

EMERGENCE OF BALTIC SEA REGION COOPERATION AND THE ORIGIN OF THE BALTIC UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME

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A word of dedication

This chapter on the origin of the cooperation between universities and peoples in the Baltic Sea region is dedicated to Professor Witold Maciejewski in honor of his contributions to the processes described here. His promotion of culture as a sign of identity, of democracy, and of understanding and respect of others has been incorporated in the Baltic University culture. It will be nurtured by all of us who have become friends and family during many years of working, socializing and getting older together.

Tuesday, August 20, 1991

The ferry from Stockholm to Tallinn left without me, although I had a ticket. I was advised by colleagues at Tallinn Technical University not to travel. "There are eleven Russian warships in the harbor and the TV building is occupied by troops" they said. I had in my luggage parabolas and receiving equipment for satellite TV for several universities so I agreed, it is best to stay home. It was two days after the coup of the generals and Mikhail Gorbachev was in custody in the summer house; the political situation in the region, especially in Russia, was very tense.

This was the time when our university cooperation in the Baltic Sea region was being established. The network was born in dramatic circumstances half a year earlier when the first conference took place in Kalmar, Sweden, only a month after the serious attack on Vilnius by Russian Omon troops, which led to 14 killed civilians. On the way from Stockholm to Kalmar to that conference we watched clandestine videos, smuggled from Lithuania by a professor of genetics, showing the event. Also then the TV tower was occupied and all TV broadcasts interrupted. It is clear that the Soviet power was more afraid of information than anything

else. The Kalmar conference sent a letter to General Secretary of Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev requesting free flow of information as a basic condition for universities and for democracy.

The coup of the generals failed as we got to know a few days later. Instead the then rather unknown Boris Yeltsin entered the political scene, and only five months later the Soviet Union had ended.¹

THE BACKGROUND: THE 1980s AND BEFORE

The historical changes in our region, and large parts of the rest of the world, in 1989–91 are perhaps the most dramatic and important in our lifetime. They may only be compared to the two world wars. In fact, one may argue that they form the end of the world wars. Those who watched the exodus of the Red Army from Estonia in August 1994 with tanks (admittedly loaded on trains) and the rest of the military arsenals have reasons to think so. For sure the Latvians felt similarly when watching the demolition – broadcasted live in Latvian TV – of the Soviet radar base in Skrunda, including an 18 stories building, in August 1998. (The Skrunda radar base had an extended permit to stay as opposed to the rest of the Russian military presence in the three Baltic States.)

To fully understand the initiatives and developments, which took place in the wake of these events, one needs to describe the political atmosphere in the 1980s. We may start around 1982. It is the end of the Brezhnev era and the beginning of the changes in Russia, which led to the entrance of Mikhail Gorbachev as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and then to *glasnost* and *perestroika*. It is then that the efforts to reform the Soviet System from within began, efforts which led to its collapse.

It is interesting that none of the political scientists in the west predicted this collapse; neither did those who were part of the system. An interesting comment was given to me by Professor Jonas Kubilius, who had served as Rector of Vilnius University up to 1991 for an impressive total of 33 years. He mentioned that when he saw the decline of the economy of the sector he was part of – higher education in the Soviet Union – he concluded that some form of breakdown would be inevitable. Another comment was given by a former Lithuanian journalist, who took part in the Baltic Family conference in Kaunas in October 1990 (to be described below). He was trained as a journalist in Moscow; in 1982 he was asked to go back to Lithuania and explicitly publish articles on groups of young people and citizens who wanted to reform the political system. A change of the petrified Soviet political culture was considered necessary and was promoted from top down.

Some may point to the strikes and formation of the independent trade union *Solidarność* in Gdańsk in 1980 as the beginning of the immediate prehistory. I would rather see this as the final phase of the long prehistory in which the Polish society, rather than Russian, played the main role. It includes the demon-

¹ All quotes by Lars Rydén unless otherwise stated.

strations in Poznań in 1956, the much more serious events in Gdańsk in 1970 and later the Gdańsk strikes in 1980, the martial laws in 1981–83 (or 86) and finally the round table agreements between the Polish Communist party and the Solidarność in 1989, which led to the first “semi-free” elections in Poland in June that year.

While these changes happened in the East, people in the West were more and more concerned with the increasingly hostile behavior of the Soviet Union, and similar responses from the NATO side. The deployment of the so-called medium range nuclear missiles in the mid-1980s changed our world. Now 6 minutes was all remaining from a decision to press the button for the missile launch to an actual nuclear blast. Any mistake would be disastrous. The shooting down of a South Korean airliner by Russian air fighters in September 1983, with the death of the 269 civilian passengers, increased the tension further. Next followed large military operations, the deployment of Pershing II missiles in 1984 and the development of the missile defense, the Strategic Defense Initiative, SDI – also called star wars – in the United States and a corresponding project in the Soviet Union. Central Europe became the most heavily armed region in the world. This chain of escalating events was finally broken by the Reagan-Gorbachev agreement on the complete abolishment of all intermediate range nuclear missiles made in Iceland in 1986. Five years later, in 1991, the Cold War was declared ended.

Many argue that the overwhelming costs of the military development broke the economic backbone of the Soviet Union and led to its collapse. Others believe that the general internal deficiencies of the Soviet system were behind its breakdown. Certainly the reasons were complicated and not explained by a single factor.

THE FIRST UNIVERSITY NETWORKS

The increasing east-west tension in the early 1980s prompted several initiatives to establish international university networks. The mission was to build bridges and decrease the threats in an insecure world.

In September 1986 I was asked by Uppsala University Rector Martin H:son Holmdahl to respond to an invitation from Tufts University to join an effort to build such a network. Just a few weeks later when visiting Boston I took the occasion to see President Jean Mayer of Tufts, a person well-known and respected in the United States, advisor to several presidents. Concerned with the worsening east-west relationships he argued that universities, which by nature were promoting international cooperation and understanding, had a responsibility to contribute to a different development. Jean Mayer had very concrete experiences from the Second World War, as he was fighting in the French forces in North Africa. Together with President Matsumaye of Tokai University in Tokyo he invited me and Professor Peter Wallenstein from the department of Peace and Conflict

research at Uppsala university, to the first conference of university rectors “on the responsibility of universities in the nuclear age” in Tokyo the following year, August 1987. Of course it was not a coincidence that Japan was the inviting party and the initiator of this cooperation. Japan is the only country with experience of the atomic bomb, and President Matsumae had himself as a physicist been part of discovering what happened in Hiroshima and as a consequence, worked for the Japanese capitulation. Thus in 1987 it was a collection of remarkable individuals representing universities in Asia, Europe, North America and Africa, who gathered to discuss how universities could contribute to international understanding and reduced tension over the iron curtain.

One of the most interesting initiatives at this meeting was proposed by Martin Sherwin, Professor of history and Director of the Nuclear Age History and Humanities Center at Tufts University. His idea was to set up a satellite bridge between Moscow and Boston to give specialists and students the opportunity to show and discuss the development of the nuclear age, the development of nuclear weapons, their role in the defense of the countries, critical moments such as the Cuban missile crisis, and the present situation. Martin Sherwin later met in Moscow with Professor Evgeny Velikov, professor of physics at Moscow State Lomonosov University and an advisor in nuclear matters to the Soviet leadership. He liked the idea and in no time an agreement was made. Thus in 1988 a series of five 2 hours long satellite space bridges named *The Global Classroom* were staged. Remarkable persons never before appearing in public, e.g. those behind the development of the first Soviet atom bomb in the 1940s, and the Americans who detected the missile installations on Cuba in 1962, participated. About 300 students on each side from Tufts and Lomonosov universities asked questions. An atmosphere of *glasnost* prevailed and the discussions were very open.

As a follow-up to the Tokyo conference, 40 university rectors (including Rector Holmdahl passing on his way to Bologna) met in October 1988 at Talloires in France, where the Tufts University European Centre was housed in a (former) Benedictine monastery, to sign the *Talloires declaration*. At the meeting the Talloires Universities Group, TUG, was formed, and Uppsala University became a node in its tri-national secretariat located in Tokyo-Boston-Uppsala.

September 13, 1991. The first round tour of the Baltic Sea

Finally the travel to Tallinn became possible. When arriving in the harbor I was received by Prof. Rein Munter from Tallinn Technical University, who had been to the Kalmar meeting. He was one of the many university academics who got involved in several networks, including our own, which grow up like mushrooms over the region at this time. Many of them were initiated in Sweden, but other countries were not late to join. Cooperation between those networks was almost always excellent.

Our first visit, to the opera in Tallinn, was interesting to say the least. On the stage were the 100 delegates of the previous Estonian Soviet Republic-Estonian independence had been officially recognized by Soviet Union-sitting on simple chairs discussing how to establish a new state. Which constitution? Which government? Outside the opera in the city many small groups promoted their own solutions for democracy and their own political party. About 120

parties were running for parliament in the first election. One of them wanted Estonia to be part of the Swedish Kingdom, reflecting the very positive attitudes of Estonian towards Swedes during these first years of independence.

Visiting Tartu was particularly interesting. Tartu, with the biggest military airbase in the three Baltic Soviet Republics, had been a closed city up to some months earlier. It was now devoid of airplanes but very polluted. We met several researchers at Tartu University including Hans Trass, an important person in the first years of the new independence. In general university professors, in Estonia especially biologists, did play a key role in establishing the new states. They had organized public hearings with politicians regarding several environmental problems; most serious was the open pit mining of phosphorite. We visited the mining site in Rakvere, proposed to be enlarged: It looked terrible and the Estonian protests were easy to understand. But Sunday was special: A meeting at the big stadium for song festivals with thousands of participants celebrated the independence. If you have a chance, do not miss an Estonian song festival.

THE ORIGIN OF UNIVERSITY COOPERATION IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Inspired by Martin Sherwin and the Global Classroom I suggested in April 1989 to the leadership of Uppsala University, meeting under Rector Martin Holmdahl, to develop a university network – not on a global scale but in the Baltic Sea region. The main argument was to promote international university contacts, very minimal in our region during the Cold War, as political changes now made it possible.

The idea was not entirely far-fetched. Uppsala had for decades had agreements with Tartu University in Estonia, the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and Charles University in Prague on exchange of teachers. Part of this exchange worked well, especially the Polish one, other parts with some difficulties, but anyway there was a concern to promote and manage it as well as could be. The contacts had in addition become important during the difficult martial law years in Poland in the 1980s as support to Polish universities. Uppsala then extended the contacts to the universities in Wrocław, Poznań, Łódź and Gdańsk. Other important steps already taken included the first Bologna meeting in 1988, when the University in Bologna celebrated 900 years by inviting European Universities to sign a “Magna Charta” for universities, a step which eventually led to the transformation and intensified cooperation of higher education in all of Europe.

Indeed Rector Holmdahl was for a long time concerned about international cooperation of universities, not least in Central and Eastern Europe. From 1984 he was a member of the board, called Bureau, of CRE, the European Rectors Conference (which later became the European Universities Association, EUA). Up to then a few universities in Poland and former Yugoslavia had been members. When, after the changes in 1985, cooperation with Soviet universities became possible, he invited several eastern universities to a CRE meeting in Warsaw in 1988 to plan for further cooperation. A first conference with substantial participation of rectors from East as well as West took place at Uppsala University in the summer of 1989.

Thus when the Rector's meeting in April 1989 decided to give me one year 25% time to develop a detailed proposal for a Baltic Sea region university cooperation it was part of a larger scheme.

SETTING UP A NETWORK – THE BALTIC FAMILY CONFERENCE

But how to find the possible participants in such a project? I had my own small network already then, which was a beginning. There was my cooperation with researchers from both PAN, the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the Russian Academy in my own field of biochemistry. I had been taking part in research conferences in both countries during the 1980s. To this were added new contacts from the Talloires network, especially important for contacts with Russian universities.

Another important contact was Dr. Lucija Baskauskas, an anthropologist from California State University, who was the director of an exchange program between California and Uppsala as well as Copenhagen. Dr. Baskauskas, originally from Kaunas in Lithuania from where she as a baby fled with her parents from Soviet occupation forces in 1940, was very concerned about the developments in Lithuania. She became stationed in Uppsala during 1989 and 1990, whence she travelled to Lithuania. In 1990 she took up the position as vice rector for academic affairs at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. One of her first efforts was to call for support from the region. In cooperation with colleagues in Uppsala she organized in October 1990 the *Baltic Family Conference* in Kaunas, the very first university conference for the region. (The conference was first planned for May 1990, but was postponed as visa matters took too long.) A 30 people strong Nordic delegation took part under the leadership of Professor Harald Runblom, director of the Centre for multiethnic studies at Uppsala University, coming there in a leased airplane, since there was no regular traffic. At the conference I introduced the proposal of the Baltic University (it had not yet that name), a proposal which was met with 100% skepticism. No one believed it would be possible to set up such a thing. Nevertheless in the following years Lucija Baskauskas became a key person, and a strong support, when building the Baltic University.

Another resource was the already mentioned CRE, *Conference des Recteurs Européennes*, and the International Association of Universities, IAU, which had been represented at the Tokyo conference. The members in the associations were all listed in catalogues and this made a first resource of official addresses. Letters most often worked quite well although not fast. Universities in the then communist countries often had a (one) fax, in the Rectors' office. Unfortunately it was often turned off (to save paper!). Telephones of course existed, but expensive to use. It was not always easy to reach each other.

Additionally, several new actors had entered the scene by 1990 and 1991. The initiative to what later became CBUR, *Conference of Baltic University Rec-*

tors, was taken in Gdańsk in fall of 1990, and its first conference was organized by Lund University in Visby on Gotland, in September 1991. It was well staged. The Swedish king and queen were present during the prestigious introductory lunch at Hotel Wisby. Unfortunately the airplane with the royal couple could initially not land due to bad weather conditions and was circulating waiting for a possible improvement. In the meantime the introductory seminar was shortened minute by minute and when they eventually were able to land there was only some ten minutes left. The material I had, with the first TV reports, for example the filming of the Leningrad dam from a helicopter, was considered the most interesting. Thus the only information the king and queen received as introduction was about the Baltic University. During the coming years, when the CBUR conferences travelled around the universities as the presidency of the meetings changed, the Baltic University was always given a place to report.

September 16, 1991

The night train from Tallinn to Riga was hard class, Soviet style, but not only hard, also quite wet. I was chewing on the very tasty cabbage pirogues provided by Ms. Munter, thinking on the situation, and slept a little. In the morning I was picked up by new friends from the Kalmar meeting in Riga. We spent the day visiting Latvian TV and agreed on broadcasting the Baltic Sea Environment series to the general public in Latvia with simultaneous translation into Latvian. It was the first agreement on televised education to the general public to be followed by agreements with several Polish stations, and later stations in Finland, Sweden and of course Lithuania.

We entered the TV Latvia building on the island in Daugava River, by passing a series of huge concrete blocks which were there to protect the tower from Russian tanks. The lesson from January 13 had been well learned and they were prepared for the August 20 coup. I heard many words on what happened during these August days, also on victims in Riga. The most spectacular was the “decommissioning” of the Latvian Communist Party head quarter in central Riga. Tons of paper documents had been either thrown out through the window several stories up, or burnt. Of course most of them could be used for post Soviet court cases as the Communist party was made illegal, both in Russia and the Baltic States. But at the beginning it was not obvious who would end with victory. Perhaps the hard liners. One friend (professor of physics) had been hiding under the bridges prepared for a Soviet troop invasion. Luckily both this professor and others were not sent to Gulag as they feared, but rather were soon serving in the local or national assemblies in independent Latvia.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WAS ON TOP OF THE AGENDA

The Talloires Universities network started by addressing global peace and disarmament. The first practical project in the network was the 1988 *Global Classroom* space bridges concerned with the history of the nuclear age and the hope to contribute to not only physical but as well mental and perhaps cultural bridges between the two superpowers. It did result in friendship between many academics and students involved; it is not clear if it had wider consequences for international relations. But certainly the project was an educational one and a first important question was “can education of the young generation in global issues

contribute to a better world?" I am still not sure what the answer to that question is, or rather, to what extent it is part of a solution.

The global classroom project reached students at two universities. The 10 hours of videotapes existed for reuse and written material was produced at Uppsala University, but it was sadly enough not much used by new groups of students. As a follow-up step in July 1990 I was part of an expert group, which met at Tallories in France to design a course on global issues. The course plan was expanded beyond the original tasks to include environmental issues and development. It may be perceived as an effort to look behind the peace agenda and address the causes of global conflict.

It should also be mentioned that another group at Tufts University, dominated by environmental scientists, already the same year gathered at Talloires to agree on international university cooperation for Sustainable Development. It is a pity that cooperation between the two groups was never established, an illustration of the failing contacts between natural sciences and social sciences and humanities.

In the Baltic Sea region we saw a similar development. The Baltic Family conference in October 1990 was concerned with building bridges between the countries in the region, in particular East and West, while the preparatory work for Baltic University focused on education and environment, in particular the environment of the common Baltic Sea. The proposal to focus on environment was easy to make and met with enthusiasm and support by all partners involved and in all countries contacted. It was obvious that we in the environmental agenda had a common understanding, a common language and a common goal – to improve the disastrous situation of the Baltic Sea in particular, and the environment in our countries in general.

This does not mean that the drama of the independence movement in the Soviet republics – or in general the struggle of the democratic forces in Central and Eastern Europe – was forgotten. The environment in this period had a strong political dimension. In Estonia the independence forces rallied to stop the large-scale phosphorite mining planned by the Soviet "All Union Mining Authority". The proposed mining project was seen both as a physical and an "existential" attack on the country: Strip mining would destroy the landscape and poison the groundwater used for drinking with heavy metals and other contaminants. Meetings regarding this issue, which was politically possible to address openly in the Estonian Soviet Republic, were held from the early and mid-1980s, and many researchers took part in the protests against the planned mining. In Latvia a proposed large hydropower plant in Daugava river played a similar role, and in Lithuania it was the Ignalina nuclear power plant, of the same construction as the Chernobyl plant (the April 1986 disaster in Chernobyl was then very recent) and run almost 100% by Russian personnel, which met resistance.

To add to this consensus on the key role of environmental issues the Conference of European Rectors, in their most important meeting to involve the East-

ern European universities in their cooperation in Warsaw in June 1988, created the COPERNICUS project as a first task. The Copernicus project was a research and industry network on issues of environmental law, environmental medicine and environmental management. As already mentioned, Uppsala University Rector Holmdahl played a key role in Warsaw in 1988. He supported the Baltic University initiative with the intention to make this a part of the Copernicus programme, and of course got disappointed by the fact that it never came true. Stockholm University, then much more established as a centre for the research and education on the environmental issues of the Baltic Sea, with the important Askö Laboratory in the Archipelago, quite independently of what happened in Uppsala, got the task to develop a Baltic Sea region Copernicus project. However, the efforts in Stockholm limited itself to two research courses on marine environmental science with some 20 students invited from the countries in the region. A later proposal to merge the Baltic University and the Stockholm University projects never developed as the Stockholm efforts did not continue. The main reason seems to be that Copernicus was never financed properly. It should be added that Baltic University had a very important and good cooperation and support from the researchers in Stockholm throughout, however outside the Copernicus context.

September 18, 1991

The travel continued from Riga to Kaunas by car, as I was picked up by colleagues from the Baltic Family conference. I noticed that there were almost no signs to show the way into the big city of Riga. We passed the terribly polluting factories in Olaine. The environment was certainly a big concern, both in Latvia and the other Baltic States. (Two years later Poland and the three Baltic states had Europe's highest share of budget for environmental work, especially to improve water management.) In Kaunas Vytautas Magnus University served as host. Lucija Baskauskas organized the visit to her TV studio – she was now a TV star in Lithuania – and we agreed on broadcasting Baltic University in Lithuania.

The following day we visited the parliament in Vilnius. Again huge concrete blocks were surrounding the entire parliament building to protect it against a possible Russian attack. But even more so, inside the building there were machine gun nest at several of the staircases. They were prepared to fight. The Lithuanians would not easily give up their newly won independence and democratic institutions and it was clear that they had a very recent experience of what it may take to do so.

THE KALMAR MEETING AND THE START OF THE BALTIC UNIVERSITY

The academic year 1989–90 was used to explore content and form of the proposed Baltic Sea region university network and space bridges. In particular it turned out to be difficult to find the right technology needed to set up satellite TV in the region. This problem was, however, solved when we found Swedish Telecommunications (later Teracom), the company responsible for the distribution of all radio and TV broadcasts in Sweden. One of their directors, Roine Modigh, became our enthusiastic supporter and solved all the difficulties. In particular we were able to use the Nordic Tele X satellite for broadcasting. Tele X had an ideal coverage of the Baltic Sea region, just where it was most important.

I had the environmental science contacts needed for a proper scientific background to the proposed agenda since before. As early as 1982 I was organizing an interdisciplinary course in environmental science at Uppsala University – the first of its kind – along the lines which later became typical for Baltic University. Contacts were also made with environmentalists in some of the countries in the region, especially Finland, Denmark, and Poland.

As our work continued so did the political developments. On our TV screens we saw a drama in which no one could foresee or predict the next step: The breaking down of the iron curtain between Hungary and Austria in the summer of 1989; marches in Leipzig for civil rights in the East German so-called “Democratic” Republic followed by the fall of the wall on November 9, 1989. The velvet revolution in Prague in December and the revolution in Romania and the assassination of the Ceausescus on Christmas 1989, and the unilaterally declared independence of Lithuania in 1990. In Sweden we saw weekly protests against the Soviet system and support for independence of the Baltic Republics, especially Estonia. In Poland the Martial law had come to an end and the first – partly – free elections had been held. *Solidarność* had become a political party and was now in the Sejm, the parliament, and represented in many local and regional assemblies.

In the fall of 1990, in parallel to the planning of the Baltic family conference, we took the next steps in order to call to a meeting to set up our own network. The Telecommunication Training Centre in Kalmar, was through Benno Engström offering to host the meeting. Kalmar on the Swedish Baltic Sea coast was a symbolically proper place, on the medieval border between Denmark and Sweden and the place for the Nordic Kalmar Union. The conference was financed by the Swedish Agency for International Technical and Economic Cooperation, BITS, through its brand new budget for cooperation in the region, especially with Poland (BITS later became the department of Sida responsible for cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe).

The conference was called for the 19–22 February 1991; a number of universities were invited to send one or two representatives to consider the proposal of Uppsala University to:

conduct as a joint project a satellite-bridged television university level course on the Baltic Sea environment; the course was intended to be carried out using video recordings produced at the participating universities, and include live discussions between students and teachers at the universities over the satellite, so-called space bridges. (*Report...* 1991)

I expected that perhaps 20 universities would be interested to join a project such as this one. But in spite of difficulties to find efficient ways to distribute the invitation 33 universities were represented at the Kalmar conference. At the conference all of them were invited to join the coming network and contribute. The project had been prepared for more than a year with tens of experts so the outline was quite established but there was still much leeway for individual

contributions. In addition to the Swedish partners (the universities or technical universities in Uppsala, Stockholm, Umeå, Luleå, Lund and Göteborg), which had taken on tasks within the project and made presentations at the meeting, several others made excellent contributions. These included for example Åbo Akademi University in Finland, St. Petersburg State University in Russia, Tallinn Technical University in Estonia, and Warsaw University in Poland. Others were, as expected, quite skeptical but much less so than during the Baltic family conference in Kaunas a half a year earlier. Perhaps the presence of Swedish telecom had an impact.

Also the Kalmar conference became part of the political drama of the region. A month earlier, on January 13, the Russian elite Omon troupes which for some time had been present in the Lithuanian main cities, especially in Vilnius, had attacked and occupied the TV tower in Vilnius and killed 14, including one young girl who was run over by a tank. The Lithuanian people had been well prepared and even trained in non-violent resistance but could do nothing to stop the troops. Events before the attack and the assault itself had been filmed and these videotapes smuggled out of the country and brought to the Kalmar meeting. We could see documentation of how people talked to the Russian troops and ask them to leave the country and in the end the attack itself as well as photo documentation of all victims. The Kalmar conference agreed to send a letter of protest to President Gorbachev against the attack and in defense of the free flow of information which the independent TV stood for, which most participants signed. It should be added that some time later the operation, which met with widespread protests in the West, was the object of an internal Soviet investigation and declared to lack proper authorization and the consent of the president.

The Kalmar conference ended with an agreement to

establish a network with the proposed name "Baltic University". To internationalize university teaching was stressed as very important. The immediate need of educational programs in the area of environment, especially in Eastern European countries, was pointed out. English was going to be used as a common language. Developing a network of universities with experience, competence and equipment for televised teaching was attractive and should be used for further projects. The areas of Security in the Baltic Sea region and Human Settlements and Culture were suggested as later topics. (*Report... 1991*)

The meeting decided to start by broadcasting in October–December that year a first set of four 2 hrs TV sessions, and over spring 1992 an additional six sessions, to make a total of ten sessions, of which two were to be satellite bridges with three participating places. A total of 38 universities, organizations or TV companies offered 101 video clips according to their special interests. Swedish Telecommunications offered to broadcast using the high efficiency transponder on the satellite meaning that the signal could be received with quite simple equipment, a 60 cm diameter dish in the centre of the region and a 120 cm dish in the most remote parts. 35 such equipments were distributed to Poland, Estonia,

Latvia, Lithuania and Russia, in addition to 7 video recorders, during the coming months.

Each one of the participants was encouraged to spread the word to other universities, and it was efficient. In September no less than 70 universities took part, and a total of 3500 students had registered for the course. Sida agreed to support the project financially. Additional financing for a realistic budget was achieved by equal contributions of a quarter of a million Swedish Crowns each from Uppsala University, a group of Finnish universities under the leadership of Åbo Akademi University, Copenhagen university, and finally Swedish Telecommunications (now with the new name Teracom), which in reality made an even greater contribution through all kinds of practical support and advantageous prices. Team Jelbe, well known for broadcasting sport events, was contracted for the TV production and out-door (OD) broadcasting, Fällman and company as producer, while Teracom was managing the satellite. All ten broadcasts were, according to the agreement with Teracom, to be made in Uppsala or its vicinity (which in the end included Turku/Åbo in Finland!).

Although in early August that year we did not have a single video clip, they finally began to arrive. Many of the films were remarkable. Several university professors became film stars, such as Victor Ionov and Oleg Savchuk from St. Petersburg State University or Rein Munter from Tallinn Technical University, and of course the now famous Lucija Baskauskas from Lithuania. Each TV broadcast included guests from several countries, as discussants between the video clips which created a true sense of internationalism. The English language was sometimes not perfect but this was not a concern. The space bridges were a challenge even for the specialists at Teracom, as three partners were connected sometimes using two satellites. In the discussions the hundreds of participating students were extraordinarily interested and active. They addressed specialists and governmental officials at the three participating sites with questions mirroring a great concern for the environment, and people living in a world polluted by industries and careless authorities especially in the former communist regimes.

The academic course "The Baltic Sea Environment" consisted of ten thematic TV broadcasts, a 35 page book for each one of them, additional local lectures and seminars, a syllabus offered to all universities, a common regional written examination in June, and a diploma for students who passed. A total of 45 000 books were printed and distributed. Translations to Polish and Russian were started in St. Petersburg and Gdańsk.

THE PEOPLES OF THE BALTIC

The first active year of the Baltic University Programme ended in the spring of 1992 with an active and enthusiastic network of 85 universities in 10

countries, an estimated 3 500 students which had taken part in *The Baltic Sea Environment* televised course, and hundreds of academic teachers and researchers involved. Obviously it would have been a pity to declare the end of the project. Instead we made all videotapes available and printed new editions of the thematic books written for the course. A new year of teaching *Baltic Sea Environment* was prepared. We applied for further financing at the Swedish Institute and Sida, which managed the Swedish financial support for cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe. What should be done after having dealt with the environment?

It was time to address other issues mentioned at the Kalmar conference – Baltic Sea region security, settlements and culture. However, many people advised us not to do this. The history of the region was too controversial. Too many tragic events had taken place. There were too many crimes, too many victims and too many accusations to deal with. It would only lead to animosity and disagreement, in the worst case fewer contacts rather than more. My position was that if the universities were unable to address questions of our history, conflicts and identity, who would? Did we not as academics have the responsibility to research, explain and show how to overcome obstacles? Who would support the young generation to build a future if not universities?

New contacts made this even more important. A visit to Minsk in Belarus in January 1992 in midst of the bitter winter established contacts with a part of the region we did not know much about before. A little later I was invited to join a delegation of Swedish researchers to visit Kiev, another part of unknown territory. Both countries were in the process of establishing some form of national identity after years of Russian domination. Belarusian and Ukrainian languages had some renaissance, fairly easy in west Ukraine, more difficult in Belarus. A new interest for nature and environmental protection was part of the process.

A conference to plan for a new series of TV broadcasts was organized in Uppsala at October 1–3, 1992. This time we met colleagues from the humanities, social and political sciences. It was more difficult to find the right researchers but the network was doing the job for us. At Uppsala University Multiethnic studies with Professor Harald Runblom, Peace and Conflict research with Professor Peter Wallensteen, and Slavonic Languages with Professor Sven Gustavsson, as well as Professor Kristian Gerner of East European studies became key departments and individuals to make this project possible. Professor Witold Maciejewski of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland as well as colleagues at the Institute for Human rights at Åbo Akademi University were other key contributors.

At the same time the historical drama continued. During a visit to the Belarusian part of the extraordinary national park Beyalveshkaya Puschtja our guide Dr. Siarhei Darozhka took us to the small hunting residence of the tsars and communist era presidents where the decision to dissolve the Soviet Union was taken in December 1991. The Baltic University TV broadcast on democracy followed only weeks after a tank shot on the Russian Duma in October 1993.

The new series of 8 TV programs called *Peoples of the Baltic* was run from October 1993 to April 1994. Broadcasts were this time staged from many countries and places, for example one on the history of the region from Gdańsk and on conflicts and peace building from Berlin. The students did not have a problem with dealing with the history, and the worst fears did not come true. Instead we learned much and got new friends in new countries. At a memorable TV space bridge between St Petersburg and Uppsala in December 1993 the students decided to investigate the clichés of national characters in the region, with a large dose of humor. Professor Kristian Gerner in the more serious debate brought up the question of collective guilt. Do students have to feel guilt for what political leaders of the earlier generation had done? No. But, it is on the contrary important to understand and take responsibility for what is happening in the present.

Again the videotapes of the eight broadcasts as well as the eight books produced during the project were made available for new groups of students.

September 21, 1991

My new good friend Linas Kliucinikas agreed to come with me from Kaunas to Kaliningrad. We took a taxi, not so expensive in those days. Kaliningrad, formerly the East Prussian city of Königsberg, but after World War II a Russian exclave named after Kalinin, had been a closed territory up to January 1991. The military presence was obvious and several times along the way we saw military vehicles. In the city itself landmarks were the Königsberg cathedral, with its bombed (by the British at the end of the war) roof and abandoned interior, and the grave of Immanuel Kant the famous philosopher, just on the outside of the eastern side. Another spectacular building was the unfinished communist party headquarters, large, prominent and ugly close to the centre.

Our host was Professor Eugenij Krasnov, marine ecologist at Kaliningrad State University. Saturday lunch was enjoyed in the company of Dr Victor Ionov; he had flown in from St. Petersburg just to have lunch with us and get news on the development of the Baltic University project. Air tickets prices in Soviet Union were still only symbolic. In the afternoon we visited the museum of "Nature and Culture" of Kaliningrad Oblast. It started with Fredrick the Great around 1700, and ended with a dreadful sight of street fights during the Russian takeover from the Nazis in early 1945. Terribly realistic. I got the vision of two dragons fighting each other.

Next morning I was invited for breakfast to Professor Krasnov's home. It was quite emotional. It was the first time ever he could invite a foreign colleague at home. He had recently moved to Kaliningrad from Valdivostok, another city closed to foreigners for strategic reasons. We drank to a future of a more open world and international friendship rather than hostility.

LONG TERM GOALS AND THE FUTURE OF THE BALTIC SEA

In June 1994 a Baltic University high level Advisory Council gathered in Uppsala to discuss the long term goals and future of the Programme after three years of intense activities. Several points were on the agenda: education was of course important, but there was also beginning research cooperation and proposals to work together with other actors in society, so far done with local and na-

tional TV companies. Where would we end up? A Baltic Educational TV channel? Or a so-called “higher education area” discussed in the political spheres, e.g. in the new Council of Baltic Sea States.

The Advisory Council supported the proposal of a new course on sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region. The background was the increased political concern on the long-term development of our world and the challenges this contained for all of society, not the least the education sector. The notion of *sustainable development* for this long term goal was at the forefront at the UN conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, probably the largest conference ever organized. The Baltic University had addressed the question from its beginning with the final component of the Baltic Sea Environment course, called *The Prospect of a Sustainable Society*. At the time when this component was produced in 1991/92 very few knew much about sustainability and there was in reality little research and no education at all on the topic. In 1994 things had advanced and the main effort to create a basic full scale Baltic University course would be possible.

Here I will only mention that the concern for Sustainable Development became the main focus for the Baltic University in years to come. The course *A Sustainable Baltic Region* was introduced to the network at a memorable conference in Kaunas in January 1997. 90 teachers from the network scrutinized the material – ten thematic books and eventually ten videotapes – and started to use it. In the coming years an average of 4000 students yearly used the material, which appeared in English, Russian, Polish and Latvian. Since then the focus of the Baltic University has been education for sustainable development, a direction which has for every year gained increased support from the international community, from national governments, from universities, and not least from the students.

Research cooperation on the other hand, has not been successful. In 1994 a network of laboratories for use of Geographical Information Systems, GIS, had been established. Proposals to cooperate on the Cold War history of the region using newly opened archives did not materialize, although a research conference on the topic was made at Gdańsk University in June 1995. Proposal to work with society in applied projects have, on the contrary, developed quite successfully in a series of projects with cities and municipalities all over the region.

Did the universities contribute to the transition from communism to democracy and market economy? This may be a research task that BUP could assume more than most others. It is clear that the communist system did not allow much dialogue or critique of the established system. Most universities came to terms with that. But in other cases it is clear that small pockets of free dialogue existed and these became key resources in the first transitions. For example in Riga solid state physics provided that. The first Latvian president was a physicist, and several of the individuals which contributed to the Baltic University in all kinds of roles were physicists. In Estonia it seem to have been biologists, who played a similar role, while in Gdańsk, the organic chemists did that. In

Lithuania we know that the first president was a professor of musicology; it is less known that the peace and conflict researchers at the Academic Institute of Philosophy were important in the transitions. Poland may be a different case since *Solidarność* with a large academic membership, became a political party; However also the Ecological Club, *Klub Ekologiczny*, focusing on the environment, was very important in the first couple of years, and became part of the local assemblies in e.g. Krakow, where they contributed to a complete transformation of the industrial city – including the horrifyingly polluting *Nowa Huta*.

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE – THE ROLE OF BALTIC UNIVERSITY IN THE TRANSITION

In the introductory words on the Baltic University Programme, as established by the Rector of Uppsala University, it is said that the Baltic University aims to support “universities in the region in their key role in the development of their countries” and “to promote sustainable development, environmental protection and democracy”. Did we do that? We may also ask if Baltic University did promote international understanding and security which was part of the agenda for university cooperation formulated in the early 1980s. In the Baltic Sea region a transition to democracy and market economy has taken place after the systems change and the ending of the Cold War. Which role did the universities play in these transitions? Did the Baltic University cooperation contribute?

The role of universities is not described, rather taken for granted. Part of it is obvious: Universities give the young generation an education and the skills needed for future professional carriers. Universities should contribute with new knowledge and understanding in societies. They should also work together with society to serve as a resource when needed (the so-called “third task”, as research and education are the two first).

We may certainly feel confident that we did contribute to improved environmental education and understanding of sustainability. What about democracy? Of course it was part of the Peoples of the Baltic curriculum, but that is theory. To contribute in practice BUP has organized a number of seminars and student meetings on democracy, very often by playing role games, including skills in conflict management and resolution. Even if this worked well it seems less easy to stimulate the students to discuss critically, and the Russian students in particular did never question the moves of their own government; it appears that criticism is perceived as a disloyalty towards the country. Our only contribution here might be the often underlined requirement to base all arguments on scientific facts.

Did the Baltic University contribute to building peace and security? We contributed greatly to international contacts and we may assume (hope) that this is important for security. Another aspect is that in the Baltic University a large em-

phasis was put on the students and their possibilities to get to know each other. Already the second year student conferences started and students meetings were held in connection with all space bridges and many of the broadcast programs. Thus several hundred students were physically “mobilized” each year, in addition to those who took a part in video conferences and thus were “virtually” mobilized. At the student conferences students were typically making presentations of their home cities or countries. The philosophy behind was that we should get to know each other, and allow everyone to develop their own identity and respect those of the others. Some scientists warned me that the approach was dangerous and that nationalism easily gets out of hand. But we did not see anything of that.

In the end the Baltic University cooperation has allowed thousands of teachers and students to make friends from the other countries in the region. Let us hope this contributes to “peace and understanding”. It seems also to be the hope of hundreds of other initiatives to build a region, many of them starting around 1990 as our own. It is rather the totality of all these efforts including young people, old people, economic interests and culture and arts, nature protection and environmentalists, local authorities as well as the states themselves, which make a spider net of interaction, trust and common interests, which may be needed. The Baltic University’s special role has been, more than most, to promote education for sustainable development. Let us hope it will contribute to a good future for us all.

September 23, 1991, Kaliningrad – Gdańsk – Stockholm – Uppsala

Leaving Kaliningrad became quite a drama. Already on Saturday I had explained to my host that my intention was to continue to Gdańsk on Sunday to take part in a meeting on Baltic University on Monday. But this was impossible. The only border station to Poland was in Mononovo, and that was only for military purposes. This road was in practice closed. Things changed, however, when Rector Medvedev of the University appeared in the afternoon. Rector Medvedev was a good friend from the Talloires network. We had been swimming together every morning during the Talloires conference. He, as Rector, was well connected, and talked to the military and border troop leader. An agreement was made to manage my move on Monday morning.

So Monday morning I was taken by the university car to the border, where an officer politely asked me to show the passport and then a military vehicle took me some 50 m away from the small bridge at the Mononovo station and left me with a correct “*dasvidanya*”. So there I was, feeling like the spy who came in from the cold. I crossed the bridge. On the Polish side nobody seemed to care, so I sat down and waited. After some ten minutes a young man appeared and asked if I might be professor Rydén. It turned out that also on the Polish side colleagues at Gdańsk University had called the military to agree on my passage and they organized to pick me up. So we left the border post at Mononovo by car on a small forest road. But surprise – after some two kilometers we entered a broad highway starting in the middle of the forest in the direction to Gdańsk. I learned it was the never finished autobahn which Hitler had built from Berlin to Königsberg.

When arriving in Gdańsk, the meeting for Baltic University planning was already over. After some post-meeting discussions my hosts from the Department of chemistry took me to the ferry to Stockholm. Next lunch I arrived safely. On the train to Uppsala a thought struck me. Perhaps I am the first person who ever travelled this trip on land and water – not air – for the first time since World War II, more than fifty years earlier.

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