

SECTION II

MULTICULTURAL REGIONS IN REGIONAL STRUCTURES
OF EUROPE

Małgorzata PACUK
Tadeusz PALMOWSKI
University of Gdańsk, Poland



BALTIC EURO-REGION: A STIMULATOR
OF INTERCULTURAL CO-OPERATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Political changes which took place in Europe at the beginning of the nineties created favourable conditions for development of the economic and intellectual potential of all states in the Baltic region.

Improvement in relations after 1989, as well as the prime ministers' conference held in Ronneby in 1990 have brought about a revival of European integration in the Baltic area. The accession of Finland and Sweden to the European Union and the aspiration of Poland and the Baltic states to join the Union make the Baltic Sea an internal sea of the uniting Europe.

The Baltic nations have a long common history of both co-operation and conflicts over 'dominium Maris Baltici'. Nowadays they are experiencing a revival of their identity.

The element consolidating, to a certain extent, Baltic society is maritime tradition which has created special values for peoples over centuries. 'Homo Balticus' is deeply rooted and integrated by the maritime environment, fully aware of common fate and interests, with respect for individual languages, cultures and religions.

The central location of Poland south of the Baltic and common approval of integration processes with the European Union predestines us, in a sense, to initiate and actively participate in various forms of international co-operation and enhancement of integration processes which in further perspective shall surely cover also eastern Baltic countries.

Baltic co-operation covers more than a group of countries. It also involves interface between entities at various levels: local and self governing authorities, companies, ports, universities, governmental and non-governmental bodies, for example in scope of:

protection of the natural environment, transport, culture, education and shaping of a democratic society.

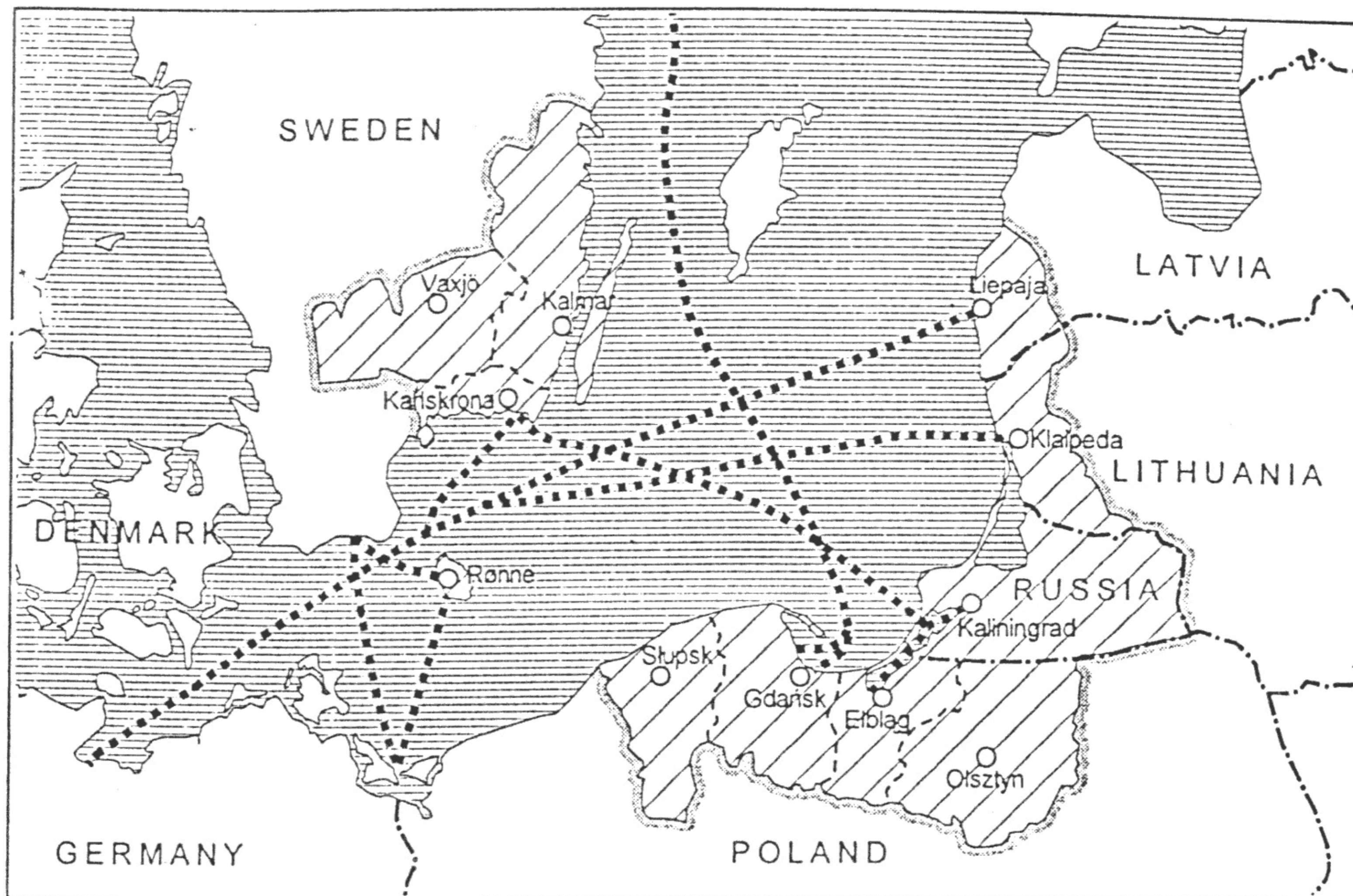


Fig. 1. Baltic Euro-region

A new plane for co-operation of the south-east regions of the Baltic was established at Malbork Castle on the 22nd of February 1998 - the Baltic Euro-region incorporates southern Sweden (Kalmar, Kronoberg, Blekinge), northern Poland (cities and communities of the provinces of Słupsk, Gdańsk, Elbląg and Olsztyn), the Kaliningrad District, the region of Klaipėda, Liepāja and Danish Bornholm.

Co-operation within the biggest Euro-region in Europe is to facilitate contacts between people, learning about the past and contemporary history of our neighbours, draw young people together, remove historical prejudice and stimulate development of the region to improve the life standard of its inhabitants.

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Over the centuries Gdańsk both as a port and a city became the main settlement area on the southern coast of the Baltic which thanks to its marine traditions and cultural values of Pomerania and Kashubia, established a strong cultural identity of the region.

In the thousand-year history Gdańsk rivalled for primacy with other centres in the region such as Malbork and Elbląg. In the 19th century⁷, Königsberg became a competitive centre in the region. The twenty-year period between the two World Wars prolonged separation of the Gdańsk port from the hinterland and due to the free city status the direct influence of the city on the region diminished.

On the other hand, however, the new town of Gdynia rapidly developed. During this period of twenty years, Gdynia - a small fishing village - was transformed into a town of 120 thousand inhabitants in 1939. At present, Gdańsk together with Sopot and Gdynia form an urban region of the Gdańsk Bay, a port and urban agglomeration with a population of one million inhabitants, one of the biggest centres on the Baltic coast, with a deep sense of regional identity reinforced by historical tradition of Gdańsk Pomerania.

The population structure of this region reflects the post-war welfare of Pomerania and the extent of migration movements of its population. Mostly, the population immigrated into the region, including immigrant families from the eastern borderland what resulted in a 'cultural melting pot'. The wealth of traditions and variety of material culture allowed for the shaping of a mutually open attitude of the newcomers and a growing sense of belonging. This remains an ongoing process to this day. Contemporary values, which integrate people from Vilnius, Lviv and immigrants from Ukraine (in result of 'Wisła' campaign), influenced by rich frontier traditions as well as the continuity of cultural heritage of Kashubia and Kociewie are enhanced by the thousand-year history of Gdańsk, the animated traditions of St Adalbert, the traditions of Hansa and the golden age of Gdańsk. The ethos of the 1980 protest which embraces both moral courage to protest and the importance of citizen solidarity to reach an understanding for common benefit is another unforgettable element contributing to this 'pot'.

Maritime tradition gives the culture of Polish coastal region a specific flavour. The ethos of marine ambitions is reflected in the development of the new city of Gdynia and elements of contemporary seaman, port and shipyard culture. The ethos of Pomerania remains vivid and attractive for people of varying decent living in the region. The marine character, open doors into the Baltic region and the Pomeranian ethos are the keystone of the region's cultural policy.

Warmia and Mazury cover an area, which together with Königsberg belonged before the Second World War to Eastern Prussia. The past centuries featured many events vivid on the awareness of various nations and particularly the Baltic coast neighbours of this part of north-east former Prussia. The region was and partly still remains multiethnic, multicultural and open to influence. Our common past and cultural heritage is connected not only with history and legacy of the Teutonic knights, and Prussian Dukedom, Kingdom, a wealth of Lithuanian and Polish contributions but also with what can still be seen today as permanent in the natural scenery and spatial, architectural development, the latter part of this heritage, though having suffered destruction, visualises and documents the multicultural character of Königsberg and the region.

A spectacular example of common heritage awareness on the Polish side was a photographic exhibition in Olsztyn in 1993 presenting the whole area of former Eastern Prussia. The exhibition showed, among others, the significance of kinship with what formerly had been called Polish Prussian Kingdom, in the 19th century Western Prussia and today is usually referred to as the Vistula Pomerania. The author of the exhibition and album called *The Northern Atlanta*, Kazimierz Brakoniecki wrote in the preamble:

"A pure historical chance or perhaps the hand of justice have brought me to decide about my Polish identity and humanity here in Warmia and Mazury, where there is no dismissal of alien traditions, because they too have contributed to the moral shape of my homeland, my cherished decision. On discovering the Polish identity and heritage I also unveil the existing Prussian. German

Warmian and Mazurian heritage in order to give evidence of aspiring towards a free and fair homeland, which respects other brotherly nations and communities, the traces of which are spread on many lands, like those traces of our national presence beyond our present borders. Those are not solely traces of national presence but signs and memories of humanity.

Thinking of this commonwealth of memories, spirit, common values, personal and national, traces of being, dispersed by fate and confirmed by history on many a borderland, my contemplation on the need to feel a sense of identity and existential certainty led me to a conclusion that I - a representative of a generation born on this land after World War II - am the next in line heir to the scenery, culture and memory shaping a commonwealth of the live and those passed away Prussians, Germans, Poles, Warmians, Mazurians, Russians. Lithuanians - the Europeans."

The Baltic Euro-region may be the way to Europe for the Kaliningrad District. In the past, the Albertyna - University played an important role in Königsberg. This Protestant university with 450 year old tradition had considerable impact on the rising position of Königsberg characterised by an established infrastructure for development of intellectual culture of the south-eastern Baltic coast. The development of printing and book selling in Königsberg is an example of the above. Books were printed in all languages present in the region - in German, Polish, Lithuanian and to a smaller extent in old Prussian which was still in use in the northern part of Eastern Prussia. The university library housed one of the richest collections in Europe relating to the history of Poland, Lithuania and Prussia.

Among the celebrities of the scientific world one must mention Immanuel Kant. Polish lecturers were also present. Jan Kochanowski was a student of this University and such famous figures as Mikołaj Kopernik, Mikołaj Rej and Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski visited this university.

A numerous group of self-governmental, administrative activists, clergymen and teachers who exerted a significant impact on the history of Pomerania were graduates of this University. Today, within the framework of the Baltic Euro-region, we can make efforts for that University to refer back to its excellent roots - and become a university drawing together nations and communities around the Baltic Sea.

The present population of the Kaliningrad District include: Russians 80%, Byelorussians and Ukrainians 8%, Poles and Lithuanians 2%. The remaining population including Germans constitutes a fraction of one percent.

Contemporary inhabitants of the district are a specific society where almost everyone has worked for the army or has someone in the family who is in the army. The young generation, born and brought up here call themselves 'kienigi', have problems in defining their identity and are characterized by a surge towards faith after the years of mandatory atheism.

It is a neighbours' duty to ensure that Kaliningrad and the surrounding district, despite or perhaps because of its dense military character, is not a 'black hole' with reference to social, economic and cultural level of its inhabitants. In order to achieve this aim, it is necessary to continually enhance relations with close and more distant Baltic neighbours. Co-operation within the Baltic Euro-region can play a special role in this case.

CONCLUSION

1. In the past, periods of cultural integration of the southern Baltic prevailed.
2. Common intellectual genesis of settlement structure developed from Denmark, Skania, Blekinge, through Mecklenburg, Pomerania, Prussia and Inflanty¹ contributed to the similarity in programme and spatial development shaping a common features of the cultural environment in the region.
3. The network of Hanseatic towns apart from the economic and social aspect functioned also as a vehicle for transmitting civilisation and cultural patterns and innovations.
4. Though certain strong trends in the 19th and 20th centuries brought about a split in practically the whole historical and cultural region on the Baltic coast, the awareness of a common cultural heritage has still existed since the Middle Ages expressed by many-joint initiatives of cultural co-operation.
5. The establishment of the Baltic Euro-region results from progressing international, regional, municipal, and frontier co-operation started at the beginning of the nineties. Following the year 1990 the process of restitution historical ties and establishing new economic and cultural relations. Research work is being embarked on the structure and operation of the area in the southern Baltic.
6. This co-operation is to be governed by the principles and values confirmed in the program VASAB 2010 (Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010) in order to, among others: promote sustainable economic and cultural development, decrease spatial disharmony, discrepancies between regions (economic, social, environmental and cultural) - equal use of space, interregional solidarity; enable regional participation in the development of the whole region, in undertaking decisions on the national level based on the individual features of their identity - variety, democracy, subsidiary.

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