

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION ON THE EXAMPLE OF BALTIC EUROPE

1. SHAPING OF COASTAL CROSS-BORDER ZONES

From the very beginning of geographical research marine areas constituted an important subject. Perhaps the process of man dominating the seas gave grounds to the development of geography as a science.

Regions located by the sea maintain contacts with regions located on the opposite seacoast. Lands located over the sea are parts of states there situated. Their mutual relations change in time. They depend on the following factors:

- geographical location,
- sailing conditions,
- distance,
- development level with respect to transport and communication means,
- attracting port cities in the coastal region,
- political relations,
- complementary nature of economy,
- cultural conditions.

The first five factors are typical of co-operation across the sea. The remaining ones are of a universal nature.

Geographical location of the coastal regions may either favour contacts across the sea or limit or even eliminate such possibilities. Favourable conditions occur when:

- the regions for potential co-operation are situated on both coasts of the sea laying inside a continent, like e.g. the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea or the Black Sea;
- two regions of two different countries are located on the two banks of a strait or natural sea channel;
- a coastal region neighbours on a nearby island which belongs to an overseas country;
- two neighbouring islands belonging to different countries are separated by a strait;
- between a centrally located island or chain of islands and coastal areas located on the both sides of the sea where one of the regions and the island belong to one country whereas the other to an overseas state;
- between two regions of two different countries located on both sides of a sea bay

where the sea route between them is shorter than by land or countries on both sides of the bay divided by a third country located further in the bay (Fig. 1).

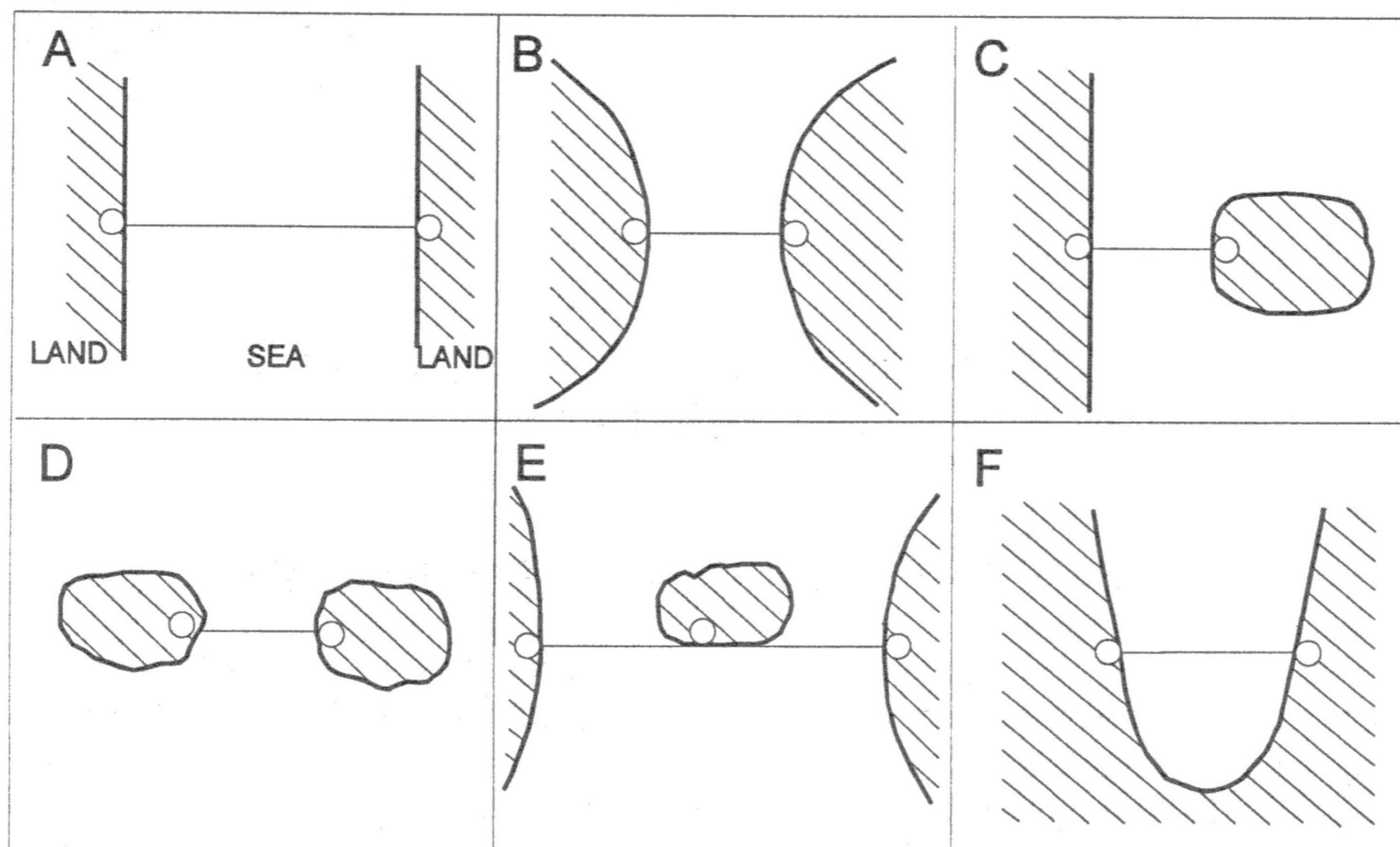


Fig. 1. Sea land relations favouring cross border co-operation
Source: Autor's study.

Other configurations of geographical location are possible but do not favour cross-border co-operation to such degree.

Sailing conditions such as the number of stormy days, fog, waves, sea currents, tides, icing, bathymetry, types of coast, natural and artificial barriers may limit shipping and due to a high risk for passengers and cargo may cause periodical close down. Modern types of ships, navigational means and radiotechnical devices eliminate these barriers to a certain degree.

Distance by sea plays a very significant role in defining the extent of co-operation and activity scope. Coastal regions located close to each other, separated by a channel or strait, usually show cultural similarities and develop many various forms of co-operation much easier. There is a clear tendency to integrate regions located on two coasts into one economic region. Coastal regions further distanced from each other often meet more problems (due to time and cost of travel) or even barriers making co-operation difficult. Co-operation may take the form of parallel projects performed independently on both seacoasts.

Development level with respect to transport and communication means plays a fundamental role in contacts between regions lying on two seacoasts. The development of shipping had initiated the first links between those living across the sea. The developments in size and speed of sea units facilitate carrying cargo and passengers. Ferries, fast catamarans and hovercrafts have cut the time needed to cover the same distance from a few days to a few hours. Ports on both sides had to be adapted to service

such vessels. Underwater cable links and contemporary methods of satellite communication facilitate the process of quick mutual communication.

Attracting port cities in the coastal region become the centres¹ of regional co-operation. Without port cities cross sea co-operation would not be possible. Airports in this case play a solely complementary role. After some time the links of a sea town with its region may become decentralised. Some of the old peripheral areas may become new subregional core centres, however, the main co-operational access will always run through a sea town.

Political relations between countries lying on two sides of the sea may vary considerably. Wars and military conflicts at sea exclude any form of co-operation. In the case of two parties identifying with opposite military and political sides, information on unidentified submarines causes tension and a freeze in international relations. Elimination of conflicts and military blocks, peaceful coexistence, correct and friendly relations create an appropriate political climate and open the way to wide co-operation on various levels.

Complementary nature of economy especially market economy as well as trade, transit services, commercial co-operation, business services, investments of a complementary nature decidedly favour contacts across the sea.

Cultural conditions are a factor which have an impact on co-operation with partners across the sea. Civilisation, national, religious and language differences and fear stemming from historical experience pose certain barriers. These can be overcome to a certain extent thanks to economic co-operation and recognition of national interests (Chojnicki, 1998).

The 'coastal cross-border zone' most often comprises two neighbouring areas divided by seawaters. Their structure has a bio-centric nature. Changes in the structure of a coastal cross-border zone progress slowly while changes initiated in the subsystem on one side do not necessarily cover the overseas counter part. The settlement network is dominated by two port town complexes lying on two sea coasts.

The remaining elements of this structure are organised around crystallised centres forming subsystems, which are part of the 'coastal cross-border zone'. Each of these subsystems features a different degree of closure with regard to its economic and social environment and to the subsystems lying on the two sea coasts. As the degree of closure varies, the openness of particular subsystems varies in the two areas as far as capital, information and power flow etc., are concerned.

Areas bordering across the sea are interested in solving common problems. These problems include communication between them and access to wider markets which was limited due to the sea barrier. Co-operation also focuses on joint actions connected with the marine environment (protection of the natural marine environment, sea pollution, protections of coastal shores, etc.) use and development of marine resources (renewable power sources, marine tourism, etc.) and comprehensive actions in solving practical problems (e.g. safety at sea, life saving services).

¹ The author refers the theory of centres formulated by W. Christaller (1933) and core regions by D. Whittlesey (1957). According to the above the core region provides an organisational centre. The centre is usually the transport network centre and usually is of urban character.

Furthermore, sea cross-border zones often share the historical and cultural past and trade traditions. In the case of some zones conditions provided allowed for a wider range of co-operation embracing many spheres of contemporary life.

The shaping of coastal cross-border zones is a complex process dependent on both land and marine factors referred to above. Although every example is to a certain extent an individual and specific case and the pace may differ, certain common stages of the development of such zones can be identified (Fig. 2).

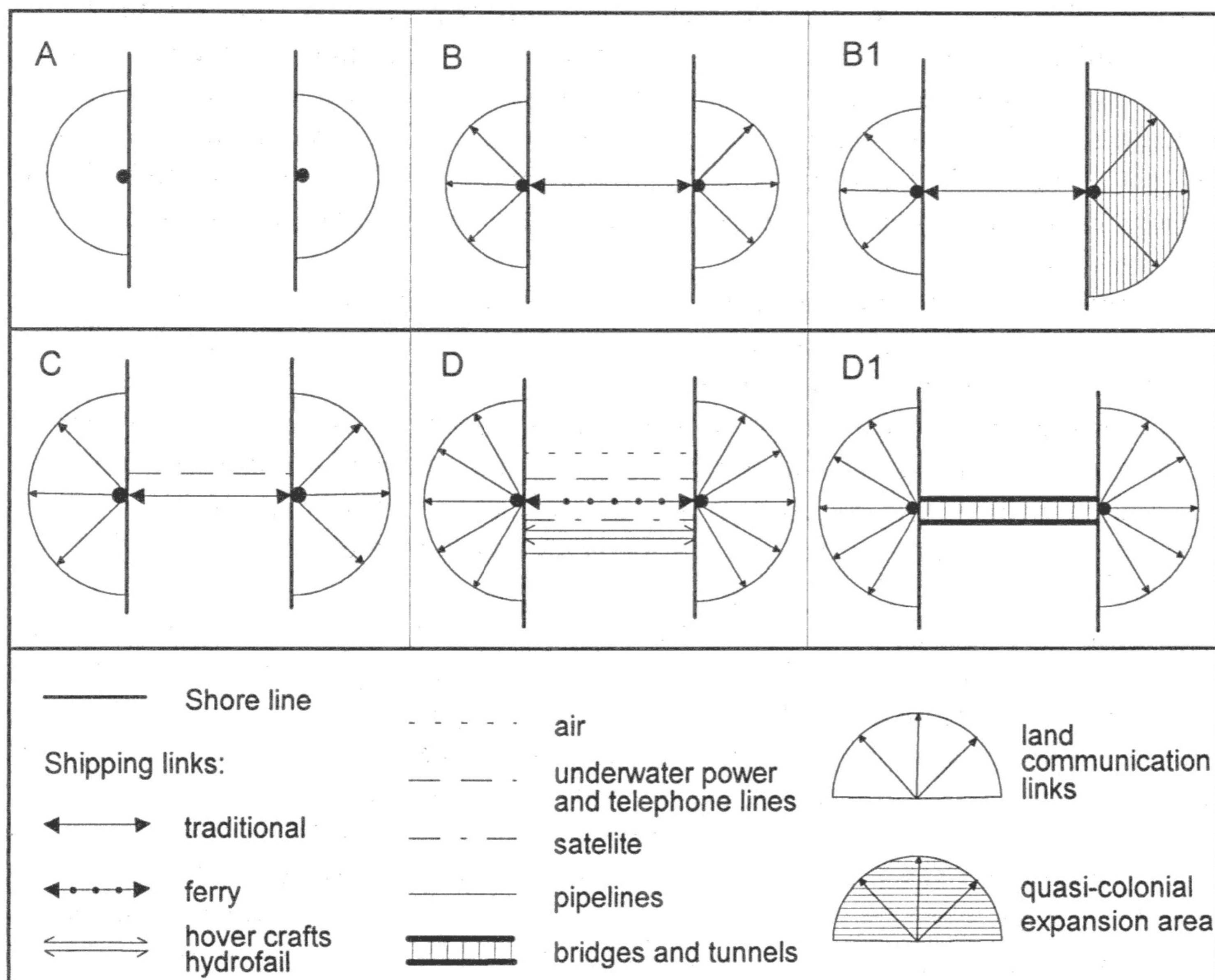


Fig. 2. Cross border coastal region development model
Source: Autor's study.

Stage A - port town centres are situated on both sides of the sea with surrounding areas shaped under their influence. Shortage of transport modes or appropriately developed means excludes the possibility of covering the distance by sea. Wars, political conflicts between sides lying on opposite coasts or sea blockades introduced by third parties can also isolate an area from possible forms of contact.

Stage B - the development of shipping makes first sporadic contacts feasible, however political tension and cultural differences exclude closer relations.

Stage B₁ - a centre situated on one coast takes advantage of its economic and military position at sea, gains outposts on the opposite coast and continues colonial type of expansion drawing economic benefits.

Stage C - regular shipping lines are established, most often ferry lines, underwater cables make direct telephone communication possible, correct political relations are maintained. Political-military preferences cause certain reservations and fears of the other partners, slight cultural differences are visible, the complementary nature of the economy is visible though economic co-operations focuses on a few selected spheres only. Personal contacts among inhabitants are initiated.

Stage D - modern, fast transport means such as hydrofoils, hovercrafts or the latest generation of catamarans for carriage of passengers and vehicles, connections by air and satellite links are introduced. Stability, political and military co-operation, complementary social and economic relations facilitate the integration and development on both seacoasts. This leads to free trade flow, unconstrained movement of people and capital flow.

Stage D₁ - full integration takes place, all modes of transport and communication (as in stage D) and furthermore, thanks to the development of modern technology in constructing transport routes, where hydrological and hydro-geological conditions allow it, links in the form of bridges, tunnels or mixed systems - in some parts bridges in others, most often in sectors situated in the central part of a strait or channel - tunnels. Only well developed countries, which possess the required technical and financial resources can afford to carry out such projects. Full political and military stability, co-operations and next integration in all spheres of life, the transfer of modern technology, freedom of movement both ways and economic benefits lead to improving the living standard on both sides of a well developed coastal cross-border zone.

Marine cross-border co-operation can also occur between land neighbouring coastal zones. In such cases marine co-operation is one of the elements complementing typical forms of cross-border co-operation.

The bigger the number of co-operating cross-border centres around a given water basin the faster is the process which can give rise to a powerful region round the whole water basin. Thus, there is a potential for the Baltic zone, the Mediterranean zone, etc.

2. EXAMPLES OF MARINE CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

Political transformations in the 1990s created favourable conditions for a better use of economic and intellectual potential of all countries lying around the Baltic Sea. Baltic co-operation may constitute an important key in the integration processes on our continent.

Countries in Baltic Europe have their own long, common history and today experience a revival of their identity. The factor uniting the society of Baltic Europe, both culturally and in scope of development, is maritime tradition, which shapes specific values as the sea has united people through centuries, especially traders and sailors cementing awareness of common fate and interests, teaching mutual respect for language, culture and religious differences.

The proper development of co-operation is conditioned by a broad and advanced knowledge of partners in the process. In Baltic Europe the zones involved in developing cross-border co-operation include (Fig. 3).

Storstrem (Denmark) - **Ostholstein** (Germany), cross-border co-operation has taken place for several years. Economic co-operation (economic consulting), support for small and medium-sized business, transfer and implementation of new technologies, joint work on strategy development, development of tourism, protection of the environment and due attention to power economy, education, culture, employment, ecology, farming and information exchange between authorities on the national, regional and local level are the main areas covered by this co-operation.

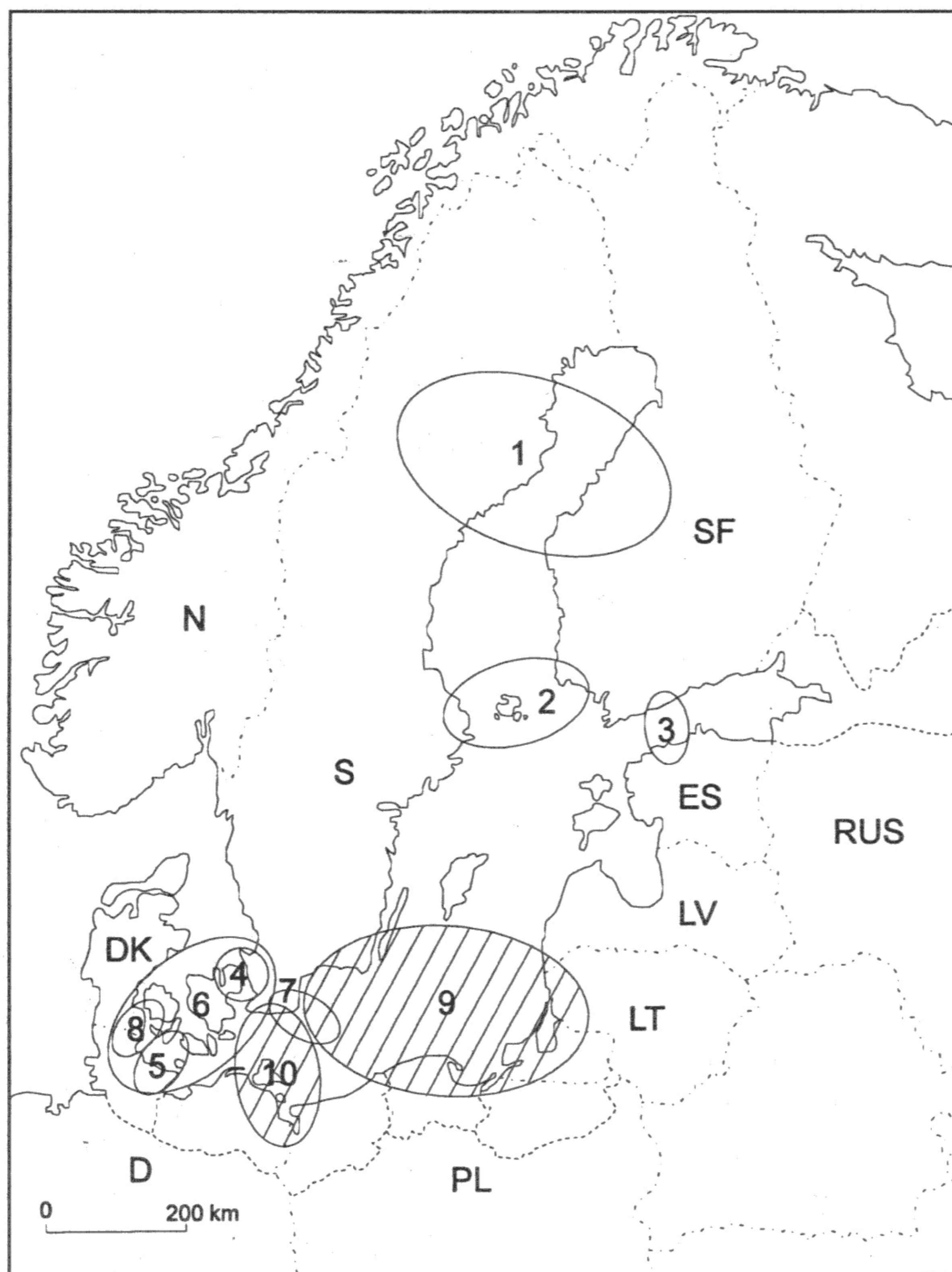


Fig. 3. Areas of marine cross border co-operation in Baltic Europe

1 - Kvarken & MittSkandia; 2- Archipelago Co-operation; 3 - South Finland-Estonia; 4 - Oresund;
5 - Storstrom - Ostholstein; 6 - STRING; 7 - Bornholm - South-East Sc≠ 8 - Fyn - KERN; 9 - Baltic
Euro-region; 10 - Euro-region Pomerania

Source: Autor's study.

In 1998, the co-operation zone also covered Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Storstrom, Western Zeland, Copenhagen and Scania. The project **String** (South-Western Baltic Sea Transregional Area - Investing New Geography) obtained financial resources from Interreg II C amounting to 1344 thousand Euro at the end of 1999. The aim of the project is sustainable development of the area, enhancing of economic potential, integration, and development of international functions and elaboration of a common strategy for full mobility of man, goods and information. Support for road and track transport modes from Schleswig-Holstein to southern Sweden across Danish islands is to shorten duration of transport so that cargo from Malmo can be delivered to Hamburg in 2 to 3 hours while ICE trains are to cover the route Hamburg - Stockholm in five hours. In order to achieve the assumed objectives joint studies are made on spatial development and economic development, increasing the region's competitiveness, promoting sustainable development, economic and social cohesion, development of trade and creation of new work places as well as protection of cultural and nature heritage. Another important issue is the support of technology transfer and closer co-operation of university and research centres, student and scientist exchange programmes with partners in the region. The STRING project is to be a 'development drive' and example of co-operation in Baltic Europe².

Oresund (Denmark - Sweden), development of co-operation between Zeland and Scania began in 1996. It embraced development of the labour market and elimination of unemployment connected with the development of future transport links between Malmo and Copenhagen. A joint Council arranges meetings during which representatives of Zeland and Scania solve problems relating to cultural, language, tax system, training and employment differences. The existing Oresund Council and Oresund Contact were transformed into a Danish-Swedish Oresund Committee in 1992. The main reason for establishment of the above was the plan of national governments to construct a bridge - tunnel linking Malmo and Copenhagen. The project was started in 1993 and finished in 1999 and released for public use in the middle of the year 2000. The target plan for the area projected by Swedish and Danish authorities is transformation of Oresund into an international economic, scientific and transport centre.

Archipelago Co-operation (Sweden/Finland), covers 40 thousand islands stretching from Stockholm, across Aland Islands to south west Finland. From the geological, historical and cultural point of view this area is an integrated whole. Cross-border co-operation was initiated in 1970 and concentrates on joint actions in tourism, promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (craftsmanship) and culture. Since 1978, the co-operation took place under the patronage of the Nordic Ministry Council. The representatives of local authorities established the Island Co-operation Council, which co-ordinates and implements various forms of co-operation. Improvement of the economic structure, increase in employment, manufacturing of the same products under the same brand name of the region are the fundamental objectives of the programme which is a protective umbrella for a number of various cross-border projects. The Aland Islands are to a large extent autonomous (internal affairs, budget, own flag and post

² STRING, Newsletter 1/99, 2/99, 1/2000, The profile STRING, European Union, Interreg II C Baltic Sea Area, European Regional Development Fund, Kiel 2000

stamps) and remain outside the EU tax system. The tax rates offered to insurance companies and in particular marine insurance are the most attractive in all Nordic countries. The water transport network have a direct impact on development of tourism, (the basic industry of the islands), trade and the financial sector. Any limitation in ferry shipment which occur have a visible impact on the economy in the area.

Kvarken & MittSkandia (Finland/Sweden), co-operation initiated by Kvarken Council of the province Vaasa (Finland) and Ornskoldvik (Sweden) at the end of the 1970s. It concerned joint projects on entrepreneurship and culture. In 1993, the scope of co-operation was extended in terms of both space and theme. A study on economic reconstruction of the Gulf of Bothnia was conducted. *Project Bothnia* focused on cross-border co-operation of the public and private sectors with special attention put on development of small and medium-sized enterprises and the tourist sector. The project consists of two parts: *Bothnian Innovation* aiming at development of scientific research and result implementation and regional co-operation, and *Bothnian Bonus* aiming at organising tourist fares and promotion of tourism in the marine area.

Southern Finland - Estonia, cross-border co-operation was initiated after Estonia gained independence and concentrates mainly on development of small and medium-sized enterprises, educational and cultural co-operation and development of telecommunication and ferry links.

Bornholm - South-East Skania (Denmark/Sweden), cross-border co-operation initiated some time earlier gained impetus in 1990 with promotion of tourism, ferry services, support for sustainable development, joint research projects and exchange of pupils, students and civil servants.

Fyn - Kern (Denmark/Germany) is an example of marine cross-border co-operation between the Danish island of Fionia and a group of towns situated in Schleswig-Holstein around or near Kiel Bay. The towns include Kiel, Eckerförde, Rendsburg and Neumiinster (K.E.R.N). Joint research was undertaken in the field of new technologies, particularly computer science, marine technology and medicine. Well qualified staff, university centres and research institutes, companies with advanced know-how and the high quality natural environment and good transport links create potential conditions for cross-border development of the region that transgress the borders of Baltic Europe.

Furthermore, in 1989 a new form of international co-operation between seven Baltic islands belonging to five different countries called **Baltic Sea island (B7)** appeared. It includes Bornholm (Denmark), Gotland and Oland (Sweden), Hiiumaa and Saaremaa (Estonia), Alands (Finland) and starting 1993 Rugia (Germany). These islands traditionally attracted trade but are peripherally located with respect to main national economic centres. Traditional industries: fishing, family farming, exploitation of natural resources including stone quarries belong to declining branches of economy. Their main problem at present is poor access, which in many cases is a derivative of poor quality ferry services. Only Rugia and Olandia have a permanent link with the mainland.

The islands feature unique, in European scale, tourist value while their location favours promotion of cross-Baltic co-operation in the cultural and educational spheres. Joint efforts are made to find a compromise between protection of the natural environment and local development. Co-operation also involves adapting growing tourism to the unpolluted environment. Baltic islands co-operate in developing an economic structure complying with and complementary to the needs of the tourist trade.

Within the framework of the *Baltic Island Project*, Bornholm, Gotland and Alands co-operate, apart from the tourist sector, in the field of small-scale entrepreneurship. Bornholm and Sarema established a common organisation for youth exchange programmes related to cultural issues called *Baltic Bridge*.

The development of ferry links and big passenger traffic confirm the growing importance of cross-border marine co-operation.

An additional factor facilitating co-operation and ensuring wide access to European information is membership in the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) seated in Gronau. Baltic marine cross-border regions involved include Oresundkomiteen, Aalands, Landskapstyrelse, Ósterbottens, Fórbund (Finish part of Kvarken) as well as the Euroregion Pomerania and Baltic Euroregion.

3. EUROREGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN BALTIC EUROPE

Poland showed a growing interest in cross-border co-operation at the beginning of the 1990s. Euroregional co-operation is a specific form of co-operation featuring a high degree of institutionalisation. Up to date, 14 Euroregions have been established in Poland. Baltic areas of Euroregional co-operation along the Polish marine border are the Baltic and Pomeranian Euroregions.

Baltic Euroregion, established in 1998, operates in the areas of Bornholm (Denmark), city of Liepaja and its area (Latvia), the Klaipeda District (Lithuania), the Pomerania Voivodship and the Warmia-Masuria Voivodship (Poland), the Kaliningrad District (Russia), the provinces of Kronoberg, Kalmar and Blekinge (Sweden). The area covered by the BALTIC Euroregion are of open character and can undergo further changes. Euroregion, sometimes referred to as 'Small European Union around the Baltic' is aimed not only at facilitating contacts between people, uniting young people, acquainting them with history and contemporary issues of their neighbours and eliminating historical based prejudice but also at improving the living standard of people inhabiting the area. Among objectives there are also find programming works towards sustainable development of the area covered as well as assistance in establishing co-operation between regional and local authorities.

Co-operation objectives are to be realised by supporting cross border economic projects and agreements in such fields as industry, agriculture and forestry, transport and communication, exchange of know-how and transfer of technology, protection of the environment and fighting crime. Furthermore, joint municipal projects in border zones such as sewage treatment plants, and waste management serve to this aim. An important instrument for realisation of the Euroregion's objectives is intensified co-operation in the field of spatial planning in cross-border zones, development of border crossing infrastructure, vocational and language training, scientific and cultural exchange, sport and tourism as well as protection and care for a common cultural heritage.

Other important fields of co-operation in the Euroregion include running of data basis and media networks as well as prevention activities and combating of natural disasters, fires, environmental hazards and other emergency situations.

Euroregion Pomerania, was established in 1995 in Szczecin. The Polish side is represented by communities from the West Pomerania Voivodship and the city of

Szczecin, whereas the German side by 6 areas and three cities from two lands Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Brandenburg. At the end of 1998, one of the most dynamic regions both culturally and economically in Sweden - the Union of Scania Communities joined POMERANIA. The biggest Swedish city to join the Euroregion was Malmö.

Thus, POMERANIA took on a marine, trilateral Polish-German-Swedish character. The basic area of life and work of its inhabitants are maritime economy, tourism, culture, agriculture and protection of the environment. All these spheres lie in the mainstream of co-operation. Efforts are being made to broaden this co-operation to include Danish community unions from Zealand.

The aim of co-operation in the Euroregions include the following:

- improvement of life standard of the inhabitants by joint support for investments and economic programmes, vocational training and programmes aimed at eliminating unemployment,
- exchange and co-operation of various vocational, scientific, cultural, youth groups,
- improving the state of the natural environment,
- development of economic co-operation, exchange of know-how and transfer of technology,
- development of co-ordinated , cross-border spatial planning,
- development of a complex database on the Euroregion,
- development and adjustment of the existing infrastructure to the needs of cross-border and regional traffic,
- co-operation in eliminating the effects of emergencies and natural disasters.

Officially, Pomerania links Polish and Scandinavian partners across the Baltic since 1998. However, real co-operation started much earlier. The Pomerania Euroregion runs an extensive exchange programme for young people and close cultural co-operation. An example of co-operation in the region in the scope of cross-border tourism and joint promotion is a agreement signed by Świnoujście on the Island of Uznam, German Rugia, Swedish South East Scania and Danish Bornholm under the name 'Tour Corners of the Baltic' and the so called round ticket for ferry lines joining the ports of Ystad, Smirsham, Ronne, Świnoujście, Sassnitz and Mukran. This project also helps to popularise the beauty of architecture and the natural environment (gardens and landscape), supports and makes more common the culinary heritage and develops information technology flow between all four partners

The cementing factor for society of Baltic Europe in both civil and cultural sense, is maritime tradition, which preserves awareness of common fate and interest teaching mutual respect for language, culture and religion differences. The contemporarily developing maritime regions of cross-border co-operation are one of the steps in this direction.

4. FINAL REMARKS

The process of developing cross-border co-operation, though progressing slowly, shows clearly signs of a growing trend. It covers examples not only of the water basins such as the Baltic and the North Sea but also the Mediterranean Sea. A factor

accelerating the process and scope is the financing granted from European Union aid funds. In extreme cases, when co-operation develops slowly, limiting of funds or their lack can lead to stagnation or lack of mutual contact. A sudden worsening of political relations between countries lying on different coasts of the sea can also hamper co-operation. However, the dominating examples indicating economic, cultural and political benefits that the coastal regions gain from the co-operation and the regular growth in number allows for the assumption that the process will continue.

In the 21st century Europe will be a Europe of regions. Political and economic transformations of the developing Baltic Europe will no doubt have a definite impact on integration processes in Europe, on their expansion and even a probable correction in that direction. The developing cross-border coastal regions are an important element in the process. They should be a point of departure for further decisions and actions towards full Baltic integration.

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