discussion concerning the legitimacy of MLG arrangements in general, and the EUSBSR in specific. Answering the research question will enable making conclusions concerning what factors that might be favourable for an actor to participate in the EUSBSR. It can make no conclusions regarding those actors who are not participating. However, by having a more thorough understanding of the participants, it will be possible to discuss whether there are actors who are excluded because they do not have the same capabilities, and to do further research on this matter. Not until then can conclusions be made regarding the legitimacy of the EUSBSR. This thesis makes valuable contribution by opening up for discussions regarding if all actors have equal opportunities to participate.

1.4 Background to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

By the adoption of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) during the Swedish EU Presidency 2009, the concept of macro regional strategies was introduced into EU policy. Its members include Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Denmark. The EUSBSR was followed by the Danube strategy in 2011, which to a large extent builds in the same model as the EUSBSR (European Commission, 2011). The concept of macro-regional strategies has not yet been clearly defined, but the Commission will present a report concerning the value added of the macro-region approach by June 2013 (European Commission, 2011). However, the reactions have been positive both in the Commission's progress report, and in the Council's Conclusions (European Commission, 2011; Council of the European Union, 2011).

The EUSBSR initiative was taken as it was realised that the EU member states in the Baltic Sea region were facing common challenges as well as opportunities (Bengtsson, 2009). Four areas for cooperation were identified: sustainable environment, prosperity, attractiveness and accessibility, and safety and security (European Commission, 2012b). These four pillars will be changed to the three objectives "save the sea, connect the region and increase prosperity" (Interact, 2012a).

There is a long and well established tradition of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. However, the activities of the various cooperation institutions in the region were not coordinated (Bengtsson, 2009). A distinctive feature of the EUSBSR is the so called three no principle: no new funding, no new legislation, and no new institutions. The idea was that there are enough resources and institutions within the Baltic Sea region; the key is to use those more efficiently by better coordination of activities (European Commission, 2009).

Governance structure – a multi-level governance arrangement

The EUSBSR can be seen as a MLG arrangement and it is constantly emphasised in the EUSBSR documents that MLG is essential for having a successful implementation (Council of the European Union, 2011). It was drafted after an extensive public consultation, and there are several stakeholder events as well as an annual conference. The aim is to involve stakeholder from all levels and all sectors, and institutions such as HELCOM, the Baltic Development Forum and the Council for the Baltic Sea States are mentioned as being important (European Commission, 2011). Concerns have been raised, however, regarding the

feasibility of coordinating a strategy without a specific institution, or extra funding (Bengtsson, 2009). It has become apparent that there is a need to clarify the organisation structures (Council of the European Union, 2011; European Commission, 2011) and the roles of actors have emerged gradually. In March 2012, the Commission presented a new communication after a request from the Council where progress has been made regarding specification of roles and responsibilities, as well as of targets (European Commission, 2012a). Visibility and communication is another problem which is addressed in the communication. Recently, as a response to this, a new web page¹ was created exclusively for the EUSBSR, along with other measures to increase communication.

The Action Plan and the flagship projects

The most important document of the EUSBSR might be its Action Plan which is divided into 15 priority areas, each lead by a Priority Area Coordinator (PAC) appointed by the member state. The Action Plan includes more than 80 flagship projects, and various strategic and horizontal actions (European Commission, 2011, 2012b). The flagship projects are central for the implementation of the strategy. The Action Plan is regularly updated and revised (European Commission, 2012b), and new flagship projects are selected and added. The criteria for being a flagship project is that it contributes to the objective of the EUSBSR and the implementation of the priority areas; that it has a clear budget and timeframe; that it has project leadership; and that there is cooperation among the leaders (Interact, 2012b).

The function of the flagship projects has been specified, but the selection process of flagship projects is still unclear. After consulting contact persons for the EUSBSR, it could be understood that a project, or a project idea, that wants to become a flagship project presents itself to the relevant PAC. If the PAC considers the project as suitable according to the criteria above, it recommends it to the Commission. The Commission in its turn considers the proposal and makes recommendations to the High Level Group, constituted by representatives of the 27 EU member states. It is then decide, by the Commission and the High Level Group in consultation with each other, if the project is to become a flagship in the Action Plan². The latest revision of the Action Plan was made in December 2010, and was updated in January 2012. The Action Plan is currently going through a major review which is expected to be finished by the end of 2012 (Interact, 2012a). It is also indicated that support for macro-regional strategies will be included in the 2014-2020 financial framework, and it is

¹ www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/

² Based on a non-official document from obtained via European Commission's EUSBSR information contact.

encouraged that member states prioritise the EUSBSR's objectives (European Commission, 2012a).

2. Theoretical framework and previous research

The theoretical framework is based on previous research and is divided into two parts. The aim of the first part is to define the concept of legitimacy within the context of multi-level governance (MLG), and explain how it is related to democracy, and the principle of equal opportunities. The criteria for legitimacy of MLG arrangements are also defined within this section. The aim of the second part is to develop an understanding for what conditions that determine an actor's opportunity to participate.

2.1 Definitions of legitimacy in multi-level governance

In order to enable assessing legitimacy, it is necessary to clearly define from which perspective legitimacy is approached. Furthermore, since the EUSBSR is seen as a MLG arrangement, it is necessary to place the issue of legitimacy within the context of MLG.

MLG is here used as a conceptual device to capture and describe the governance structures of the EUSBSR and not as a theory (Zürn, Wälti, & Enderlein, 2010). There are several different conceptualizations within the literature of what MLG is or is not (Peters & Pierre, 2004), or what analytical value the concept has (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Piattoni, 2010). A general and fundamental assumption made, is that MLG arrangements are characterised by the involvement of multiple actors from multiple levels, and by fluid or flexible orders of governance (Marks & Hooghe, 2004; Piattoni, 2010; Zürn et al., 2010). In this thesis, MLG refers to arrangements which share those characteristics. Theories such as 'network governance' and 'new modes of governance' also discuss governance arrangements and do, to a larger or lesser extent, fit the MLG definition above. Piattoni (2010) argue that those theoretical understandings are not equivalent to MLG, which she considers to be more encompassing and cover the dynamics more fully. However, this thesis regards those strands within the governance literature as relevant, in cases where they can be considered to overlap with MLG, and on the premises that it shares the basic MLG assumption of multi-actor and multi-level involvement.

Normative legitimacy

Legitimacy can be conceptualised in several different ways. This thesis is interested in, and limited to, the normative dimension of legitimacy, which has as its issue whether "regulations,

institutions, authorities and their actions are justifiable to those affected by them, and particularly towards those required to uphold them.” (Føllesdal, 2011:86). By other words, in this thesis, the issue of legitimacy concerns whether the EUSBSR can be justified by the affected actors.

Føllesdal (2011:86) distinguish normative legitimacy from legal and social dimensions of legitimacy. These two perspectives of legitimacy would, if applied in this thesis, assess whether the governance of the EUSBSR is legally justifiable or whether there is a general compliance with the governance of the EUSBSR. Normative legitimacy is, according to Føllesdal (2011), more demanding than the other two dimensions. The decisions in a dictatorship can be legitimate according to the legal system of the regime, and a decision can be socially legitimate as long as the citizens comply, irrelevant of whether they are correctly informed. However, neither of these two cases would be regarded as legitimate from a normative perspective (Føllesdal, 2011).

Legitimacy and multi-level governance

Within the literature on MLG, there is a debate concerning what particular norms that should be applied when assessing MLG arrangements. A majority of the research which assess the legitimacy of MLG arrangements focus specifically on the EU (Føllesdal, 2011; Lord & Beetham, 2001; Piattoni, 2010; Scharpf, 2009), and are made as contributions to the wider debate on the legitimacy deficit, or democratic deficit, of the EU. Even if this thesis differs from those studies, in the respect that it studies a specific MLG arrangement within the EU and not the EU *per se*, the general discussions on legitimacy and MLG is mostly relevant and applicable to this thesis.

MLG arrangements are often criticised for the weak opportunity of citizen’s to participate, which is also known as the input side of legitimacy. When this criticism is directed to the EU as a MLG polity it concerns, more or less, “the lack of a common public space, the lack of EU-wide political debates, party competition, and political accountability” (Scharpf, 2009:178). However, on the other side of the debate, one can also find the argument that the EU, as an MLG polity, is more open towards participation (Piattoni, 2010:200).

Various researchers argue that MLG arrangements are different from national governments, and that therefore, the legitimacy of MLG arrangements should be evaluated in another manner (Piattoni, 2010:187). Issues regarding legitimacy in MLG arrangements, such as the EU, have given rise to suggestions of alternative sources of legitimacy for MLG and related

forms of governance. Among the positive views on multi levelled forms of governance, one finds claims of increased participation and stakeholder inclusion (Papadopoulos, 2010), i.e. referring to input legitimacy. This is also reflected within the literature on the EU's legitimacy. One way to legitimise MLG arrangements is by claiming that they are more effective and have a greater problem-solving capacity, than traditional forms of governing (Peters & Pierre, 2004), i.e. referring to output legitimacy.

Thus, there are different ways to argue why MLG arrangements are, or are not, legitimate. This thesis shares the theoretical perspective of those scholars arguing that it is not a question of abandoning traditional notions of legitimacy altogether, but that it rather is a question of adopting it to the new political reality. Piattoni (2010) takes classical EU governance criteria as benchmarks for evaluating the legitimacy of MLG arrangements. By referring to those theories, she argue that the legitimacy of MLG is based on its input, output and contribution to democracy (Piattoni, 2010:190-191). Democracy is seen as being the most important of those since it is consist of both input and output legitimacy.

The same reasoning is made by Lord & Beetham (2001) who argue that we cannot accept less legitimate standards for MLG arrangements, such as the EU, than from liberal democratic states. However, they acknowledge that "it does not follow that the same *methods* of legitimation need be used" (Lord & Beetham, 2001:449). They conclude that what it essentially means for a state, as well as for the EU, to be legitimate that it is democratic (Lord & Beetham, 2001:445-446).

It therefore seems fair to say, that democracy is a necessary criterion for a political arrangement to be normatively legitimate (Piattoni, 2010:228-229), regardless if it is a MLG arrangement or a national government. Consequently, in order for the EUSBSR to be legitimate it must be democratic. This brings us to the question of what it means for governance to be democratic.

As the criteria for legitimacy can therefore be derived from the democratic principles, the next question to address is what it means for governance to be democratic.

Democracy, representation and equal opportunities to participate

Classic democratic theory is based on the ideal of a representative political system, which assumes equal opportunity to participate. Dahl (1999) puts substantial focus on the principle of equality, in his widely known writings on democracy.

In traditional state-centric perspectives, the principle of equal opportunity to participate refers to the individual citizen's participation in the political system, e.g. through voting (Dahl, 1999). This state-centric perspective is not applicable to the way that society is governed today. Therefore, there is a need for a reformulation of the state-centric conception of democracy, without abandoning its basic principles (Sørensen, 2002).

One aspect, where MLG differ from state-centric democratic ideals, is in its perspective on participation. In a democratic state, citizens participate by voting, and they are represented by political parties. In MLG arrangements, however, the participants are actors of various kinds, and who are representing interests that might be territorial as well as functional. This is clearly the case of the EUSBSR, where various kinds of actors, who has great difference in interests as well as jurisdictions, are involved (Marks & Hooghe, 2004:15-22). A regional council, a state agency, and an environmental interest organisation are fundamentally different, even if it at the same time, according to Piattoni (2010:13), is a tendency to greater assimilation between actors representing territorial and functional interests. What can be seen is a political arena where the principal agents are actors, rather than political parties or citizens.

Actor participation, rather than citizen voting, is not necessarily a threat towards the principle of equal representation, which builds on equal opportunities to participate, according to the participatory democratic ideal (Saurugger, 2008:1276). The criteria is that "equal access for all groups regardless of their financial, social and societal resources" is provided (Saurugger, 2008:1283). Uhrwing (2001) applies the same kind of reasoning in her study of interest organisation, and where she argues that a certain representativeness should be among interest organisations as well.

Sørensen (2002) discuss the challenges that new, multi-actor, forms of governance pose to democratic representation and claims that "[d]ue to the weakened position of the nation-state, it becomes increasingly unclear between whom political influence should be equally divided" (Sørensen, 2002:713). Clearly, a basic criteria for an actor to have equal opportunity to participate, is that it actually has an opportunity to participate in the first place. A common answer to the question of who should be included in multi-level forms of governance is that those who are affected by a decision should have the right to participate (Piattoni, 2010; Smismans, 2008; Sørensen, 2002).

According to Sørensen (2002), it is not formally established who is affected, and it is left open to the actor to decide whether it wants to participate or not. However, many authors fail to give any further explanation concerning who is to be considered as affected by a decision. It is problematic to define inclusion by such a loose concept as affectedness, given that it is a fundamental condition for participation.

For the EUSBSR it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify who the affected actors are, even if there are some geographical limitations. Since it is difficult to draw exact lines of who is involved and not, it is up to the actor to claim its affectedness. It is therefore appropriate to speak of subjective affectedness, as a way to decide who is included and who is excluded (Karlsson Schaffer, 2012). However, an actor who do not perceive itself as affected could then be excluded because of its own perception (Piattoni, 2010) .

In conclusion, what can be demanded from a MLG arrangement to be democratic is that all actors have equal opportunity to participate. It is also essential that all actors actually affected by the policy perceive themselves as affected.

2.2. How the concepts are related

It is appropriate to further elaborate how the different concepts are related. Democracy is a basic precondition for an initiative like the EUSBSR to be normatively legitimate. The EUSBSR has MLG structures, which is a reflection of a European, as well as global, development of increasingly complex structures of governance. This development challenges the representative democratic ideal's principles of one person one vote, and equal opportunity to participate. It thus creates the need for reformulation of traditional democratic ideals, and consequently of legitimacy as well. The participants are actors of various kinds, whose inclusion and right to participate, is dependent on their affectedness. Hence, what is necessary for the EUSBSR, or any MLG arrangement, to be legitimate, is that all affected actors have equal opportunities to participate. However, "problems arise because it cannot be guaranteed that a system of governance represents all affected parties" (Christiansen, Føllesdal, & Piattoni, 2003:15) This is, in its turn, a legitimacy problem in so far that some affected parties are excluded, or that all affected parties do not have equal opportunities to participate. In the following section, it will be elaborated on why it might be the case that all affected parties are not represented. This is done by developing an understanding of what factors that are favourable to an actor's opportunity to participate, as well as of what factors that determines an actor's affectedness.

2.3 Opportunities to participate

In the previous section, it was argued that the democratic principle of equal opportunities to participate must be met, in order for MLG arrangements, such as the EUSBSR, to be legitimate. Furthermore, in MLG arrangements, it is the affected actors, and not the national citizens, that the principle of equal opportunities applies to. The thesis will now go further into the theoretical discussions on what factors that favour an actor the opportunity to participate, in order to enable evaluating the legitimacy of the EUSBSR.

Within the literature, there is a lack of research assessing the legitimacy of MLG arrangements through analysing the equality between actors participating in MLG arrangements. The focus is rather on whether MLG actually changes the power structures and whether the actors who have access to the political system have any real influence (Jeffery, 2000). Furthermore, there is, to the author's knowledge, no analytical framework that can be applied to encompass all actors, regardless of level or sector. The research is mainly focusing either on participation of interest groups, or on participation of sub-national authorities. Since diversity of stakeholders is in the very core of MLG arrangements, it is reasonable, and valuable, to design an analytical framework that includes and acknowledge those differences.

Another reason for making a uniform analysis encompassing all actor types, is that actors of different jurisdictions are becoming more similar, i.e. local governments are approaching interest organisations vice versa (Piattoni, 2010:13). This makes it even more difficult to separate and analyse actors according to independent categories.

This thesis will therefore combine different theoretical perspectives on actor participation in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the conditions of participation in MLG arrangements. The aim is to identify concepts in those theories that can be operationalized and applied to all actors included in the analysis. Some authors are not explicitly referring to one of the theoretical perspectives presented in this subchapter, or focusing exclusively on one of them. Still, based on the arguments and main points presented in previous research and theory, a rough categorization has been made, in order to distinguish between basic theoretical perspectives. The question of what it means for an actor to be affected is also addressed.

Interest organisations: traces of pluralism and corporatism

When it comes to political participation of interest organisations, the most common theories are pluralism and corporatism. The pluralistic claim is that the political system does not favour any actor over another, and that there is a competition among actors (Eising,

2008:1169) Whether or not an actor can participate in depends on its resources (Uhrwing, 2001:25). Corporatism, on the other hand, claim that the political system is favouring certain actors (Falkner, 2000:95), such as producer organisations, or those who are especially dominant in their field (Uhrwing, 2001:33). There is a preferential relation between the stakeholder and the decision-maker.

Uhrwing (2001) has analysed interest organisations possibility to access political processes in the case of Swedish environmental policy-making. The theories used are corporatism, pluralism, and the Political Process Approach. Her conclusion is that resources do matter, and adds that expertise is one of the most valuable resources. Uhrwing (2001) acknowledged that expertise can be seen as dependent on economic resources

Greer, da Fonseca, & Adolph (2008) assess whether there is a bias in interest representation in the EU. Their conclusion is that the EU is favouring those who are energetic and well financed, and that evidence from the health sector shows that this furthermore has created a national bias where post-communist and Mediterranean interest groups are underrepresented, due to resource inequalities. Hence, Greer, da Fonseca, & Adolph (2008) are leaning towards the pluralist explanation where it is the capabilities and resources of an actor that matters.

Coen (2007) has made an extensive review of factors that have been found to affect an interest organisations participation in EU policy. If one intends to categorise those factors, they could be considered to be of corporatist, as well as pluralist natures. Firstly, business associations are overrepresented in the consultation process. However, it is not necessarily the consequence of preferential relationships with the Commission, since it can also be because they “have a comparative advantage in terms of organizational capacity, financial resources, expertise and information” (Coen, 2007:335). Still, it has been established that there is a trust-relationship between the Commission and the consulted interest groups, and that it is important to create a good reputation. This is, however, not referred to as corporatism, but as elite pluralism. Furthermore, interest organisation deploys various strategies to get advantageous positions in the EU policy-making and one of those is to take collective action.

Another view on actor participation is put forward by Smismans (2008) who conclude that the new modes of governance in the EU are favouring participation of national administrations rather than stakeholders. Those who are participating are often experts of a more technical nature. He also finds that stakeholders are sometimes prevented from taking part, due to lack of economic resources and employees, and acknowledge that exclusion from information is a

problem. Even if the EUSBSR is not primarily about technical matters, the findings of Smismans (2008) are relevant for understanding that initiatives to increase participation is not necessarily leading to increased participation, and that stakeholders do not always have the resources needed in order to participate.

According to the approaches just presented, resources such as budget size, employees, and expertise, often matter for an actor's possibility to participate, or to have an influence, in political processes. Furthermore, there might be preferential relationships between the stakeholders and the policy-makers.

Territorial interests: Sub-national mobilisation

While the theories and research above have mainly focused on interest groups, there is a wide range of literature concerning sub-national mobilization, and which discuss the influence of sub-national authorities. Sub-national mobilization is interested the role of sub-national authorities in EU decision-making, and is part of the MLG literature³. Even if several of those authors focus on influence, while this thesis is focusing on participation, it is here suggested that this literature can be used for identifying factors that are favourable for an actor's opportunity to participate as well.

Charles Jeffrey (2000) is one of the protagonists within this field. He acknowledges that sub-national authorities (SNA) differ in various aspects, and hence have different possibilities to mobilize and to participate in influence activities. Variations do not just exist between regions in different member states, but within member states as well. Constitutional factors are the main reasons for an SNA's influential strength are. In addition to those factors, Jeffrey (200) finds that variables such as intergovernmental relations, entrepreneurship and legitimacy are important. Entrepreneurship refer to the "administrative adaptation, leadership, and coalition-building strategies [of the SNA] in response to the challenges posed by European integration" (Jeffery, 2000:14). Legitimacy, on the other hand, refers to how well anchored the SNA is among the citizens in its territory, and is often connected to regional identity, political arrangement and historical rootedness. What he mainly confirms is that there are weak and strong regions within Europe.

Bomberg & Peterson (1998) share Jeffrey's (2000) conception that SNAs have different possibilities to influence EU-decision making. They also agree, that constitutional factors

³ Sub-national mobilization is here not seen as a full theory of MLG, since the focus is exclusively on sub-national authorities, and not on other actors which are a part of MLG as the concept is applied in this thesis.

matters, but further add that there are other factors that matter as well. Other factors that increase an SNA's opportunity to influence are joining coalitions, having representation in Brussels, and cooperating with EU institutions or national governments. Bomberg & Peterson (1998) acknowledge that there are both formal and informal channels of influence. Informal channels include representation office in Brussels, networks, and coalition building.

That representation in Brussels is an important part of sub-national mobilization has been pointed out by several authors (Liesbet Hooghe & Marks, 1996; Marks, Haesly, & Mbaye, 2002; Moore, 2008). The phenomena of representation could therefore be seen as an indication that access to information and channels of influence seem to be of importance.

Thus, sub-national mobilization points out that some SNA's are better equipped for participation than others. Moreover, the phenomenon of sub-national mobilization as such reflects that information, and channels influence, is regarded as beneficial by the SNA's. The strategies deployed include establishing representation offices, as well as building coalitions.

Affectedness

Affectedness cannot be categorised in the same way as the theories presented previously. There are several theories which explain citizen's political participation (Esaiasson & Westholm, 2006). However, the actors participating in MLG arrangements are mainly institutions or organisations and not citizens. Arguably, a citizen and an institution are too different to be equally compared. A clear strand of literature that assesses actors' affectedness has not been found. However, traces can be found within literature on actor participation and MLG (Sørensen, 2002), as well as within literature concerning transnational democracy (Karlsson Schaffer, 2012). While the literature presented earlier is focusing on the actual participation, affectedness is more connected to the mobilization phase. It is more or less irrelevant whether or not an actor actually participates; it is more about if the actor has the intention to participate, and what the choice to mobilize or not to mobilize depends on.

Piattoni (2010), who has written an extensive volume on MLG, conclude that an actor's "failure to mobilize may indicate [...] lack of interest, capacity, or belief in opportunity to do so" (Piattoni, 2010:92). The lack of capacity clearly relates to the pluralist assumption of actors participation opportunities. However, the lack of interest and belief in opportunity to mobilize is connected to an actor's affectedness. Whether or not an actor is interested in participating, might be the result of a well-founded decision. However, it might also be the

case that how the issue is framed has had an effect of whether or not an actor perceives it as being affected.

Whether an actor believes it has the opportunity is even more clearly connected to affectedness. An actor who actually has the opportunity to participate might be excluded due to its own perceptions. Piattoni's (2010) empirical research further demonstrates that an actor's decision to mobilize is determined by whether there is a "match or mis-match between the level at which they *believed it was appropriate* for them to get mobilized and the level at which the issue was addressed" (Piattoni, 2010:178). Hence, an actor needs to believe that it is competent enough and has the resources needed, to get mobilized. Therefore, it could be assumed that an actor's choice to participate in the EUSBSR is based on its own subjective judgement that it is appropriate and possible for it to do so. As a consequence, actors tend to legitimate their participation by referring to that their level is adequate for solving the problem (Piattoni, 2010:181). Piattoni (2012) give as an example, the fact that in environmental issue, non-governmental organisations frequently participate since they 'feel' that they have the adequate competences and knowledge (Piattoni, 2010:178).

Returning to why affectedness matters for legitimacy, it can be said to do so since these conceptions of why an actor perceive it as appropriate or feasible to participate "sometimes prevents them from mobilizing at levels at which they could in fact make fundamental contributions" (Piattoni, 2010:181).

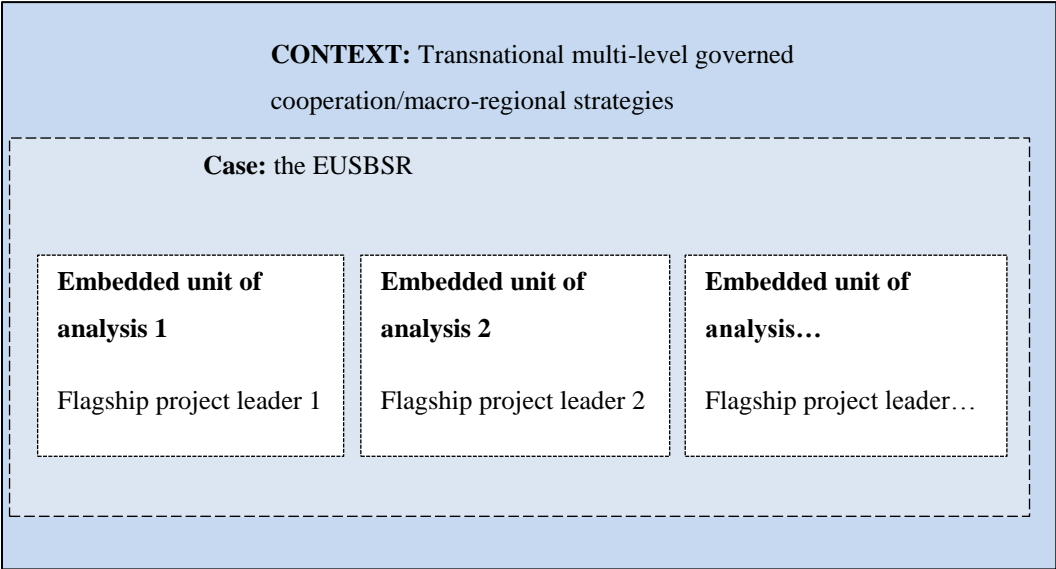
Due to the geographical and political scope of the EUSBSR, there are a great number of actors that could be regarded as affected, but all those actors will not participate. What is crucial, from a legitimacy perspective, is that participation is not restricted just because potential actors do not perceive themselves as legitimate actors, or as affected by the EUSBSR.

The question that follows is what an actor, in the case of the EUSBSR, should be affected of. It could be Baltic Sea region cooperation, or the issues addressed by the EUSBSR. In this thesis, it is argued that both factors are relevant.

3. Method

This thesis follows an embedded single case study design (Yin, 2009:50). The EUSBSR serves as a case for multi-level governance (MLG) arrangements, and can be seen as a unique case in the sense that it was the first macro-regional strategy, and has quite unique governance structures (Yin, 2009:47). The case study is particularly useful for studying contemporary events that are dependent on the context in which they take place, and it is therefore well suited for this thesis (Yin, 2009:18). The embedded units of analysis are the leaders of the flagship projects listed in the Action Plan. Figure 1 is used in order to illustrate the logic of the embedded case study design.

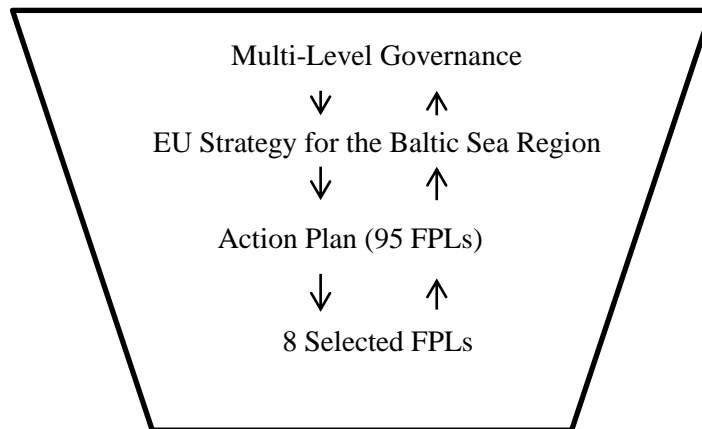
Figure 1: Embedded single case study



Based on model by Yin (2009:46)

The research includes empirical analyses at two levels. First, an analysis of the general features of the leaders of the flagship projects leaders (FPL) is made. It then moves on by analysing eight of the FPLs more thoroughly, in order to get a more detailed understanding of which factors that seem to be favourable for an actor’s participation opportunities. The findings from the analysis of the eight FPLs will be put in relation to all FPLs. The generalizability of case studies is sometimes questioned, but as Yin (2009:15) explains, case studies are generalizable to theories. The results here should be seen as generalizable for participation in the EUSBSR and macro regional strategies, and as theoretically generalizable for to multi-level governance. Figure 2 provides an illustration of this thesis’ research design.

Figure 2: Research design



Analytical strategy

The overall analytical strategy is to ask specific questions to the case and to the embedded units of analysis, i.e. the FPLs, in order to enable answering the research. The empirical analysis builds on mapping of main features selected by following theoretical propositions in the MLG literature (Yin, 2009:130). Knowing the type of actor is relevant for the proposition that there is a multitude of actors. Nationality is also seen as relevant, since the EUSBSR is a transnational MLG arrangement.

For the detailed analysis, an analytical framework has been constructed out from theoretical propositions in the literature on participation opportunities. The analytical framework is applied to a sample of eight FPLs.

3.1 Collection of the data

According to Yin (2009:69-70), the case study should be made by asking questions to the case, as a way to find evidence for answering the research question. This resembles the questions asked by an interviewer to its interviewees. In this thesis, all FPLs in the Action Plans had been asked questions concerning nationality and actor type.

In the detailed part of the empirical analysis, data, or evidence, has been collected by asking eight of the FPLs questions based on the categories in the analytical framework. The set of questions form a protocol (see appendix 1), similar to an interviewer's interview guide (Yin, 2009:86-87). Yin (2009, 118-119) suggests, that the evidence in case studies is organised in case reports, as a way to create a case study database. The data, or evidence, collected here is therefore assembled in separate research reports for each FPL. The reports are available from

the author on demand. The data has been sorted in tables, according to the preselected categories, and the data is linked to the theoretical proposition through pattern matching (Yin, 2009:34, 139-141).

The empirical material

The FPLs analysed belong to the flagship projects listed in the January 2012 version of the EUSBSR Action Plan (European Commission, 2012b). In many cases, the FPL of the flagship project is not specified, and nationality is the only information given. The contact list available at the EUSBSR webpage has been consulted in order to gain more precise information. According to EUSBSR contact persons, those are the only documents available. As additional compliments, web pages concerning the flagship projects and FPLs, and the Commission's progress report, were also consulted.⁴ For flagship projects where uncertainties concerning leadership still remained, the flagship project was excluded. In total 95 FPLs were identified and included in the analysis. Webpages has been the main source for determining type of actor.

For the detailed analysis of eight FPLs, a greater variety of documents is used, and which mainly consist of information available at the FPLs' webpages such as presentations, annual reports, organisation statistics, and operational plans, but also of information request by e-mail⁵. The empirical material used in this thesis does therefore include both qualitative and quantitative data.

Reflections on the data

The empirical material consists of data collected from various kinds of documents. One advantage of using documents as sources is that it is an unobtrusive method for data collection. A lot of attention has been given to eight selected units of analysis, and since evidences and issues have emerged during the investigation, relying on documents has made it possible to go back and ask further questions (Yin, 2009: 102).

The empirical material, and the method used for collecting data, set some limitations for the scope of this research. Interviews was considered, but not found suitable since it was prioritised to get a wider view on the issue. It was also preferred to analyse the actors as a

⁴ See "Empirical material" under "References and empirical material" for information concerning main documents for identifying FPLs.

⁵ See "Empirical material" under "References and empirical material".

whole, rather than basing it on the perspective of one interviewee from each FPL, which would have been the only feasible number given the time limits of the study. Furthermore, it would have been more difficult to go back to the material.

To a large extent, it is the nature of the research subject, i.e. participants in MLG arrangements, that primarily sets limitations for the analysis. The sample will not be a homogenous sample since the units of analysis, i.e. the FPLs, differ from each other in many aspects, such as type of actor and nationality. This is also reflected in the type of material available, and has created a need for flexibility during data collection and analysis. For some of the actors more data could be collected than for others, and there are certain language limitations. In order to minimise the risk that the availability of data influence the result, the depth of analysis is placed on a level where sufficient data could be collected on all the actors.

3.2 Sample

The FPLs in the overview analysis includes all those 95 FPLs that could be identified, and should therefore not be seen as a sample for FPLs, but rather as a demarcation. However, the 95 FPLs are seen as a sample of EUSBSR participants. The reason for focusing exclusively on FPLs is that it is almost impossible to identify all actors participating in flagship projects, or other projects that can be seen to contribute to the EUSBSR. In addition, it is here assumed that a FPL's choice to participate is active and consciously made.

For the detailed analysis, a smaller sample consisting of eight FPLs has been selected. A purposive sampling is made, where the selection is primarily theory based, and guided by the core assumption in MLG theory that actors from different levels and sectors should be included (Bryman, 2008:414-415). A variety of actor types is therefore aimed at, while nationality is given secondary priority. Therefore, the sample must not necessarily be representative for the actual distribution of actors of the EUSBSR.

In order to avoid bias in the selection, and to obtain a sample which is somewhat representative for the EUSBSR as a whole, it was the intention to select two FPLs from each of the EUSBSR's four pillars, and that belonged to different priority areas. However, due to the priority given to variety of actor types, in combination with practical limitations, this could not be fully achieved.

4. Analytical framework

The analytical framework is constructed around themes derived from theory and previous research. It is used in order to guide the collection of data. Evidences are found by posing questions corresponding to each variable (see appendix 1). In this chapter, it is elaborated how these themes are operationalized as variables.

The great variety of actors clearly makes it more difficult to find variables that can be applied uniformly to all actors. However, in order to evaluate multi-level governance (MLG) arrangements, this thesis considers it as a requisite to apply an analytical framework designed to the multi-actors reality of MLG arrangements. Therefore, four broad and more general main variables have been formed: resources, position in society, access to information and channels of influence, and affectedness. In order to measure an actor's performance on each variable, different indicators have been developed. The indicators are rather flexible, and some of them are applicable only to one type of actor. The reason for designing a more flexible analytical framework is that how an actor is evaluated depends a lot on the type of actor. Does it mean the same for an environmental non-governmental organisation as for a municipality to have a strong position in society? Does the number of employees matter for an actor's opportunity to participate in the EUSBSR, if those persons are employed within maintenance work?

Employees as a resource might be more important for an interest organisation than another type of actor, since the employees work at an interest organisation might be more targeted towards influencing policy. It can therefore be more relevant to evaluate strength in resources, by how those are allocated rather than the actual financial capital. A sub-national authority (SNA) might have a high number of employees, but whether those employees work with elderly care or in representation offices in Brussels is more significant for participation in the EUSBSR, than the actual number of employees.

Furthermore, an actor's position in society can be evaluated from its domination in the area (Uhrwing 2001), but for a SNA it is also important which competences and constitutional basis it has, i.e. if it's a strong or weak region (Jeffery, 2000).

Whether or not an actor perceives itself as affected by the EUSBSR might be more difficult to say, however, it can be one of the most important factors for whether or not an actor decides to get involved in the first place. Measuring affectedness is interconnected with the

other indicators, since those are relevant for an actor’s perception of how relevant it is to get mobilised (Piattoni, 2010).

Figure 3: Analytical framework

Resources	
-financial resources	→number
-employees	→number
-representation offices	→yes/no
-expertise	→in the issue of the Priority Area
Position in society	
-competences/responsibility	→central role, power to implement
-domination	→dominance of organisation
- strength	→type of region
- members/territorial scope	→number or territorial scope
Access to information and channels of influence	
-networks in Baltic Sea Region	→yes/no, type of network
-representation office in Brussels	→yes/no
Affectedness	
-cooperation interest	→interest in Baltic Sea Region cooperation
	→interest in transnational/cross-border cooperation
-issue interest	→interest in the issue as such
	→competence connected to issue

4.1 Operationalization

The analytical framework is applied to a sample of eight actors, in order to get a better and more detailed understanding of what factors that are favourable for an actor's participation opportunities. The subsequent section will describe how the analytical framework and its indicators are operationalized.

Resources

Resources have been put forward, primarily by pluralists, as a factor increasing an actor's opportunity to participate. However, there are several kinds of resources, and they can also be measured differently. The most obvious one is financial resources, which here will be measured by the size of the budget in euros.

In the analysis by Uhrwing (2001), the number of employees is used as an indicator for resources, due to difficulties to gain access to information concerning then budget. Therefore, data concerning the number of employees for each actor has also been included in this analysis.

Nevertheless, the size of a budget or the number of employees gives no indication of how those resources are spent. An actor, especially if it is not an interest organisation, has other responsibilities not connected to political involvement or promotion of interests. For instance, an authority responsible for providing education might include teachers among its employees. It is therefore of interest to consider how the financial resources are allocated and if an actor has prioritised representation of its interest. This is why whether or not an actor is has a representation office in Brussels is included as an indicator as well.

Expertise is another resource which can be important for any organisations opportunity to participate. According to Uhrwing (2001:260), interest organisations which have expert knowledge in an issue, rather than those with more general policy ideas, have better access to political decision-making processes. Since the EUSBSR is not about one specific interest, it will here be considered whether or not an actor has a certain expertise connected to the priority area which the flagship project is a part of. It is the project, and not the leaders as such, that are selected to become flagship projects. If an FPL is an expert, it can be considered that projects with experts have a greater opportunity to be selected.

Position in society

Within all three theoretical strands; corporatism, sub national mobilisation, and pluralism, there are indications that if an actor has a strong position in society, it increases their opportunities to participate. When it comes to interest organisations, one often speaks of how dominant an organisation is. If it is a subnational authority (SNA), it is clear that some SNAs have greater possibilities to influence and access EU policy if they have a strong constitutional basis (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Jeffery, 2000). An actor's function or role in society can also be regarded as a kind of resource which from pluralist perspective would be a favourable factor (Uhrwing, 2001:24). The question here is if the dominance of an interest organisation, the constitutional basis of a SNA, or the societal function of any actor, has an effect on the actor's opportunity to participate in the EUSBSR. For all actors, it should be relevant to consider what power to implement an actor has. Moreover, many actors are nation based and it is thus relevant to consider the geographical scope of an actor and its number of members.

To operationalize the variable 'position in society' in a precise way is difficult. Regarding the indicator dominance, Uhrwing (2001), operationalize it by determining whether an actor is perceived as dominant, or the natural representative, within the area of issue by the decision-makers. Since the empirical material in this thesis is not based on interviews, such a categorisation depends on how an actor presents itself. Dominance can also be understood as being without competition (Uhrwing 2001), but this is also difficult to operationalize, and it entails ambiguities. For instance, a Danish agricultural association might be without competition nationally, but at the same time it is not the only agricultural association in the Baltic Sea region, since there agricultural association in the other EUSBSR member states as well. Therefore, it cannot easily be determined whether or not the actor is dominant.

Another aspect to take into consideration regarding an actor's position in society, is that for SNAs, it is more connected to its constitutional basis (Jeffery, 2000). Questions concerning an actor's dominance, or whether or not it is a producer organisation, are in practice irrelevant. An actor's position in society is therefore operationalized in a more general and flexible way. It is general in the sense that it is an overall discussion related to concepts such as dominance, function in society, competence, and responsibility. It is flexible in the sense that it is taken into consideration, that what kind of position in society that is particularly advantageous depends on the type of actor.

Access to information and channels of influence

Another factor that can increase an actor's opportunity to participate is access to information and channels of influence. Networks can provide both information as well as influence (Michalowitz, 2007:135). In the case of the EUSBSR, it is therefore assumed that networks within the Baltic Sea region are relevant for an actor's access to information and as a channel of influence. Hence one factor that can be assumed to be favourable for an actor's opportunity to participate in the EUSBSR is that it already participates in cooperation within the Baltic Sea region. The fact that there are no new institutions created could make this factor even more important.

Affectedness

One factor that can determine whether or not an actor will participate is if it regards it as relevant to do so. In a nation state, it is quite easy to say who has the right to vote, but when it comes to MLG arrangements, who is included and excluded is much more difficult to say. The basis for participatory ideals is that those affected are granted the right to participate. The EUSBSR has not set any limits to the issues that can be included, and almost any issue or interest could be sorted into one of the strategies four pillars. It is neither addressing any actor in particular, which can be compared to the right to vote which is commonly connected to citizenship and age. To some extent it is geographically limited to its eight member states, which has 85 million inhabitants. However, the EU institutions and the EU 27 member states are clearly involved, and the projects include actors outside the EU as well, e.g. Russia and Norway.

Therefore, it is relevant to assess if the actor is participating because it considers itself particularly affected by the EUSBR. As explained, almost any actor could theoretically be considered as being affected by the strategy. What is meant here by particularly affected is that they either have a strong interest in cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, or that they have a specific interest in the priority area as such. It could be argued that an actor which does not have any real interest in Baltic Sea Region cooperation or in the specific issue area, will not find the EUSBSR as relevant. However, given the geographical as well as political scope of the EUSBSR, there could in reality be opportunities that are not taken by an actor, if it does not perceive itself as affected. It can also be argued that an actor must find the issue to be at a relevant level (Piattoni, 2010) A distinction is therefore made between actual affectedness and perceived affectedness. What is investigated here is whether there are evidences pointing to that the actor perceive itself as affected by the EUSBSR.

The variable affectedness is therefore operationalized by identifying if the actor explicitly expresses an interest either for cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region in general, or for the issue of the priority area it is participating in.

5. Empirical analysis

The empirical analysis is made on two levels. First, a categorisation of all flagship project leaders (FPL) by actor type and nationality is made, and presented in table 1 and 2, as well as in appendix 2. The aim is to identify which actors that are participating as FPLs.

The second part of the empirical analysis is a more thorough analysis of eight FPLs. The aim is to get a more detailed understanding of what factors that seems to be favourable for an actor's opportunity to participate.

5.1 Empirical findings

Here, a summary of the results of both empirical analyses are presented and discussed on a more general level. The complete analyses can be found in appendices 2 and 3.

Categorisation of flagship project leaders

According to the literature, multi-level governance (MLG) arrangements are characterised by participation of a broad range of actors (Piattoni, 2010:84). An empirical analysis of the types of actors participating in the EUSBSR has therefore been made and the results are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Types of actors

Actor type	Number	%
National Government Agency (NGA)	27	28%
National Ministry (NMIN)	24	25%
Intergovernmental Organisation (IGO)	10	11%
Interest Organisation (IO)	8	8%
Sub-national Authority (SNA)	7	7%
National Government Research Institute (NGRI)	6	6%
Academia (ACA)	5	5%
EU institution/agency (EUA)	4	4%
Private Company (PC)	2	2%
National Government Company (NGC)	1	1%
Research Institute (RI)	1	1%

Categorisation of flagship project leaders (FPL) listed in appendix 2. Since two of the FPLs were both NGA and NGRI, one is counted as a NGA and the other one as a NGRI. There is a total of 95 FPLs, but only 79 flagship projects (FP). This is because some of the FPs have more than one FPL.

The results presented in table 1 give evidence that the MLG aspirations of the EUSBSR do not correspond to the empirical data. A majority of the FPLs are either National Government Agencies (NGA) or National Ministries (NMIN). Moreover, these two actor types are part of the same organisation, since a NGA is the operational part of a NMIN. Hence, the two actor types can be combined, and when that is done, they stand for 53 % of the FPLs. If putting all national governmental actors (NGA, NMIN, NGRI, and NGC) together, they make up 59 % of the FPL's. National governmental actors are also represented in Intergovernmental Organisations (IGO), which can be seen as a transnational governmental actor. It can therefore be concluded that the EUSBSR does not seem to be as participatory as had been expected. Rather, it seems to confirm the participatory myth proposed by Smismans (2008), who found evidence that national administrations still are predominant in new types of governance. Stocchiero (2010:5) claimed that “central governments are the nodes of the macro-regional system” and that “the macro-regional strategy lays in the political wills of the central governments”(Stocchiero, 2010:5). Apparently, this seems to be reflected in participation among FPLs as well. Hence, this is in some aspects connected to its position in society, or rather position in the EUSBSR, which will be further discussed in chapter 5.2.

Flagship project leaderships by nationality

Since the EUSBSR is a transnational cooperation, it could be expected that there is a certain representativeness regarding nationality. Criticism have been put forward in the initial phase of the EUSBSR that some member states are more involved as coordinators than others (Bengtsson, 2009:7). Furthermore, since the EUSBSR is supposed to make use of existing cooperation in the Baltic Sea region instead of creating new institutions, it could be expected that actors who are not nation based participate as well. A categorisation of the FPLs nationality has therefore been made and the results are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Flagship project leaders by nationality

Nationality	Flagship project leaders	%
Sweden	21	22%
Germany	15	16%
Finland	13	14%
Transnational	12	13%
Denmark	10	11%
Lithuania	9	9%
Poland	8	8%
EU	4	4%
Latvia	2	2%
Estonia	1	1%

The categories transnational and EU has been added, since not all actors belong to a member state.

The results show that even if actors from all EUSBSR member states, including transnational and EU actors, are participating as FPLs, the distribution is uneven. For instance, there is a clear overrepresentation of Swedish actors. It might not be as surprising that Estonia has the least number of FPLs, given that it is the smallest country within the EU Baltic Sea region and stand for only 1,5 % of the total population. However, Sweden's population only makes up for 11 % of the total population in the EU Baltic Sea region, but it has 22% of the flagship project leaderships⁶. According to Greer et al. (2008), post-communist states are underrepresented in interest representation in the EU, due to lack of resources. This seems to be the case for participation in the EUSBSR as well, where the bottoms four member states in table 2, are the post-communist states in the EUSBSR. The effect of resources will be further analysed in chapter 5.2.

Another comparison that can be made is between national and transnational actors. It seems as 83% of the actors belongs to a member state, and that can question to what extent the strategy use existing cooperation in the region for its implementation.

⁶ Approximated calculation based on a Baltics Sea region population of 85 million (European Commission, 2011) an Estonian population of 1,3 million, and a Swedish populations of 9,5 million (Eurostat 2012).

Results of detailed analysis

After analysing 95 FPLs, i.e. all those FPLs that could be identified in the EUSBSR's Action Plan, a more thorough analysis is made of eight of those FPLs. The analytical framework from chapter 4 (figure 3), has been applied in order to get a more detailed understanding of what factors that seems to be favourable for an actor's participation opportunities. A presentation of the eight FPLs is found in table 3. The results of the analysis are found in appendix 3, while a summary of the findings is presented in table 4.

Table 3: Presentation of the selected flagship project leaders

Actor	Type and Nationality	Flagship project	Additional information
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Estonia	National Ministry, Estonia	6.3. Increase the use of electronic signatures/e-identification	
VINNOVA	National Government Agency, Sweden	7.1. BSR Stars. Develop a Baltic Sea Region Programme for Innovation, Clusters and SME-Networks	Sweden's governmental agency for innovation systems
Admiral Danish Fleet Head Quarters	National Government Agency, Denmark	14.2. Map existing marine pollution response capacities and make sub-regional plans for cross-border response cooperation.	Under the Danish Ministry of Defence
HELCOM, the Helsinki Commission	Intergovernmental cooperation, Transnational	3.4. Development of HELCOM Core Set Indicators	Baltic marine environment protection Commission.
Region Blekinge	Sub-national Authority, Sweden	4.5. Improve the waste handling on board and in ports	Regional council in south-east Sweden
University of Greifswald	Academia, Germany (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)	12.10. Develop strategies for sustainable tourism	Full name: Ernst Moritz Arndt University of Greifswald.
Agrifood Research Finland, MTT	National Government Research Institute, Finland	9.8. Establish a Forum for Inventive and Sustainable Manure Processing	Finnish acronym: MTT
Hanseatic Parliament	Interest Organisation. Transnational.	12.2. BSR-Quick. (Education and qualification for SME's)	Association, registered in Germany as Hanse-Parliament e.V.

Flagship projects in Action Plan 2012 version (European Commission, 2009). For further information, see appendix 3.

The main purpose of table 3 is to provide the reader with basic information concerning the eight selected FPLs that are soon to be discussed. As can be seen, the selected FPLs represent a quite wide range of actors. Even the two NGA's are quite different from each other, since the Admiral Danish Fleet, as part of the Danish defence, has more practical tasks, while VINNOVA's tasks are much more related to development.

However, the main interest regarding these FPLs concerns information related to the four main factors. In table 4, the eight FPLs are compared on the same factors, following the analytical framework (figure 3).

Table 4: Summary of results from detailed analysis

	Resources	Position in society	Access to channels of influence and information	Affectedness
Ministry of Communications and Economic Affairs Estonia	Medium (S, e)	Strong	Medium	Yes. Issue
VINNOVA	Strong (S, R, E)	Strong	Medium	Yes. Issue
Admiral Danish Fleet HQ	Medium (S, e)	Strong	Low	Yes. Issue
HELCOM	Medium (E)	Strong	High	Yes. Issue and region.
Region Blekinge	Medium (R, e)	Neutral	High	Yes. Region and issue.
University of Greifswald	Medium (S, E)	Neutral	Unclear, but seems to be low.	Yes. Issue and region.
Agrifood Research Finland (MTT)	Strong (S, E)	Strong	Unclear, but seems to be low.	Yes. Issue and region.
Hanseatic Parliament	Less (e)	Neutral (not clear)	Medium	Yes. Region and issue

Overview of analytical results in appendix 3. Resources is labelled strong (scores on 2-3 points), medium (scores on 2-1 points), less (scores on 0-1 points), the categories overlaps in order to allow for more flexible categorisations, since it is not possible to maintain strict borders. The letter within the parentheses are the type of resource (Staff, Representation, Expertise and experience). Position in society is strong (central society function or role, dominate within its field), medium (does not seem to have an exceptional position), weak (marginalised role). Access to information is dependent on two indicators, and is categorised as high (2 channels), medium (1 channel) or low (no access). Affectedness is the most difficult to categorise, and therefore it only indicates whether there is any affectedness, and in which aspect. If it is affectedness by both issue and region, the one that is perceived as strongest is written first. See appendix 3 for the full analysis

The table above includes both quantitative and qualitative data from each of the eight FPLs. The scorings are based on the analytical results in appendix 3, in the next section each factors is discussed more in detail.

The only variable where the results are the same for all actors is affectedness by the issue. Most of the actors have some resources, even if it is only one or two. During the analysis, it became apparent that some of the actors had a significant knowledge in the area of issue from experience (e), rather than formal expertise (E). Therefore, it is clear that experience relevant for the issue seem to be a favourable factor as well. Besides those findings, here seem to be no typical participant when all factors and actors are taken together. Some scores high on many variables, e.g. VINNOVA, while some are strong on only one of them, e.g. the

Hanseatic Parliament. Interpreting these results requires that the analytical results in appendix 3 are discussed more in detail.

5.2 Analysis of empirical findings

Resources

According to previous research, resources are favourable for an actor's opportunity to participate. The analysis was made by collecting data on of different kinds of resources. Due to insufficient and poor availability of data, it was decided not to include financial resources as an indicator. The analysis shows that experience, in addition to expertise, seems to matter.

Moving on to the number of employees, there seems to be no evidence that a high number of employees favours an actor's opportunity to participate. The number of employees ranges from 8 at the Hanseatic Parliament to 5 846 at the University of Greifswald (see appendix 3). However, it was noticed that this data includes different kinds of employees. Uhrwing (2001) point out that the effect of the number of employees can depend on how many who are working with a specific issue. Even if the data included in this analyse does not allow for any thorough analysis regarding this possibility, some things can be said. The University of Greifswald, as a larger organisation both in terms of size and field of activity, has a greater variety of employees, in comparison to the Hanseatic Parliament that has a much more narrow focus. The indicator 'Representation in Brussels', that was applied in order to grasp how resources were allocated, did, however, not show any clear tendencies that it would matter.

The discussion concerning employees is to some extent related to the next resource, namely expertise. This factor is put forward by Coen (2007), Uhrwing (2001) as well as Smismans (2008), and it is commonly denoted that EU officials' are in need of external expertise (Coen, 2007). In the case if the EUSBSR, it is quite difficult to precise what kind of expertise that can be regarded as a resource since the EUSBSR is not about one single issue. Initially, the focus of the analysis was on formal expertise relevant for the priority area issue. During the analysis, it became apparent that while only some of the actors could be called experts; all actors seemed to have significant experience regarding the issue. Smismans (2008) put most emphasis on technical expertise, while Uhrwing (2001) admit that detailed knowledge of a less technical nature matter as well. Considering the findings here, there seems to be reasons to further reflect up on who is an expert, and what expertise is. In a narrow understanding of expertise, the empirical findings (see table 4 and appendix 3) show that there are both experts and non-experts participating. However, if one broadens the definition and also considers

whether there might be some degree of expertise, or significant experience, all evidence point to that it could be a favourable factor.

Another thing that should be taken into consideration is that being a flagship leader entails certain obligations concerning administration, communication, and cooperation (Interact 2012b). This could be a role which also requires project management skills, and in such case, expertise or experience of project management might be a significant resource as well. Coen (2007) points out organisational capacity as one factor that increases an actor's opportunities to participate, and it is not unlikely that this factor would matter for the EUSBSR as well.

In conclusion, the initial analysis did not give any strong indications that resources would be significant for an actor's opportunity to participate, either as number of employees, representation, or expertise. However, an extended definition of expertise which includes experience, give evidence that this seems to be a favourable factor. If this is the case, the effect of the implementation of the EUSBSR could be that those already experienced become even more experienced, since they are given more opportunities to cooperate with others on the matter, as well as to gain access to funding if that is allocated for macro-regional strategies. In order to fully understand the significance of expertise, it is necessary to critically reflect on the concept of expertise when discussing participation opportunities.

Position in society

As has been described earlier, position in society is a broad theme under which it is analysed what position the actors have and in what respect this affect an actor's opportunity to participate. The aim is to determine whether the actor has a particularly strong position. Since the factor is constructed out of various theoretical perspectives, the analysis is conducted in a more flexible way. In table 4, it can be seen which actors that seem to have a particular strong position in society, but it is not given in which way this position is favourable. By going further into the empirical findings, it could be seen that the conclusions in chapter 5.1 were correct, and that national governmental actors possess a certain position.

From a first glance at the results presented in table 4, it can be seen that there are at least five actors that seem to have a strong position in society. However, this is not because they are producer organisations, which is emphasised within corporatism (Coen 2007, Uhrwing 2001).

What give these five actors a certain position in society is that they are national governmental actors. Even if, multi-level governance (MLG) implies a diffusion of power from the member

states to other levels and sectors (Lisbet Hooghe & Marks, 2011:17), it seems as the central position enjoyed by the national governmental actors still remains. Within corporatism, it is assumed that an actor gain a privileged position since it is needed or can be used for policy implementation (Uhrwing 2001). As national governmental actors, may it be ministries or agencies, undeniably have competences crucial for policy implementation, they automatically gain a strong position in society. Furthermore, Stocchiero (2010) claim that central governments have key positions within the EUSBSR.

Since 59% of the FPLs are national governmental actors (see table 1), it can be concluded that being a national governmental actor *per se* seem to be a favourable position. This finding is therefore less connected to theories of actors' participation opportunities, presented in chapter 2.2, and it is rather a question related to the MLG literature.

Still, there are non-national governmental actors participating as well, and some observations can be made concerning these actors. For instance, both Jeffery (2000) and Bomberg & Peterson (1998) claim that sub-national authorities (SNA) can hold a strong position in society by their constitutional basis. However, the SNA analysed in detail, Region Blekinge, would not be regarded as a particularly strong SNA by their constitutional basis. This confirms what Jeffery (2000) and Bomberg & Peterson (1998) also concludes; there seem to be other factors that also can be favourable for an SNA's opportunity to participate.

Dominance is another concept that is mentioned in connection to position in society, especially by Uhrwing (2001). There were two actors that could be regarded as dominant within their issue areas, and that is HELCOM and Agrifood Research Finland (see appendix 2.3). HELCOM seem to be perceived as a dominant actor, and Agrifood Research Finland claims to be a leading organisation. This could therefore be a factor to take into consideration. HELCOM might even be said to have been granted a special place in the EUSBSR, since its importance is mentioned in the Communications as well as in the Action Plan (European Commission 2009, 2012a, 2012b).

Concerning geographical coverage, the findings do not present a uniformed picture. Two of the organisations which are not national governmental actors cover the whole Baltic Sea region, namely HELCOM and the Hanseatic Parliament, and this might have given them some strength. Yet, Region Blekinge and the University of Greifswald cover quite small geographic territories.

When discussing position in society, it is also relevant to take a look at the role of producer organisations. Coen (2007) is one of those finding indications that business organisations enjoy an advantageous role in policy-making. The Hanseatic Parliament is the only interest organisation analysed here and does in fact represent private interests. The analysis presented in table 1 does not give any information regarding what type of interests the other interest organisations represent, and it is therefore not possible to say whether the Hanseatic Parliament represents the exception or the rule. However, only two private companies are FPLs, which at least can confirm that being a producer *per se* is not an advantage.

To sum up, the conclusions that can be made concerning an actor's position in society is that as the detailed analysis (table 4) reveals, it is not necessary to have a particularly strong position for having the opportunity to participate, and that it is enough to have a neutral position. However, since those who have a strong position in society all represents national governmental actors, and given that 59% of the flagship leaders are national governmental actors, it seems that having a formal position in society, i.e. being a national governmental actors, is a strongly favourable factor. It challenges the participatory ideal of MLG as such, and seem to further confirm the view of Smismans (2008). This is also the best clue to what a strong position in society means in the context of the EUSBSR, since there was no clear-cut answer to what a strong position might be among the non-national governmental actors.

Access to information and channels of influence

According to the findings in table 4, it does not seem that access to information and influence channels would be favourable for an actor's opportunity to participate, since the degree of access ranges from high to low. However, the more detailed presentation of analytical findings in appendix 3, give indications that there are reasons to be cautious when drawing conclusions, and that table 4 excludes some important aspects. This is further discussed and elaborated on in the subsequent section.

Starting with participation and membership in Baltic Sea Region network or forums for cooperation, the data available was at some points unclear, and it is important to take into consideration whether or not cooperation was established already before the EUSBSR. Admittedly, it is easier to confirm than to reject participation in networks. Among the actors, Region Blekinge is the actor who seems to be the most active participant in Baltic Sea region cooperation. About half of the eight FPLs mention some sort of cooperation in the Baltic Sea

region. The others were less specific and referred to EU cooperation in general. Therefore, it cannot be confirmed that participating in Baltic Sea region cooperation would be favourable. Nevertheless, even if networks according to Bomberg & Peterson (1998) are informal channels of influence, those included in the analysis are formal in the way that they are officially established. It cannot be excluded that even more informal forms of cooperation exist.

When it comes to representation in Brussels, this is a far less abstract indicator than Baltic Sea region cooperation, even if Bomberg & Peterson (1998) see it as an informal channel of influence as well. No strong evidence could be found, that representation in Brussels would matter, as only three out of the eight actors seem to have representation there. However, it is important to keep in mind, that the national governments are represented by their permanent representations. Given the dominance of these actor types among the FPLs in the EUSBSR (see table 1), representation in Brussels could have an effect. Both Moore (2008) and Marks et al., (2010) admits that there are different objectives for having a representation office in Brussels. This might be a factor worth looking further into, in order to see whether it has different importance for different types of actors.

Even if there seem to be no clear evidence that high access to information and channels of influence would be favourable when the eight FPLs are taken together, there are three specific FLPs that are worth more discussion.

The first is Region Blekinge, which is the actor who seems to have highest access to information and channels of influence by its participation in several Baltic Sea region networks, as well as by representation in Brussels. Since both coalition building and representation in Brussels are particularly connected to participation opportunities of SNAs (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998), this might indicate that access to information and channels of influence is particularly important for SNAs. Within sub-national mobilisation literature, it has been discussed what significance representation offices have in practice (Jeffery, 2000; Moore, 2008). Both Jeffery (2000) and Moore (2008), conclude that the effectiveness of a representation office is dependent on the characteristics of the SNA. It would therefore be valuable to make a more thorough investigation of the other SNAs participating in the EUSBSR, in order to see if there are any common features among these SNAs.

The second FPL of particular interest is the Hanseatic Parliament. Building coalitions is often mentioned as favourable for an actor's opportunity to participate. Since the Hanseatic

Parliament is an association of 45 members, and has as its objective to promote small and medium sized companies in the region (see appendix 3), it is *per se* a strategic coalition. Thus, it is first and foremost a channel of influence for its members.

Lastly, another FPL which stands out is HELCOM. In resemblance with the Hanseatic Parliament, the organisation as such is a Baltic Sea region cooperation. What is interesting about HELCOM is that it rather is an actor who others seek to influence, than an actor seeking influence. Its cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, involves cooperating with relevant stakeholders within the region (see appendix 3). Thus, for HELCOM, access to information can rather be seen as a resource for the organisation's work, than as a factor relevant for its opportunities to participate (Smismans, 2008)

In sum, there are no clear indication concerning the significance of having access to information and channels of influence. It could be valuable to go deeper into the question of who is to be influenced, and what kind of information that is made available. The National Contact Points (NCP), which are appointed by the member states, have responsibilities concerning communicating the EUSBSR. How this task is executed by the NCP, might further explain the overrepresentation of some nationalities among the FPLs (see table 2). Whether recent efforts to improve the communication of the EUSBSR, made at a macro-regional level, will affect these asymmetries is therefore interesting to analyse.

Affectedness

The final point of discussion concerns affectedness. The purpose is to investigate whether there are any evidences, that the actor could perceive itself as particularly affected by the EUSBSR. It could either be affected by the EUSBSR's geographical scope, or by the issues of the priority area. To assess an actor's affectedness is a complex task. Nevertheless, it is important to discuss affectedness, since it is not just a favourable factor. It can in fact be a basic condition for an actor's initiative to participate at all. The detailed analysis shows that affectedness seems to have had that effect.

As can be understood from previous research, it is much up to the actor itself to decide whether or not it is affected (Karlsson Schaffer, 2012; Sørensen, 2002). Theoretically, all actors in the Baltic Sea region could be considered geographically affected by the EUSBSR. Given that the EUSBSR's main objectives covers a very broad range of issues, and that the Action Plan is a document that can be revised according to the needs, it can be assumed that almost any actor could be seen as affected by the EUSBSR's issues.

The results presented in table 4, are unambiguous; all actors were found to be particularly affected by the EUSBSR. All of them had a special interest in the issue of the priority area, and some of them also seemed to have a clear interest for cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.

As the analysis in appendix 3 show, there is a clear connection between the issue of the priority area and the interest of the FPL. One example is the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications who has among its priorities to achieve “a single market with as small differences as possible [and] support as extensively as possible harmonization of indirect taxes and abolition of exceptions as well as productive cross border cooperation” (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication Estonia, no date, b)⁷, and who is participating in the priority area which concerns “to remove hindrances to the internal market in the Baltic Sea region including to improve cooperation in the customs area” (European Commission, 2012b). Among those who has the strongest affectedness by the issue one finds HELCOM, where the priority are concern “to reduce the use and impact of hazardous substances” (European Commission, 2012b), which is one of the organisations priorities. VINNOVA, as the Swedish Innovation agency dealing with developing innovation systems, does arguably have a clear interest in the issue of its priority area which is “to exploit the full potential of the region in research and innovation” (European Commission, 2012b).

The stated priorities of an actor can have been made in accordance with its current activities. For instance, an actor might not have had an explicit interest for the issue when entering the flagship project, and that it has become a priority only after investing time, resources, and seeing results. There are however evidence (see appendix 3) of longer commitments. HELCOM, for instance, was giving priority to the issue already before, and it is unlikely that the main objective of an organisation like VINNOVA, Agrifood Research Finland or the Hanseatic Parliament would have been completely changed just by becoming a FPL.

An actor’s interest in an issue is, in many respects, interconnected with an actor’s competence concerning the issue. According to Piattoni (2010), an actor’s competence is relevant for its judgement of whether it is appropriate to participate or not. In this manner, the Admiral Danish Fleet who is “responsible for military security and safety at sea, including pollution combating at sea” (Admiral Danish Fleet, no date, a)⁸, is affected by the issue “to reinforce protection from major emergencies at sea and on land” (European Commission, 2012b).

⁷ See “Empirical material”, under “References and empirical material”.

⁸ See “Empirical material”, under “References and empirical material”.

Another example is the University of Greifswald, who might not seem to have a strong interest in achieving the aim of the priority area, “to maintain and reinforce attractiveness of the Baltic Sea region in particular through tourism” (European Commission, 2012b), but the issue is, however, within the working field of the institution for geology and geography, which has tourism as one of its specific focuses.

As explained earlier, an actor can also be affected by the EUSBSR, by having an explicit interest for Baltic Sea region cooperation, and as can be seen in table 4, there are fewer FPLs who correspond to that. Region Blekinge is one of the actors who most clearly express an interest for Baltic Sea region cooperation, and it also express the strongest interest for the EUSBSR as such, by having formulated its own action plan for its work with the EUSBSR (see appendix 3). The University of Greifswald is a less clear cut case and its interest for Baltic Sea cooperation takes the form of research projects and partnership agreements. It seems to have a greater interest for studying the Baltic Sea region than to cooperate within it (see appendix 3). In contrast to this, HELCOM and the Hanseatic Parliament are two actors who can be seen to have Baltic cooperation as their main objective. The purpose of those organisations is to strengthen and foster cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, within their respective areas of activity. There are all reasons to assume, that those actors perceive themselves as affected by the EUSBSR as a Baltic Sea region cooperation project.

Concerning those who did not express an interest for cooperation in the Baltic Sea region in specific, it can be added that those actors still seem to have an interest for transnational and/or EU cooperation. It could therefore further be analysed, if this is something which is common to a majority of the participants. There might be actors who are affected by the issues, but who have had more national focuses. Thus, they do not find transnational cooperation appropriate, which prevents them from considering transnational projects such as the EUSBSR as opportunities.

During the analysis of the actors’ affectedness, two unexpected findings were also made. The first discovery was that two of the eight FPLs, the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication and VINNOVA, are in fact the Priority Area Coordinators (PAC), for the very same priority areas that they are participating in. As PACs, these two FPLs have central roles in the selection of FPLs, and they also have a strong interest in the successful implementation of the priority area and of the EUSBSR in general. Furthermore, by being formal parts of the EUSBSR governance structure and common participants in EUSBSR

meetings, they most probably have high access to information on the EUSBSR. Thus, in their competences as PACs, those FPLs have strong positions, a high degree of access to information and channels of influence, and a high level of affectedness by the EUSBSR, even if those aspects were not included when analysed as FPLs.

The second unexpected finding was made when looking for why VINNOVA has an interest to participate in the EUSBSR. VINNOVA states that it has been given the task to lead the flagship project BSR-Stars, which is the flagship project that it is currently leading (see appendix 3). Accordingly, VINNOVA's affectedness seems to be secondary to the affectedness of the Swedish government. Even if the national government is on a higher level deciding the work tasks of its national governmental agencies, it is interesting that VINNOVA is referring its participation in the flagship project to the government mission as explicitly. In that sense, the flagship project does not seem as a project which the civil servants at VINNOVA has found to be of interest to participate in.

To sum up, evidence could be found that the actor's analysed are particularly affected by the EUSBSR, and mainly on the basis of the issue of the priority area. Some of the actors also, and in some instances to a higher degree, perceived themselves as affected in regards to the geographical scope of the EUSBSR. However, several of the actors who did not express any specific interest for Baltic Sea region cooperation, still had an explicit interest for international cooperation. These findings are of high importance, since one must ask what happens to an actor who does not perceived itself as affected by the issues prioritised or by Baltic Sea region cooperation. As (Piattoni, 2010) argue, it is a risk that actors who are in fact affected by a policy, are excluded because they do not perceive themselves as being affected. This is of course a hypothetical scenario, but given that the analysis shows that all actors have a perceived affectedness of the EUSBSR, which may be related to a specific issue or to Baltic Sea region cooperation, there are evidences that perceived affectedness, by a potential actor, can be crucial for its opportunity to participate. More attention should be given to the aspect that whether or not an actor perceives itself as affected depends on definitions made by others. Excluding potential actors can affect the implementation of the EUSBSR, it can restrain actors from developing in area where they are currently underdeveloped, and it might in a longer perspective exclude them from gaining access to funding.

6. Conclusions

This thesis asked what factors that seem to be favourable for an actor's opportunity to participate in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Based on the results of the empirical analysis, it can be concluded that experience, in addition to expertise, is a resource that seems to be favourable. However, being a national governmental actor seems to matter even more, as this gives a certain favourable position in society. Ultimately, whether or not an actor will participate at all, seems to depend on whether it perceives itself as affected by the issue or not.

In accordance with the aim of the thesis, these conclusions should be discussed from a legitimacy perspective, focusing on the principle of equal opportunities to participate.

It can be concluded that many of the factors found to be favourable in previous research, seemed to matter less in the case studied here. However, one factor could be added and that is experience, which extends the concept of expertise. For more general policy initiatives such as the EUSBSR, it seems relevant to consider what kind of expertise that is a resource. Expertise concerning project management could be just as important as expertise within the field. Hence, the definition of expertise used in previous research by for instance Smismans (2008), and in some respects also by Uhrwing (2001), needs to be further elaborated and more nuanced.

The problem is that if actors with experience have better opportunities to participate, it can impede those lacking experience from learning by participating. It can thus create an elite situation, where those already experienced become even more experienced. This is clearly problematic from a normative legitimacy perspective, but it can also be negative for achieving the objectives of the EUSBSR, since it should be of value to involve actors who are less developed in a particular issue area, in order for them to learn and improve.

The point of departure of this thesis was that the EUSBSR is a multi-level governance (MLG) arrangement, but the findings however give a contradictory picture. Even if there are a great variety of actors participating, the overrepresentation of national governmental actors is obvious. MLG has been discussed for many years, but it seems as it has not yet moved from theory to reality. It would be valuable to study how multi-level structured the flagship projects are in themselves, in order to conclude to what extent, or whether, the findings are connected to the leadership function as such.

Since being a national governmental actor, is a factor which not all actors possess or can obtain, it is a legitimacy problem. Given the inequalities regarding national distribution, it can also be asked to what extent the national commitment, organisation, and coordination of the EUSBSR affect how well it is communicated. It is problematic if the EUSBSR is less legitimate in some member states than in others. This is similar to the inequalities discovered by Bengtsson (2009) as well as Greer et al. (2008), even if it is here not a question of resources.

Regarding non-national governmental actors, it cannot be confirmed, nor excluded, that they have equal opportunities to participate. For some factors, the actors' characteristics corresponded quite well to the pattern predicted by theories connected to their specific actor type. Examples of this concern the Hanseatic Parliament's position in society, as well as Region Blekinge's access to information and channels of influence. This research was designed to apply the same analytical framework to all actors, but admittedly, it can be the case that different factors matter for different actors. This inherent problem of comparison makes it hard to evaluate, and to ensure, legitimacy of MLG arrangements. This point of criticism is crucial if legitimacy is to be regarded as not just a question of output or input, but of democracy as Piattoni (2010), as well as the author of this thesis, propose.

Finally, the greatest challenge for legitimacy of the EUSBSR, and other MLG arrangements, could be the issue of affectedness. Within the literature, the concept of affectedness is used in a rather incautious manner. As for instance Sørensen (2002) uses the concept, it seems logical that those who perceive themselves as affected are included, while those who do not are excluded. However, this way of reasoning fails to take into consideration that whether or not an actor perceives itself as affected, depends on definitions already made by others. When developing MLG arrangements, more responsibility should be taken concerning who will perceive it as being affected. A thorough and serious discussion is needed concerning the difference between actual affectedness, and perceived affectedness (Karlsson Schaffer, 2012).

As has been said, it seems as national governmental actors have a position which is favourable for their opportunity to participate. They also take great part in the shaping of the strategy, which has consequences for the actors' perceived affectedness. This can create inequalities that cannot be solved by funding, nor by communication. What is needed is a critical reflection concerning for whom the strategy is supposed to be.

One could argue that since the primary function of the flagship projects is to implement the EUSBSR, it matters less who the participating actors are. However, it must be acknowledged that in MLG arrangements, political decisions are made during the implementation phase as well. The idea of MLG is to make those implementing policies, more involved in the making of these policies. Therefore, not only the effectiveness, but also the legitimacy of the EUSBSR, depends on multi-actor participation in all respects. If the macro-regional approach is further extended, and specific funding made available, the potential problem with legitimacy is even more serious.

It is therefore proposed, that further research concerning MLG legitimacy should focus on the aspect of affectedness. This is crucial if the participatory aspect of MLG ideal is to be taken seriously. This thesis has also pointed to the need of further developing the concept of expertise in relation to participation opportunities in MLG arrangements, striving for a more nuanced, and empirically applicable understanding of the concept. A next step in the empirical research concerning the EUSBSR could be to further investigate what actual influence participation in a flagship project gives an actor.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Protocol for case study questions

General question: Are there any factors that increase an actor's opportunity to participate?

Resources

What resources does the actor have?

- What is the size of the actor's budget
- How many employees does the actor have?
- Does the actor have a representation office in Brussels?

Position in society

What position in society does the actor has, and is it particularly strong?

- What competence and responsibility does the actor have?
- How dominant is the organisation?
- What constitutional basis does the actor have?
- How many members does the actor have?

Access to information and channels of influence

What access to information and channels to information does the actor have?

- Is the actor participant in other Baltic Sea region networks/cooperation/organisations?
- Is the actor represented in Brussels?

Affectedness

Is the actor particularly affected by the EUSBSR?

- Does the actor have an explicit interest for Baltic Sea region cooperation?
- Does the actor have an explicit interested in the issue of the priority area?

Appendix 2

Flagship project leaders

FP	Country	Type	Name	Comment
1.1	SE	NGA	Swedish Chemical Agency	
1.2	SE	NGA	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	
(1.3)	X	X	X	
1.4	LT	PC	Latvian Rural Advise and Training Centre	
1.5	FI	NMIN	Ministry of the Environment	
2.1	DE	NMIN	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	
2.2	TRAN	IGO	HELCOM	
	DE	NGA	BSH	Sweden might be involved, but lack of info.
2.3	TRAN	IGO	HELCOM	Germany might be involved, but lack of info.
3.1	FI	NGRI	SYKE, Finnish Environment Institute	
3.2	PL	NGA	Chief inspectorate of Environmental Protection	
3.3	SE	NGA/(NGRI)	Swedish Geotechnical Institute	Here counted as GA.
3.4	TRAN	IGO	HELCOM	
3.5	FI	NGRI	SYKE, Finnish Environment Institute	
3.6	DE	RI	Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research (ISI)	
3.7	SE	IO	The International Chemical Secretariat	Non-profit organisation
3.8	SE	NGA	Medical Products Agency	
(4.1)	X	X	X	
4.2	FI	NGA	Transport Safety Agency Trafi	
	SE	NGA	Swedish Maritime Administration	
	FI	IO	Baltic Institute of Finland	
(4.3)	X	X	X	
4.4	FI	NGA	Transport Safety Agency Trafi	
4.5	SE	SNA	Region Blekinge	
4.6	DK	NGA	Danish Maritime Authority	
	TRANS	IGO	Nordic Council of Ministers	
5.1	DK	NGA	Danish Metrological Institute	
5.2	EU	EUA	DG ENERGY	
5.3	SE	NMIN	Ministry of the Environment	
	DE	NMIN	Federal Ministry for the Environment	
5.4	DK	NGA	Danish Metrological Institute	According to project plan

6.1	PL	NMIN	Ministry of Economy	
	SE	NGA	National Board of Trade	
(6.2)	X	X	X	
6.3	EE	NMIN	Ministry for Economic Affairs and Communications	
6.4	SE	NGA	Swedish Board for Accreditation Conformity Assessment SWEDAC and	
6.5	EU	EUA	DG TAXUD	
6.6	EU	EUA	DG TAXUD	
(6.7)	X	X	X	
7.1	SE	NGA	VINNOVA	
	LT	NMIN	Ministry of Economy	
7.2	SE	SNA	Region Skåne	
7.3	LT	NMIN	Information Society Development Committee under the Ministry of Transport and Communications	
7.4	LT	IO	Lithuanian Biotechnology Association	
	DE	IO	BioCon Valley GmbH	
7.5	SE	NGA	Swedish Research Council	
8.1	DK	NMIN	Danish Ministry of Education	
8.2	PL	NMIN	Ministry of Higher Education	
8.3	DE	NGA	Federal Environment Agency	
8.4	DE	NMIN	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	
	SE	NGA	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	
8.5	DE	NMIN	Federal Ministry of Economics	
(8.6)	X	X	X	
8.7	DE	SNA	Behörde für Wissenschaft und Forschung	
8.8	SE	NGA	Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen)	
9.1	SE	NMIN	Ministry of Rural Affairs	
9.2	DK	NMIN	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries	
9.3	PL	NMIN	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	
	SE	IO	Swedish national Network for Rural Development	
9.4	SE	NGA	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	
9.5	FI	NGRI	Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute	
9.6	TRANS	IGO	Nordic Council of Ministers	
9.7	TRANS	IGO	Nordic Council of Ministers	
9.8	FI	NGRI	MTT Agrifood Research Finland	
	DK	IO	CBMI Centre for bioenergy and environmental technology	Actor type less clear. Innovation network.

9.9	DE	NGRI/(NGA)	Julius-Kühn-Institut	Here counted as GRI.
	FI	NGRI	MTT Agrifood Research Finland	
(9.10)	X	X	X	
10.1	LT	NMIN	Ministry of Energy	
10.2	DK	NGC	Energinet Denmark	
10.3	SE	NGA	Swedish Energy Agency	
10.4	LV	NMIN	Ministry of Economics	
(11.1)	X	X	X	
(11.2)	X	X	X	
(11.3)	X	X	X	
11.4	PL	NMIN	Ministry of Infrastructure	
	LT	NMIN	Ministry of Transport and Communications	
11.5	LT	NMIN	Ministry of Transport and Communications	
12.1	TRANS	ACA	Baltic University Programme	
12.2	TRANS	IO	Hanseatic Parliament	
12.3	DK	NMIN	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	
	LT	NMIN	Ministry of Education and Science	
	DE	NMIN	Federal Ministry of Education and Research	
12.4	DE	SNA	Hamburg Ministry of General and Vocational Education	In cooperation with German foreign office.
(12.5)	X	X	X	
12.6	LT	IO	LT Youth Council	In cooperation with other national youth councils
12.7	FI	SNA	Regional Council of Southwest Finland	In cooperation with Turku Touring
12.8	DE	PC	AIDA Cruises	
12.9	PL	SNA	Voivodeship of Pomorskie	
12.10	DE	ACA	University of Greifswald	
12.11	TRANS	IGO	Nordic Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being	
12.12	SE	SNA	Blekinge County Council	
12.13	DE	ACA	University of Applied Sciences, Flensburg	
13.1	FI	NGA	Finnish Border Guard	
13.2	SE	NGA	Swedish Coast Guard	
13.3	TRANS	IGO	HELCOM	
13.4	DK	NGA	Danish Maritime Authority	
13.5	PL	ACA	Maritime University Of Szczecin	
(13.6)	X	X	X	
(13.7)	X	X	X	

(14.1)	X	X	X	
14.2	DK	NGA	Admiral Danish Fleet HQ	
14.3	TRAN	IGO	Council of Baltic Sea States	
15.1	EU	EUA	EUROPOL	
15.2	FI	NGA	Finnish Border Guard	
15.3	TRANS	IGO	Baltic Sea Task Force (on organised crime in the Baltic Sea region)	
15.4	FI	NGA	National Police Board Finland	
15.5	LT	NMIN	Ministry of the Interior Public Safety	

The flag ship projects (FP) put within parenthesis, and where country and actor type is marked X, represent those FPs where the flagship project leader (FPL) could not be identified. These FPLs are not included in the empirical analysis. Abbreviations ‘Country’: Estonia (EE), Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Poland (PL), Sweden (SE) European Union (EU), Transnational (TRANS). Abbreviations ‘Type’: Academia (ACA), European Union Institution/Agency (EUA), Intergovernmental Organisation (IGO), Interest Organisation (IO), National Government Agency (NGA), National Government Company (NGC), National Government Research Institute (NGRI), National Ministry (NMIN), Private Company (PC), Research Institute (RI).

Appendix 3

Resources

	Financial	Employees	Rep. Brussels	Expertise	Other/comments
Min. Economic Affairs and Communication, Estonia	9 500 000 € (2010, administrative costs)	242	Through permanent representation of government	Less clear. Competence within organisation.	
VINNOVA, Sweden	32 066 127 € (2010)	210 (average 2011)	Yes.	Yes. National expert role.	
Admiral Danish Fleet HQ, Denmark	No info. Defence command (main org.): 2 709 053 752 €	400 (approx.)	Not as it seems.	Not clear. Competence and experience.	The flagship project is based on a system developed and deployed within the Danish defence.
HELCOM	No information	13 + employees on specific projects (8, may 2012)	Not as it seems. Members represented through national perm. rep.	Yes. Expert group on the issue.	
Region Blekinge, Sweden	9 592 068 € (2010) 37 701 733 € (2012)	39 (2010) 57 (2012)	Yes. Shared with neighbouring region, 2 employees.	Not an expert organisation, but experience of other projects within the issue.	Increase of revenue due to new areas of responsibility.
University of Greifswald, Germany	No information.	5 846	Not as it seems.	Partly. Experts within the institution for geography and geology.	Contact person at institute for geography and geology.
Agrifood Research, Finland	53 800 000 € (2010)	750 (approx.)	Not as it seems.	Yes.	
Hanseatic Parliament	No information.	8	Not as it seems.	Not an expert organisation, but significant relevant experience.	

Position in society

It is not possible to measure an actor's position in society on a scale. This overview is a discussion concerning e.g. role, function, competence and dominance. Territorial scope and number of members is provided in order to put it into the context of the Baltic Sea region.

	Role, function, reputation, dominance, competence, etc.	Territorial coverage/members¹
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, Estonia	As a ministry it has a central position in Estonia and fills an important function by developing and implementing national policies. Not known which reputation the Ministry has within the Baltic Sea Region.	Estonia, (1 340 127 inhabitants 2010). The smallest region in the Baltic Sea region.
VINNOVA, Sweden	Government agencies with important function in society. Especially concerning innovation. Provide finance for research and for development of innovation systems. Counselling to public and private actors concerning opportunities in the EU.	Sweden (9 340 682 inhabitants 2010).
Admiral Danish Fleet HQ, Denmark	Important for Danish national security, as well as for the Baltic sea environment. Responsible for e.g. "safety at sea including combating pollution". As a military authority, it has a certain position in society and responsibilities concerning national sovereignty, international military operations etc.	Denmark (5 534 738 inhabitants 2010).
HELCOM	One of the most important organisations regarding Baltic Sea environmental cooperation. Clearly a dominant organisation.	All EUSBSR member states, plus Russia and the EU.
Region Blekinge, Sweden	Could not be classified as a strong region, but has competences within a number of important policy areas in society, e.g. regional development, growth. Its competences have gradually been extended to include public transportation and environmental issues. The limits for cooperation are set by the members as well as the government.	Members from 1 County and 5 municipalities. Covering a population of 152 979 inhabitants.
University of Greifswald, Germany	Does not seem to be the largest university in Germany, but it is one of the oldest, founded in 1456. It is ranked 401-500 in the world and 33-39 nationally, according to Shanghai ranking. However, its reputation regarding the specific issue is unknown.	12 452 students.

¹Member states' population: Eurostat (2012) *Total Population*, available at: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>, accessed 2012-05.05.

Access to information and channels of influence

	Network/cooperation in Baltic Sea region	Representation in Brussels
Min. Economic Affairs and Communication, Estonia	Does not mention Baltic cooperation specifically.	Estonia's permanent representation. The ministry has 5 counsellors. Represents itself at Transport, Telecommunication and Energy Council, and Competitiveness Council.
VINNOVA, Sweden	Highly involved in EU and international cooperation. No information concerning Baltic Sea Region cooperation in specific, other than the EUSBSR project.	Yes. They have an informative function for other actors concerning EU policies on the issue.
Admiral Danish Fleet HQ, Denmark	Not that is specified.	Not as it seems.
HELCOM	Is a Baltic sea region cooperation itself. Is rather a source for influence and information for other actors. Cooperate with stakeholders in the Baltic Sea region.	Not as it seems. The member states are represented nationally through permanent representation. The EU is a member of the organisation.
Region Blekinge, Sweden	Yes. Participant in at least 3 Baltic Sea region forums for cooperation.	Yes.
University of Greifswald, Germany	Seem to have many contacts in the region. Regarding international partnerships, one of the cooperation networks concern bilateral agreements with Baltic and Nordic Universities. It is however, less clear if its cooperation in the Baltic region includes participation in formalised organisations or networks.	Not as it seems.
Agrifood Research, Finland	Participates in the Baltic Stern Network founded in 2009, for Baltic Sea research. It emphasise involvement in international and EU cooperation, but does not mention Baltic Sea region in specific.	Not as it seems.
Hanseatic Parliament	Is a Baltic Sea region network and forum for cooperation itself. Is a member of and in close cooperation with the Baltic Sea Academy.	Not as it seems.

Affectedness

Affectedness is measured by an actor's explicit interest in Baltic Sea cooperation or in the issue of the Priority Area, as well as by the correspondence between the actor's area of competence and the issue of the Priority Area.

<p>Min. Economic Affairs and Communication (MKM), Estonia</p> <p><i>Priority Area 6: to remove hindrances to the internal market in the Baltic Sea region including to improve cooperation in the customs and tax area</i></p>	<p>Baltic Sea Region Cooperation: No explicit interest in Baltic sea cooperation. It promotes the Baltic Sea region as an advantage for Estonia.</p> <p>Issue of the Priority Area: The ministry has competences within, e.g., trade, industry, transport, telecommunication, and standardisation. Thus, the issue is of relevance for the ministry. Tax related issues belong to the ministry of finance.</p> <p>According to the ministry's Council positions, there is an explicit interest to achieve "a single market with as small differences as possible" and "support as extensively as possible harmonization of indirect taxes and abolition of exceptions as well as productive cross-border cooperation"¹</p> <p>Other/Comments: Estonia is Priority Area Coordinator, and the ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication seems to be the responsible ministry.</p>
<p>VINNOVA, Sweden</p> <p><i>Priority Area 7: to exploit the full potential of the region in research and innovation</i></p>	<p>Baltic Sea Region Cooperation: There is no specific interest expressed for cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, even if there is a clear general interest for cooperation in the EU.</p> <p>Issue of the Priority Area: there is a strong interest for innovation, given that it is the Swedish governmental innovation agency. Its aim is to "increase the competitiveness of Swedish researchers and companies"²</p> <p>To develop innovation systems, in Sweden, is within its field of competence.</p> <p>Other/Comments: VINNOVA has been instructed by the government to take part in the implementation of the EUSBSR and to lead the flagship project, and is thereby strongly affected by the EUSBSR. Furthermore, VINNOVA and the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications are coordinators for the Priority Area together with Poland.</p>
<p>Admiral Danish Fleet HQ, Denmark</p> <p><i>Priority Area 14: to reinforce protection from major emergencies at sea and on land</i></p>	<p>Baltic Sea Region Cooperation: Not clear, but no interest expressed in cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region in specific.</p> <p>Issue of the Priority Area: the Admiral Danish Fleet HQ has the contingency function for "combating pollution of the sea caused by oil and other harmful substances"³ in Denmark.</p> <p>Maritime Assistance Centre, Joint Rescue Coordination Centre and maritime environment are activities located within the organisations Operation Centre.</p>
<p>HELCOM</p> <p><i>Priority Area 3: to reduce the use and impact of hazardous substances</i></p>	<p>Baltic Sea Region Cooperation: Cooperation in the Baltic Sea is of strong interest, since it is HELCOM is a Baltic Sea Region cooperation.</p> <p>Issue of the Priority Area: The issue is one of the priorities, and objective concerning hazardous substances was adopted already in 1998.</p> <p>Other/Comments: the activity of HELCOM is, according to the EUSBR Action plan, important for the implementation of the first pillar which PA 3 belongs to.</p>

<p>Region Blekinge, Sweden</p> <p><i>Priority Area 4: to become a model region for clean shipping</i></p>	<p>Baltic Sea Region Cooperation: Explicitly express an interest for the Baltic Sea Strategy, by referring to geographical location and availability to funding. The region has developed its own action plan for implementing the EUSBSR. Hence, it seems as if there is a strong interest for cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.</p> <p>Issue of the Priority Area: According to the regional development programme, there maritime safety is of interest for the region due to competence within the region and the environmental competences of an accident at sea.</p> <p>Environmental issues have only been a part of Region Blekinge’s activities since 2011.</p>
<p>University of Greifswald, Germany</p> <p><i>within Priority Area 12: to maintain and reinforce attractiveness of the Baltic Sea region in particular through tourism</i></p>	<p>Baltic Sea Region Cooperation: Less clear. However, culture of the Baltic region is one of it six research focuses. It has an interest in Baltic cooperation as a subject. Also have international agreements with universities within the Baltic sea Region. The Baltic Sea region is a geographical focus for some of the research at the university.</p> <p>Issue of the Priority Area: tourism is an issue of interest for the institute of geology and geography. Social and economic geography, which is a subject within the institute for geology and geography, has tourism as its working field.</p> <p>Other/Comments: The working field of social and economic geography has tourism as a thematic focus, and Baltic Region as a geographical focus. The combination of those focuses makes the institution of geology and geography particularly affected. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is priority area coordinator.</p>
<p>Agrifood Research, Finland</p> <p><i>Priority Area 9: to reinforce sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fishing</i></p>	<p>Baltic Sea Region Cooperation: There is no explicit interest regarding cooperation in the Baltic Sea region specifically.</p> <p>Issue of the Priority Area: There is a great interest for agriculture, as well as sustainability. Fishing and forestry does not seem to be within institute’s interest, but might to some extent be related to its focus on rural enterprise and food production.</p> <p>Since the institute is conducting research concerning agriculture and sustainability, the issue is relevant. It has a research programme Research programme concerning water friendly agriculture aiming at the wellbeing of the Baltic Sea has been conducted since before the EUSBSR.</p>
<p>Hanseatic Parliament</p> <p><i>within Priority Area 12: to maintain and reinforce attractiveness of the Baltic Sea region in particular through education</i></p>	<p>Baltic Sea Region Cooperation: Strong interest in Baltic Sea region cooperation since the organisation is a Baltic Sea region cooperation. Promotion of cooperation is part of its objective. Does, e.g., support a web forum for SME’s interested in Baltic cooperation.</p> <p>Issue of the Priority Area: The main goal of the organisation is to” improve the situation of SME’s in the Baltic Sea area”⁴. Assisting with education is one of the means for achieving that goal. Education is one area which the organisation is active in.</p>

1. Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Estonia, *Estonia’s Positions and Priorities*, <http://www.mkm.ee/eu/>, accessed 29-04-2012
2. VINNOVA, *About VINNOVA*, <http://www.vinnova.se/en/About-VINNOVA/>, accessed 06-05-2012
3. Admiral Danish Fleet, *Maritime Environment*, <http://forsvaret.dk/SOK/ENG/NATIONAL/ENVIRONMENT/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed 06-05-2012.
4. Hanseatic Parliament, *Objectives of the Hanseatic Parliament*, http://www.hanse-parlament.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=27, accessed 06-05-2012.