

Article

Experimentalist Governance to Foster Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region: A Focus on the Turku Process

Savitri Jetoo

Department of Social Sciences, Åbo Akademi University, Tuomiokirkontori 3, 20500 Turku, Finland; sjetoo@abo.fi or savitri.jetoo@abo.fi; Tel.: +358-50-524-2874

Received: 13 June 2018; Accepted: 30 July 2018; Published: 31 July 2018



Abstract: The Baltic Sea is one of the most severely polluted water bodies on earth, with stressors resulting from anthropogenic pressures of 85 million inhabitants in nine coastal countries. All are members of the European Union (EU) with the exception of Russia. This exception poses challenges for governing the Sea, as Russia is excluded as a member country from EU Baltic Sea governing policies, such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). This added complexity has led to the emergence of new forms of cooperation to include Russia in the governing process. One such initiative is the Turku process, an initiative by the cities of Turku (Finland), Hamburg (Germany), and St. Petersburg (Russia) to promote cooperation, especially with Russian partners. Since its emergence in 2010, there has been no study of it in the literature. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing the history and evolution of the Turku process under the lens of experimentalist governance. It aims to illustrate the experimentalist governance perspective through the Turku process and to present the theoretical foundations of the concept. It does the former through key informant interviews with main actors in the Turku Process and the latter with the help of the literature on experimentalist governance. This study adds to the dialogue on governance in an especially challenging time when the Ukraine crisis has negatively impacted EU–Russia relations.

Keywords: experimentalist; governance; Baltic Sea; Russia; cooperation; European Union; Turku Process

1. Introduction

The Baltic Sea is one of the most severely polluted water bodies on earth, with multiple stressors ranging from acidification, warming, nutrient pollution, chemical contamination, and overfishing. This results in a collective disturbance of the Baltic Sea ecosystem that is stronger than any marine region (Figure 1), as there are symbiotic interactions of stressors [1]. These stressors result from combined anthropogenic pressures from 85 million inhabitants from nine coastal countries: Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. All of these countries are members of the European Union (EU) with the exception of Russia, making the Baltic Sea an internal EU Sea. This exception poses challenges for governing the Sea, as Russia is excluded as a member country from EU Baltic Sea governing policies and tools, such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). The non-membership of Russia in the EU has been found to pose a key structural barrier for eutrophication governance of the Baltic Sea [2]. This added complexity has led to the emergence of new forms of governance to include Russia. One such initiative is the Turku process, an initiative by the cities of Turku (Finland), Hamburg (Germany), and St. Petersburg (Russia) to promote cooperation, especially with Russian partners. Since its emergence in 2010, there has been no study of it in the literature. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing the history and evolution of the Turku process under the lens of experimentalist governance. It aims to illustrate the experimentalist governance perspective through the Turku process and to present the theoretical foundations of the

concept. It does the former through key informant interviews with main actors in the Turku Process and the latter with the help of the literature on experimentalist governance.

System	Warming of surface water	Increased nutrient load	Oxygen depletion in bottom waters	Shipping intensity	Proportion of NIS	Organochlorines in organisms	Status of marine fish stocks
Baltic Sea	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Yellow
North Sea	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Mediterranean Sea	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
Black Sea	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Gulf of Mexico	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Gray
East China Sea	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Green	Yellow	Gray
Barents Sea	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow

Figure 1. Summary of changes in the Baltic Sea in comparison to other global marine areas. Key for drivers severity/impact: Red—above average; yellow—average; green—below average; gray—no assessment possible. NIS, nonindigenous species [1].

Baltic Sea Governance

The Baltic Sea has always served as an innovation lab for governance because of its biophysical and geopolitical characteristics. For the former, the semi-enclosed shallow brackish properties of its water translates into an ecosystem highly susceptible to anthropogenic pressures from the heavily industrial bordering countries. Geopolitically, the Baltic Sea region cooperated during the throes of the Cold War, in a process led by Finland, which resulted in the signing of the Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea in 1974, through prevention of pollution to the Baltic Sea (excluding inland waters) [3]. It was historic as it was the earliest multilateral convention signed by contending military coalitions; three signatories were members of the Warsaw Pact (the Soviet Union, Poland, and the German Democratic Republic), two were members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), while two were politically neutral (Finland and Sweden) [3], (p. 44). This evolved into the Helsinki convention of 1992 (with amendments as necessary, with most recent on 1 July 2014), covering the entire Baltic Sea area, inclusive of inland waters, water of the sea, and the sea bed [4]. This entered into force on 17 January 2000, with ratification by EU, Germany, Latvia, and Sweden in 1994; Estonia and Finland in 1995; Denmark in 1996; Lithuania in 1997; and Poland and Russia in 1999 [4]. The initial Helsinki Convention focused on diplomacy and cooperation amongst nation states, extending to recognize the role of nongovernmental actors in Baltic Sea protection measures. This inclusion of the public was furthered through the work of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)), the secretariat established by the 1974 Convention as an oversight governing body. HELCOM includes other actors through the project work, but also as observers to HELCOM. Currently, there are 19 government and intergovernmental organizations listed as observers to HELCOM, as well as 43 non governmental organizations [5]. While this signals progress in inclusion of the public in HELCOM activities, it is also limiting as the public does not have a direct vote or voice in the decision making process.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EU SBSR)

The history of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea (EUSBSR) can be traced back to 2006, when the European parliament articulated a need for a strategy to combat the urgent environmental issues faced by the Baltic Sea Region. This was followed in 2007 by presidency conclusions in which the European Council invited the European Commission (EC) to prepare and present a long term strategy for the Baltic Sea Region by June 2009 [6]. The task was completed two years later when the EC presented the first version of the EUSBSR and its action plan. The strategy went through revisions, and in its current version, has three objectives that are further divided into four sub-objectives (Figure 2).

These focus on thirteen focus points or policy areas (PA) and four horizontal actions (HA) (actions to bring countries together in the region).

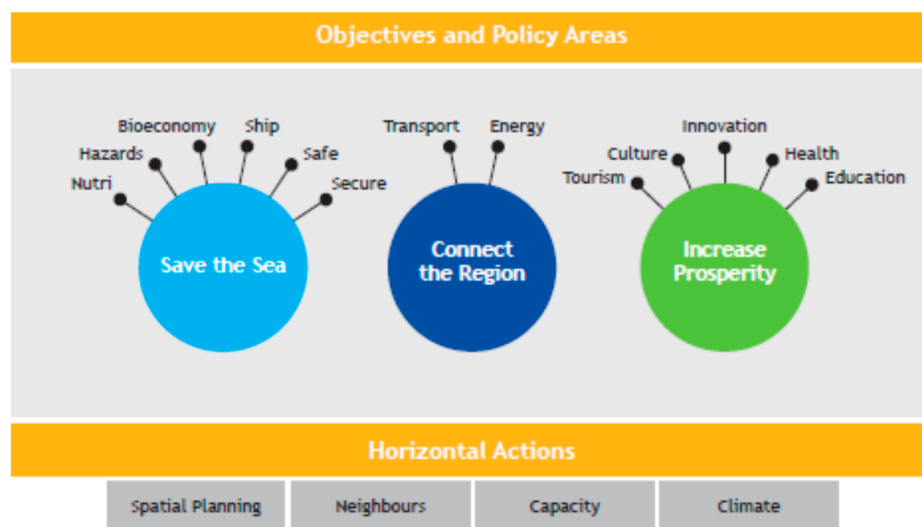


Figure 2. This is a showing the structure of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea (EUSBSR) [6].

In its current form, the EUSBSR is an agreement between the coastal countries that are part of the EU (all with the exception of Russia) and the EU to cooperate on saving the sea, connecting the region, and increasing prosperity. As such, the countries directly targeted by the strategy include Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, with Russia and Norway as two observer countries. As the EU SBSR is an EU initiative, the latter two countries are not bound by the terms of the strategy. As the policy areas and horizontal actions are of mutual interest to EU member states and its partners, constructive cooperation is essential to the success of implementation actions. For example, the ‘Save the Sea’ objective will require cooperation by Russia in order achieve the sub-objectives of clear water in the sea, a rich and healthy wildlife, clean and safe shipping, and better cooperation. Further, given that Russia has the second largest phosphorus nutrient reduction target (Russia, 3790 tonnes; Poland, 7480 tonnes) in Helcom’s Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the objective of clear water will be difficult to achieve without good cooperation on joint environmental measures, programs, and actions.

2. Materials and Methods

The theoretical foundation of this study lies in experimentalist governance literature. This section will examine the theory of experimentalist governance

2.1. Experimentalist Governance

The European Union (EU) has been an interesting case study for political scientists, public administration, business administration, international relations, comparative politics, and organizational behavior. The political institutions and policy making at the EU have been studied through numerous governance lenses, including multilevel governance [7], network governance [8], informal governance [9], and innovative governance [10]. Despite these many theoretical perspectives on EU governance, proponents of experimentalist governance [11] claim that EU governance is not unique and its experimentalist character is not captured by any of the previous frameworks. According to the authors, this experimentalist governance is a response to the uncertainty and volatility characterized by wicked problems that overwhelm traditional governance arrangements. Similar to natural science experiments, experimentalist governance is characterized by provisional strategies (hypotheses), which are reviewed and revised after monitoring of implementation efforts (experiments) [11]. While this is characteristic of

EU framework rulemaking with revisions across sectors and levels in society, it is also characteristic in other contexts including the reform of public services (education and child welfare) in the United States (US) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) [12]. The authors also refer to this type of governance as directly deliberative polyarchy (DPP); directly deliberative because it uses direct reactions and experiences of actors to generate novel perspectives for deliberation and polyarchy because local units learn from and set goals for each other [11].

Experimentalist governance is defined as “a recursive process of provisional goal-setting and revision based on learning from the comparison of alternative approaches to advancing them in different contexts” [12] (p. 3). Like natural science experiments, experimentalist governance is a cyclical process that is defined by four elements: 1. goal setting; 2. engagement of the local level through discretionary implementation; 3. regular performance reporting and peer review of results; and 4. revision of goals and process [12]. It emphasizes the setting of common framework goals around which local units are expected to experiment, goals such as good water quality, sustainable food, and access to education, among others. These local units can then use their judgment to adapt the goals to their unique contexts, with the caveat of peer review of mutual monitoring and reporting of results. This then results in modifications of goals and metrics and corrective action, and thus greater accountability. This tailoring of goals allows for diversity of views and methods and understanding to be built into the process. As not all implementation may not occur at the same time, it also allows for modification in different stages of the implementation process and the incorporation of different viewpoints, not just one dominant worldview. These governance processes are further termed experimentalist as they systematically incite uncertainty about their own assumptions and practices, question all solutions, and create ongoing adjustments through comparing different methods of reaching the common goals [12]. They are termed as ‘directly deliberative polyarchy (DPP); deliberative because they argument to uproot settled processes and directly deliberative as they use the experiences of actors’ different reactions to problems for innovative solutions [12]. They are described as polyarchic because of the characteristic of local actors learning from one another.

The authors emphasize that experimentalist governance should be understood as functional, rather than structural or institutional. The four constitutive elements should be interpreted as a set of necessary functions that can be implemented in many different institutional settings. There is “no one-to-one mapping of governance functions to specific institutional mechanisms or policy instruments and vice versa” [11] (p. 7). For example, a function such as planning can be done through a variety of institutional devices, operating in tandem or by itself. Equally, a single institutional process such as peer review can undertake different governance functions such as comparing different local implementation efforts and holding institutions accountable to the public. Experimentalist governance is pervasively implemented in a range of policy areas including data privacy, education food safety, genetically modified organisms (GMO), justice and home affairs, and external relations [11]. It is seen as emerging in these areas as a response to the limits of central decision making or command and control governance. While experimentalist governance (EG) may not be an immediate cure to the problems of legitimacy of the EU, it provides a new perspective in decision making and coordination that is playing a progressively important role in an increasingly complex world.

As such, experimentalist governance is a promising approach to analyze the complex, contentious, and changing issue of transnational collaboration for mitigation of Baltic Sea pollution and implementation of measures in the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). It is precisely for this reason that this framework is used as a basis for analysis of the Turku process.

2.2. Data Collection—Documents and Key Informant Interviews

This research uses the qualitative research method, using words rather than numbers to capture what exists, including differing perspectives and the qualitative researcher’s ability to capture multiple views on what exists. One advantage of qualitative, rather than quantitative research is that it can capture subtleties and meaning that would be missing with numbers [13]. This study uses document analysis of

EU documents available on the EU website and internet sources of literature on the Turku process. It is further complemented by key informant interviews of experts (experts here defined as persons involved in the process, and could be from a natural science background, in the Ministry of Environment, a diplomatic expert, or an administrative expert) involved in the Turku process. Experts were initially identified through personal contacts and from the websites. Interviews were open ended that typically lasted 2 h, with the researcher asking prepared leading questions and allowing the interviewee to elaborate. These answers were recorded in a notebook kept by the researcher.

Snowball sampling was also used, where an interview with one expert results in recommendations of other experts and contacts who were involved in the Turku process and can provide added perspective to the data collection process. Snowball sampling is useful for research as it identifies actors in a network, but this can lead to research findings from like-minded individuals. However, it provides access to in-depth information that would not be available elsewhere [13]. The snowball sampling process was conducted in a manner in that after locating an expert in the Turku process and conducting the interview, the researcher ended by saying, *‘Thank you for your time and for sharing your knowledge about the Turku process with me. I wonder if there were others who were involved or are knowledgeable about the Turku Process and who you think might be willing to meet with me?’*. This usually led to several other names and contact information that the researcher followed up on. By also using internet and personal network sources, this enabled triangulation of the data and minimized bias that might be inherent in the snowball sampling technique.

3. Results

3.1. The Turku Process

The Turku Process builds on a history of twin city cooperation between cities in the Baltic Sea Region and St. Petersburg. Turku was the first city to establish cooperation with St. Petersburg in 1953, progressing to a Turku City office opening in St. Petersburg in 1997 [14]. Hamburg was the second city in the Baltic Sea Region to establish twin city cooperation with St. Petersburg just a few years later in 1957. The Turku process builds on that long cooperation of these cities with St. Petersburg. The Turku Process was initiated by the City of Turku and the Regional Council of Southwest Finland in 2010, with the aim to increase cross border cooperation and with emphasis on regional Russian partners in the Baltic Sea Region [15]. According to the Turku process website, the Turku process is a joint initiative of the City of Turku/Regional Council of Southwest Finland, St. Petersburg, and Hamburg and supported by the European Commission’s Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO) [16].

The tripartite coordination group was established in the first informal round table meeting held in Turku, on the 23–24 September 2010 [17], which consisted of city representatives from Turku, Hamburg, and St. Petersburg. Support of the DG Regio was acknowledged by the presence of DG Regio. Dirk Ahner in the informal round table meeting held in Turku, as shown on the meeting notes. The objective of the meeting was stated as ‘to present and have an active discussion and consultation about current cooperation and activities between local authorities in the Baltic Sea Region and in particular, the existing cooperation with Russian local and regional partners [17]. Thematic areas of focus for the meeting included four categories: i. the environment; ii. prosperity business and business contacts; iii. security and maritime related issues and attractiveness; and iv. tourism related issues and cooperation. There were two expected outcomes, which focused on an analysis of existing cooperation between key actors and suggestions to improve this cooperation and discussion on ideas and ventures that were of mutual importance to the Russian stakeholders and the Baltic Sea Region.

Key stakeholders at the meeting included the Mayor of Turku, Aleksi Randell; DG Regio Mr. Dirk Ahner; Representative of the City of St. Petersburg, Dr. Nikolai D. Sorokin (Committee of Nature use, environmental protection and ecological safety, St. Petersburg); and Director of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), Mrs. Anne-Christine Brusendorff. There were also representatives

of various non-governmental organizations including the Pan European Institute of Turku, the Union of Baltic Cities, John Nurminen Foundation, Priority Area Coordinator for Tourism EUSBSR, Innoship, St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce, Pan European Institute Turku, and the Baltic University Programme. This list shows the diversity of interests represented at the meeting, including businesses and academia, who were interested parties to this cooperation.

The following section examines the Turku process further through the lens of experimentalist governance, to answer the question of whether it is an example of experimentalist governance designed to respond to the uncertain Baltic Sea environment through systematic, adaptive learning from trial and error experiments at the local level. It uses the four defining properties of experimentalist governance to examine the Turku process: 1. goal setting; 2. engagement of the local level in discretionary implementation; 3. regular performance reporting and peer review of results; and 4. revision of goals and process [12].

3.2. Goal Setting

The overarching goal of the Turku process was cooperation to aid in the implementation of the European Union Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). This was seen as vital to the success of the EUSBSR, as captured in a communication by the EU: ‘Close cooperation between EU and Russia is also necessary to tackle jointly many of the regional challenges’ [18]. This is a challenge, as Russia is not a member of the EU, but contains about one-eighth of the population of the Baltic Sea Region and the largest city (St. Petersburg) in the region, and is the largest country in the world spanning eleven time zones. Despite this, Russia was not included in the planning of the EUSBSR preparation because of administrative incompatibilities hindering EU–Russia cross border partnerships that occurred during 2006–2008 [19]. However, like other interested parties including Norway and Belarus, Russia presented a ‘non paper’ on the EUSBSR, offering a guarded welcome to this internal document. Russia pointed out the multilateral approaches such as the Northern Dimension (joint policy at the national level for dialogue and cooperation between EU, Russia, Norway, and Iceland) and the Council of Baltic Sea States that already included Russia [19]. While it was recognised that the Helsinki Convention, the Northern Dimension, and the Council of Baltic Sea States provided a ‘sound basis for agreement on principles and identification of common interests, they were less well adapted for development of concrete projects’ [19] (p. 3). This is the gap that the Turku process was envisioned to fill.

According to the Turku process website, the objective of the Turku process is to ‘bring together local actors, create dialogue, and enhance concrete project cooperation . . . above all, the aim is to bring EU and Russian actors closer to each other in the Baltic Sea Region’ [16]. This is done through round table meetings and events that serve as incubators and promoters of project cooperation. The first round table meeting discussed the need and potential of the Turku process, while the city of Hamburg formally joined the process in the second round table meeting. This is all done to aid in the achievement of the overarching Turku process’s goal of ‘practical joint actions for sustainable well-being of the Baltic Sea Region’ [16]. However, the interview process revealed that one of the challenges of the Turku process was turning the words of cooperation into practical action, as a key challenge was funding and deciding what actions to pursue.

While there are projects that were undertaken in the past as part of the Turku process, there is limited evidence of projects currently being undertaken as part of the Turku process. According to the Turku process secretariat representative (author interview), the resources of the Turku process are now taken up in coordination of the EUSBSR horizontal action (HA) neighbours. This seems relevant as the inclusion of HA neighbours was driven by the Turku process. According to key stakeholders, the most important contribution and sign that the goal of the Turku process has been met is ‘the inclusion of horizontal action (HA) ‘neighbours’ in the EUSBSR (author interview with Union of Baltic Cities representative, City of Turku Representative, and Centrum Balticum representative). The role of the Turku process in the inclusion of ‘neighbours’ was acknowledged by the European Union Communication [20] (p. 167): ‘Horizontal action ‘neighbours’ was included in EUSBSR Plan

of Action in February 2013 ... it was based on ... And the ‘Turku process’, a joint initiative by Turku/Regional Council of Southwest Finland, St. Petersburg, and Hamburg (Secretariat by Centrum Balticum Foundation) to promote practical cooperation between EU and Russian partners building on trust and experience accumulated over six decades of twin city cooperation’. This acknowledgment gives legitimacy to the role that the Turku process played in promoting cooperation to further the EUSBSR goals.

3.3. Engagement of the Local Level

The strength of the Turku process lies in the engagement of the local level, which is pursued for project cooperation. Documentation on the Turku process pointed to three projects being implemented with local level cooperation: i. BSR IWAMA—this project aims to improve wastewater management in the Baltic Sea Region and has the St. Petersburg Scientific Research Centre for Environmental Safety, Russian Academy of Science as an associated partner; ii. preKNIGHT—this project aims to create regional knowledge networks and includes the Turku University of Applied Sciences, St. Petersburg State University of Economics, and Hamburg University of Applied Sciences; and iii. TransMobinBSR—this project aims to establish networks between EU member states and Russia, focusing on transnational mobility in vocational education [16]. These are all examples of engagement on the local level for Baltic Sea region cooperation that are implemented across countries and subject to pooling of knowledge and review of implementation results, and subsequent revision.

This engagement at the local level is furthered by the presence of the City of Turku office in St. Petersburg. According to one interviewee, the Turku process was instrumental in furthering trust between city actors in Turku and St. Petersburg, such that they can each pick up the phone and call one another to talk about common issues (author interview 2 with NGO in Turku). Round table meeting minutes highlighted a range of local actors, including actors from the Vodakanal wastewater treatment plant in St. Petersburg, from academia in all three cities, and even industry representatives. This broad representation on the local level is conducive to effective project implementation actions, as a range of interests are represented on the ground where the impact is felt and where humans leave impact on the Baltic Sea ecosystem.

3.4. Regular Performance Reporting

The Turku process was initiated in 2010 and by 2013, was consumed into the HA ‘neighbours’. As such, the reporting period for the process spanned a period of three years, during which time reporting took the form of round table meetings. At the first round table meeting, the key focal areas of the Turku process were discussed, and included the environment, maritime related issues, cooperation, prosperity, and business contacts, all issues pertinent to the three focal areas of the EUSBSR (connect the region, save the sea, and increase prosperity). The second round table meeting was held in 2011 on 22 May in St. Petersburg (author interview with Turku process participant). While there was no concrete reporting on actual project work during this meeting, the goal of practical joint actions for a sustainable Baltic Sea Region was reiterated. During that meeting, there were also calls for ideas and proposals for practical joint actions in the Baltic Sea Region.

A third meeting/workshop was held in Hamburg and discussed joint actions and the need for funding for projects. However, there was no evidence of actual reporting on project implementation. The purpose of that meeting was listed as maintaining and accelerating desire to cooperate on projects contributing to the EUSBSR, but there was no reporting on projects as an item on the agenda. It should also be noted that all the projects that are linked to the Turku process started after this time and as such, there would not have been reporting on these projects during the formal Turku process round table meetings. The project BSRIWAMA is an Interreg funded project to a tune of 4.6 million Euros, which runs for the period 2016–2019. The project preKnight was started in 2013, one of the first seed money projects approved by the EU in 2013 for a period of one year. Likewise, TransMobinBSR was also a ‘neighbours’ seed money funded project to the tune of 47,650 Euros.

3.5. Revision of Goals and Process

During all the meetings of the Turku process, there was continued discussion of the process and calls for adapting the process to meet the objectives of concrete project cooperation. During the Hamburg meeting in 2012, there was a call for good projects linked to the EUSBSR in the following areas: i. reduction of nutrient load discharges by cities; ii. better ship handling and environmentally friendly port management; iii. improving access to technology for small and medium enterprises; and iv. improving skills of the labour force through labour market monitoring [15]. There was also an acknowledgment that the Turku process was a demonstration exercise and that it should be replicated in other cities, with a strong call for new partners issued at this meeting. The EU DG Regio also articulated that the Turku process would receive formal support from the Cohesion policy programs and informal, but tangible support from other EU policy areas. Funding was a dominant theme on the agenda of this meeting, signaling that access to funding was a challenge to this cooperative process.

The iterative process of goal setting was evident in the round table meetings, as each meeting built on the minutes of the last and reviewed goals such as increased membership and project cooperation. There was evidence of revision of goals with respect to membership as new meeting minutes included goals such as ‘to widen the pilot process by including new partners’ (Hamburg meeting minutes, 2012). However, there were no tangible revisions of project goals, but rather a revision of goals with respect to cooperation with more partners, with the aim of furthering project cooperation in the region. There were no targets nor milestones set in the meetings, and this could have led to a more dynamic Turku process. While the EUSBSR has definite targets such as clear water, among others, these were not translated into measurable goals of the Turku process. Rather, one of the chief aims was getting the process recognized, and this was achieved in the various EU communications and by the subsuming of the process in the HA ‘neighbours’. A question worth further discussion is whether this is enough or whether there should be a Turku process 2.0 to meet needs in the current post Ukraine Russia sanctioned environment. This will be discussed further in the discussion section.

4. Discussion

This paper examined the Turku process with the aim of determining whether it is a type of experimentalist governance designed to aid in reducing the complexity in governing the Baltic Sea environment. As the research has shown, to some degree, the Turku process displayed characteristics of experimental governance. There was goal setting, engagement of the local level, and review of goals and actions, but limited adapting of the process for in line with monitoring of results. A further cycle of the Turku process, a Turku process 2.0, would fulfill all the criteria of experimentalist governance. This would be useful, for as noted in the theory of experimentalist governance, the approach has the promise of addressing complex and contentious transnational issues like transboundary Baltic Sea governance, where there are conflicts of interests and political conflict acting as impediments to multilateral cooperation. The Baltic Sea region is characterized by complexity, with nine coastal countries each with its own language and eight out of nine being members of the EU with the exception of Russia. This complexity will only increase with increasing pressures such as climate change, global demographic growth, migration, urbanization, and rising pressures between Russia and Europe, as shown in Figure 3 [21].

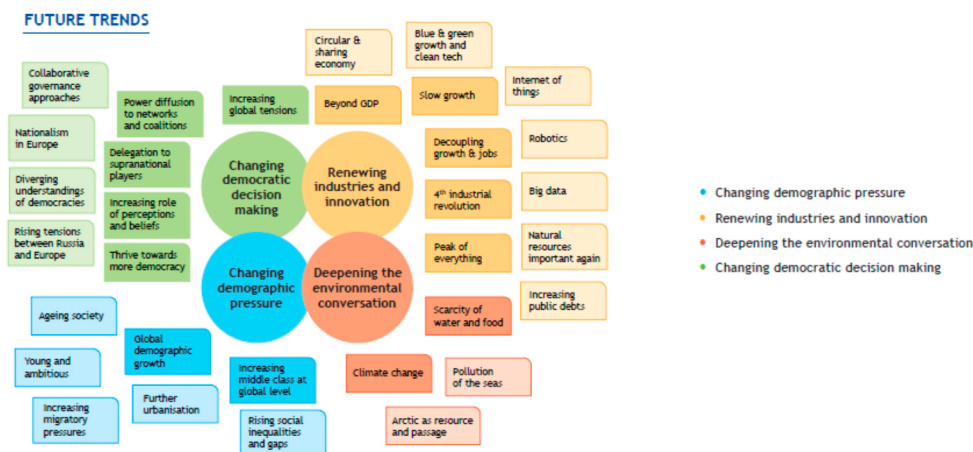


Figure 3. Future trends in the Baltic Sea Region [21].

According to researchers of future trends in the Baltic Sea Region report, there are two types of trends, one that relates to paradigm shifts in social and value changes (darker colours) and another that relates to specific markets such as technologies, policies and so on, referred to as major trends (lighter colour) [21]. As the green colour indicates, governance and decision making in the region are changing, with paradigm shifts such as increasing global tensions, delegation of power from national to supra-national actors and networks and coalitions, the increasing role of perceptions, and thriving towards democracy. At the same time, the major trends are moving towards increased tensions between Russia and Europe, diverging understanding of democracies in Europe, nationalism, and collaborative governance approaches.

These major trends of increasing tensions, especially between Russia and the EU, will pose growing challenges to the objectives of the EUSBSR, as they will make cooperation more challenging. This growing tension causes increasing discomfort over national security among Russia's neighbors and impacts implementation of EUSBSR. As countries of the Baltic Sea Region are members of supranational organizations, such as the EU, their decision making is impacted by European policies such as sanctions imposed on Russia and by Russia and the EU. The rising tension with Russia was acknowledged by Finland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Timo Soini, at the Baltic Sea Region Forum on 14 May 2018, in which he said that 'tensions will not disappear until the crisis in Ukraine is solved' [22]. These increasing tensions and sanctions point to declining interest at the national level in finding joint solutions, as there is a decrease in finding cooperative solutions and an increase in national interests, especially in relations with Russia. However, this overall nationalism trend points to challenges in finding joint solutions and poses challenges to implementation of the EUSBSR, as own interests seem to override the common good. This diverging understanding of democracy and declining of a shared value base in the region can also pose further challenges on joint implementation actions.

However, the paradigm shift of more collaborative governance could counteract these challenges, especially if there is more cooperation between subnational actors such as cities and communities. This is an opportunity for a revitalization of the Turku process, or a Turku process 2.0, as concrete project cooperation can continue the good relations on the local level, making the EUSBSR more visible and implementation more effective. According to one expert interviewed (author interview 3 with Turku process expert), there is need for a Turku Process 2.0, as 'where there is no prospect of EU Russia dialogue, which we had before Crimea, it would be good to come back to the Turku process, as there is need for better dialogue and a more flexible process; local authorities can do more than official government bodies'. Another expert added that for a Turku process 2.0, the question needs to be asked, 'what value will be added', and if the value is in local action, which neither the Northern Dimension nor the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) specifically addresses, then there is need for a revitalization of the Turku process (author interview 4 with BSR expert).

The Turku process 2.0 can continue to engage industry, businesses, nongovernmental, and governmental organizations, leading to better shared understandings and symbiotic partnerships. This is supported by research on policy integration, which shows that communication and partnerships can be a major facilitator (or also detractor) of joint work among sectors, creating policy synergies and sharing of responsibility of policy implementation actions [23]. The general culture of trust developed during the first Turku process, which resulted in local officials being able to call each other on the phone to discuss joint issues, is essential for policy integration and effective implementation. The increasingly important role of cities in governance has been acknowledged in the EU white paper on governance [24], which acknowledged the importance of multilevel governance. It included principles of openness and participation and stated that the current policy practices of the EU are reinforcing the role of the sub-national organizations and their policy implementation. The EU white paper on governance requires that the European commission engage representatives of regional, urban, and local government and non-governmental organizations and their networks in a transparent manner. It further notes that networks have the potential to have a '... more effective contribution to EU policies' [24] (p. 18). A revitalized Turku process 2.0 would be in keeping with this commitment for more effective engagement at the local level.

5. Conclusions

The Baltic Sea continues to be one of the most polluted marine areas globally, facing challenges such as summertime algal blooms and pressures from shipping through its narrow and shallow straits, changing demographic patterns, and changing demographic decision making. Recognizing this, the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region is designed to foster cooperation by member states on Baltic Sea issues. However, there are growing tensions with Russia, the only Baltic Sea coastal country that is not a member of the EU and as such, is only a partner country to the EUSBSR. This adds further complexity to the multilevel governance architecture of the Baltic Sea governance. This has led local actors to look at novel ways of working together to implement the EUSBSR. This paper examined one such cooperative mechanism, the Turku process, and illustrated the experimentalist governance using the Turku process, presenting key theoretical underpinnings of experimentalist governance. It has demonstrated that the Turku process displays key characteristics of experimentalist governance, such as setting the goal of project cooperation for implementation of the EUSBSR and engaging of local actors. There have been several meetings to review progress of the partnerships. One of the key signs of goal achievement was the incorporation of the horizontal action 'neighbours' into the EUSBSR. This has consumed the Turku process, which has not been effective in the fourth dimension of experimentalist governance, that is, adapting the process.

This paper shows that this can be done through another iteration of the Turku Process, a Turku process 2.0, which has the potential to engage local actors for greater trust and policy coherence when there is increasing tension between Russia and EU on the national level. This iteration will allow for the systems based approach of experimentalist governance to be fully implemented with each of the four components fully in place, as they all depend on each other in an iterative process. Further, experimentalist governance is desirable in the Baltic Sea Region, as there are diverging interests and the overall governance architecture does not allow for one hegemon to set and impose its own rules [25] for good environmental status. It is especially suited to transnational domains such as cities in the Baltic Sea region where common goals, such as those in the 'save the sea' objective of the EUSBSR, can be interpreted at the local level. In this case, conditions at the local level in Baltic Sea countries differ considerably, so a flexible implementation allows for the diffusion of potential conflicts through shared understanding. This openness creates policy space and increased motivation for local actors in pursuing shared interests and goals. The EUSBSR provides a common harness to steer and guide diverse views, in order to mitigate against the potential stalling when many views are entertained at once.

A Turku process 2.0 has the potential to bring actors and institutions together to generate political change to further Baltic Sea protection aims. Effective institutions can stimulate the political action at

three key points in the policy process [26]: i. The Turku process 2.0 has the potential to contribute to more appropriate agendas and reflect the convergence of the political and technical consensus about the nature of the environment through a bottom-up incorporation of local level knowledge and practices into the EUSBSR; ii. It has the potential to contribute to more comprehensive and specific international policies agreed upon through HELCOM, whose core is intergovernmental bargaining; and iii. It has the potential to contribute to national policy responses that directly control sources of environmental degradation such as Russia's policy on fertilizer application to crops that are planted near the Baltic Sea. Governance through a process such as the Turku process 2.0 can serve to amplify public pressure when they foster competition among local authorities, and hence national governments, to take more protection measures to work towards the good environmental status of the Baltic Sea. This would build on the history in the Baltic Sea Region where institutions that refracted and magnified local environmental concerns led to more and accelerated national pollution control programs. For example, institutional change (such as formation of HELCOM etc.) has translated into better environmental protection, such as an across the board 50 percent reduction for 37 significant pollutants and 70 percent reductions for dioxins, mercury, cadmium, and lead emissions before 1995 in the Baltic Sea Region [26].

Funding: The author would like to thank Marko Joas for his support throughout this work. The author would like to thank all the experts who shared their time and knowledge of the Turku Process and also the independent peer reviewers. The author would like to acknowledge funding support from the BaltReg Project, funded by the Åbo Akademi University and the Academy of Finland (decision 2015 nr: 290331) and the URMI project—Urbanization, Mobilities and Immigration (decision nr: 303619).

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; and in the decision to publish the results.

References and Notes

1. Reusch, T.B.; Dierking, J.; Andersson, H.C.; Bonsdorff, E.; Carstensen, J.; Casini, M.; Czajkowski, M.; Hasler, B.; Hinsby, K.; Hyytiäinen, K.; et al. The Baltic Sea as a Time Machine for the Future Coastal Ocean. *Sci. Adv.* **2018**, *4*, eaar8195. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
2. Jetoo, S. Barriers to Effective Eutrophication Governance: A Comparison of the Baltic Sea and North American Great Lakes. *Water* **2018**, *10*, 400. [[CrossRef](#)]
3. Räsänen, T.; Laakkonen, S. Institutionalization of an International Environmental Policy Regime: The Helsinki Convention, Finland and the Cold War. In *Governing a Common Sea: Environmental Policies in the Baltic Sea Region*; Earthscan: London, UK, 2008; pp. 43–59.
4. HELCOM. The Convention. 2018. Available online: <http://www.helcom.fi/about-us/convention/> (accessed on 24 May 2018).
5. HELCOM. Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) Website. Available online: <http://www.helcom.fi/> (accessed on 31 May 2018).
6. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Website. Available online: <http://balticsea-region.eu/> (accessed on 24 May 2018).
7. Hooghe, L.; Marks, G. Unraveling the Central State, But How? Types of Multi-Level Governance. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* **2003**, *97*, 233–243.
8. Kohler-Koch, B.; Rittberger, B. The 'governance turn' in EU studies. *JCMS J. Common Mark. Stud.* **2006**, *44*, 27–49. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Christiansen, T.; Piattoni, S. *Informal Governance in the European Union*; Edward Elgar Publishing: Cheltenham, UK, 2003.
10. Tömmel, I.; Verdun, A. *Innovative Governance in the European Union: The Politics of Multilevel Policymaking*; Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder, CO, USA, 2009.
11. Sabel, C.F.; Zeitlin, J. *Experimentalist Governance in the European Union: Towards a New Architecture*; Oxford University Press on Demand: Oxford, UK, 2010.
12. Sabel, C.F.; Zeitlin, J. Experimentalist Governance. *Oxf. Handb. Gov.* **2012**, *1*, 2–4.
13. Gray, P.S.; Williamson, J.B.; Karp, D.A.; Dalphin, J.R. *The Research Imagination: An Introduction to Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2007.

14. St. Petersburg Administration. Official Portal of the City Government 2001–2005. Available online: <https://archive.is/20090224073839/http://eng.gov.spb.ru/figures/ities#selection-663.0-663.409> (accessed on 11 June 2018).
15. The Turku Process. Notes obtained from ex-official of the City of Turku. 2010 and 2012.
16. Centrum Balticum. The Turku Process. Available online: http://www.centrumbalticum.org/en/projects/turku_process (accessed on 11 June 2018).
17. First Round Table Meeting Minutes. Turku Informal Round Table on Baltic Sea Cooperation Special Focus: Effective cooperation with Russian Local and Regional Partners. September 2010.
18. European Commission Communication. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, com (2009) 248 Final of 10.6.2009). Available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52009DC0248&from=EN> (accessed on 28 June 2018).
19. Ahner, D. Completing the Circle—Russia and the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Expert Article 740 Baltic Rim Economies 31. 5. 2011. Quarterly Review 2–2011. Available online: <https://www.utu.fi/fi/yksikot/tse/yksikot/PEI/BRE/Documents/BRE%202-2011%2030.5.2011.pdf> (accessed on 12 June 2018).
20. European Commission. Commission Staff Working Document. European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Action Plan {Com (2009) 248. Brussel, 20.3. 2017. SWD (2017) 118 Final. Available online: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7610-2017-INIT/en/pdf> (accessed on 12 June 2018).
21. Böhme, K.; Zillmer, S.; Hans, S.; Antikainen, J.; Pyykkonen, S. *Looking Towards 2030: Preparing the Baltic Sea Region for the Future*; Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth: Stockholm, Sweden, 2016.
22. Centrum Balticum. Our News. Hybrid Threats, Digitalization and Environmental Cooperation. 2018. Available online: http://www.centrumbalticum.org/en/news_room/our_news/hybrid_threats_digitalisation_and_environmental_cooperation_-_register_now_to_the_baltic_sea_region_forum_2018.5328.news (accessed on 12 June 2018).
23. OECD. *Building Policy Coherence, Tools and Tensions*; Public Management Occasional Papers, No. 12; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development: Paris, France, 1996.
24. Commission of the European Communities (CEC). *European Governance: A White Paper*; COM 428; CEC: Brussels, Belgium, 2001. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/european-governance-white-paper_en (accessed on 25 June 2018).
25. Overdevest, C.; Zeitlin, J. Assembling an Experimentalist Regime: Transnational Governance Interactions in the Forest Sector. *Regul. Gov.* **2014**, *8*, 22–48. [CrossRef]
26. Levy, M.A.; Haas, P.M.; Keohane, R.O. Institutions for the Earth: Promoting International Environmental Protection. *Environ. Sci. Policy Sustain. Dev.* **1992**, *34*, 12–36. [CrossRef]



© 2018 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).