Networking around a common issue
- From words to action in the case of clean Baltic Sea

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ABSTRACT

The most pressing and complex contemporary societal issues can only be solved by networking among different actors and by extensive, often international, cooperation. One of the environmental issues that have been recently acknowledged to call for attention and cooperative efforts is the state of the Baltic Sea. The Baltic, and seas in general, are examples of the borderless world and dependency between countries. The aim of this paper is to investigate the early emergence of (collective) action around a common issue (poor condition of the Baltic sea). We are interested in the role of network mobilizers in promoting the issue and its solutions, as well as the mobilization mechanisms that the key players are using. The analysis concerns how an actively and widely presented interest in the issue by very different types of actors becomes turned into concrete actions. The key contribution of the paper is to offer a rich case study of network development around a common issue to understand better mobilization. Focus on an environmentally related problem means that the implications have wide applications – environmental concerns are bound to increase in importance, not only in the Baltic Sea region, but also globally.

Key words: mobilization, environment, change initiators, networking

1. Introduction

The most pressing and complex contemporary societal issues can only be solved by networking among different actors and by extensive, often international, cooperation. Examples of such far reaching international issues, in which business is implicated too, are climate change and environmental problems (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Wijen & Ansari 2007). One of the environmental issues that have been recently acknowledged to call for attention is the state of the Baltic Sea. The Baltic, as seas in general, are examples of the borderless world and dependency between countries. Climate change will have a significant impact also on the Baltic Sea ecosystem requiring even more stringent actions (HELCOM, 2007). Several different types of actors (for instance, representatives of cities and non-governmental organizations, NGOs) have become interested in and also committed to protecting the Baltic Sea. As there are many initiatives by different actors, all calling for cooperation and networking around the common issue, this provides an interesting area for investigation of how actors are being mobilized into acting towards a common goal in practice. Indeed, as the number of initiatives and number of interested parties have been exploding, it becomes crucial to see how the words are put into action.

This paper builds theoretically largely on the IMP literature, but incorporates ideas from the literatures on institutional entrepreneurship (DiMaggio, 1988; Fligstein, 1997) and social capital to study the mobilization of cross-national issue networks. It has earlier been argued that social capital, a network of relationship possessed by an individual or a social unit (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) forms a critical precondition for network mobilisation (Partanen et al., 2008). Essentially, we see that for changes in the broader networks to take place, the impulses for change need to be created at individual relationships (dyads) (Halinen, Salmi, Havila, 1999) and often, interpersonal ties are efficient channels for promoting these impulses.

According to the IMP view, networks have been seen to include different types of actors – including not only (industrial) business firms and their (direct) customers and suppliers, but also various types of socio-political actors. Thus the conceptual and empirical focus has been broadened from inter-firm exchange relationships to networks involving a diverse range of actors such as governments, supranational authorities, trade unions and public and private intermediary actors (Hadjikhani and Lee, 2006; Hadjikhani, Lee, and Ghauri, 2008; Welch and Wilkinson, 2004). Previous case studies on the political behaviour of MNCs show that the relationships between business and non-business actors are issue-related (Hadjikhani and Ghauri, 2001).

The aim of this paper is to investigate the early emergence of (collective) action around a common issue. We are interested in the role of network mobilizers in promoting the issue and its solutions, as well as the mobilization mechanisms that the key players are using. The analysis concerns how an actively and widely presented interest in the issue by very different types of actors becomes turned into concrete actions. Furthermore, as the Baltic Sea Region countries differ in their cultural and institutional features, the paper aims to find out which mobilization mechanisms have been in these different settings. The key contribution of the paper is to offer a rich case study of network development around a common issue to understand better

network mobilization. Focus on an environmentally related problem means that the implications have wide applications – environmental concerns are bound to increase in importance, not only in the Baltic Sea region, but also globally.

2. Theoretical basis

The paper builds on the theoretical work by industrial marketing and purchasing (IMP) scholars. By concentrating on the cooperation between diverse actors around the common issue, this research contributes to the "opening the network" (Golfetto, Salle, Borghini & Rinallo (2007:845) to a complex societal setting unlike common to most IMP studies. Yet, a number of IMP scholars have recently extended the focus of analysis from predominantly business networks and firms as actors, to involving different types of actors (including political, third sector) and covering multiple types of networks (e.g. Brito, 2001; Welch and Wilkinson, 2004; Hadjikhani and Lee, 2006; Hadjikhani, Lee, and Ghauri, 2008; Ritvala and Salmi, 2008). Therefore, the industrial networks approach is analytically capable of analysing wide inter-sectoral networks around a common issue. Still, with few exceptions (Hadjikhani and Ghauri, 2001; Welch and Wilkinson, 2004, 2005) existing analyses of public-private networks within the IMP tradition tend to be limited to single countries, and more international extensions are needed. Current problems – global warming, poverty and the use of child labour, for instance – are not geographically isolated but raise global concerns.

The complexity of such issues which reach beyond single countries is high and their solving is likely to result into multiple coordination problems. Besides potentially conflicting goals and priorities of different actors (e.g. public and private sector), cultural and institutional differences between countries that participate in issue solving make the coordination problems more severe. It has been found, for instance, that institutional differences are reflected in differences in business neworks between Russian, Chinese and West European networks (Salmi, 1995; Jansson, Johanson and Ramstöm, 2007). These differences may be multiplied when there are public, private and third sector actors involved. Therefore, more theoretical and practical understanding is urgently needed on the role of cultural and institutional context on effective strategies on building networks around pressing contemporary issues.

Solutions to complex issues call for changes in many institutionalised beliefs, values and practices. Therefore, the literature on institutional entrepreneurship offers a fruitful addition to the analysis. Institutional entrepreneurship refers to "the activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or transform existing ones" (Maguire, Hardy, and Lawrence, 2004, p. 657; DiMaggio, 1988). The literature on institutional entrepreneurship stresses the role of guiding actors such as entrepreneurial individuals (Lawrence and Phillips, 2004) or powerful firms (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006; Sherer and Lee, 2002) in institutional change. Yet, institutional change is a highly complex social change process, which necessitates the participation and support of a diverse range of actors, like the cases of global climate policy (Wijen and Ansari, 2007) and the use of child labour (Khan,

Munir, and Willmott, 2007) well demonstrate. Central in such complex institutional change processes is the formation of networks by opposing actors (Hargrave and Van de Ven, 2006). Following Trist's (1983) ideas, significant social issues cannot be tackled by any individual or organisation alone but solving of such issues takes place in the inter-organisational domain. Institutional change in such settings necessitates "collective institutional entrepreneurship" (Möllering, 2007), which refers to "the process of overcoming collective inaction and achieving sustained collaboration among numerous dispersed actors to create new institutions or transform existing ones" (Wijen and Ansari, 2007, p. 1079). This emphasises the collective mobilisation aspect of institutional change, the process of overcoming "collective inaction" (Olson, 1965; Wijen and Ansari, 2007) and the necessity of gaining support from a wide array of actors. Therefore networks and successful network mobilisation are at the heart of solving pressing societal issues.

Mobilisation of other network actors has been seen to form a key factor influencing network dynamics. Indeed, early on it was noted that to bring about change, the company needs to mobilise its partners to induce change and affect its business relations. In any attempt to accomplish things (e.g. cooperation) in a network, other actors need to be mobilised, and for this, bonds between the actors are necessary (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995, p.203). Mobilization has been discussed, for instance, in the context of foreign market entry. Axelsson and Johanson (1992, p. 221) note that relevant questions then are "who could be mobilized for what, by what". These form relevant questions for our study too, as we investigate how the change initiators around the common issue (Clean Baltic Sea) mobilize other actors to change their behaviour.

Network mobilisation goes beyond dyadic relationships and interactions. It is seen as a dynamic process of forming groups or other associations for the pursuit of collective goals where organisations interactively shape and develop the rules that constitute and govern their relationships (Brito, 2001; Mouzas and Naudé, 2007). Araujo and Brito (1998) stress the role of multilevel games that a small number of actors play to mobilise collective action and to change power positions within networks. In the context our study, an issue network is a loose, temporary coalition of actors that emerges around a common issue to influence through collective action(s) existing beliefs, norms, policies and practices and is reflected in network relationships (Araujo and Brito, 1998; Dahan, Doh, and Guay, 2006). Also scholars relying on the stakeholder approach have investigated collective action and mobilization (Rowely and Moldoveanu, 2003). Our approach here takes a broader perspective to networks, not limiting the analysis to any one actor and its stakeholders, but rather, we see that wide, overlapping networks with differently connected actors may be involved in the processes.

Despite the previous work on mobilisation (Araujo and Brito, 1998; Brito, 2001; Lundgren, 1992), Mouzas and Naudé (2007) are the first IMP scholars to explicitly discuss the underlying processes of network mobilisation. Their model of network mobiliser articulates network mobilisation as a sequence of five interdependent phases as organisational challenges: *network insight, business propositions, deal, social contract*, and *sustained mobilisation* (Mouzas and Naudé, 2007). Our focus is on the very early phases of this process, and furthermore, our approach extends to involvement of a wide variety of different actors.

In network terms, according to Easton (1992, p. 24) "any change in a network requires resources to be mobilized. In particular existing actors not only need to have the necessary resources but also the will and interest to deploy them. On the other hand any firm, however apparently powerless, may initiate change if it can draw upon the resources of the whole network by virtue of the acceptability of the change". Therefore, we see that common concerns around difficult issues become actions and cause concrete changes only, if the results may be seen in changing networks. Simultaneously, very different types of actors via different activities may play a key role in causing the changes.

It has been argued that even in case of sweeping changes and fundamental macro-level developments, network dynamics are initiated at the level of individual relationships (Halinen, Salmi and Havila, 1999); to cause changes at the level of networks, the impulses for change need to be created and acted on at individual relationships. Indeed, individual relations may be both the source and transmitter of change. Thus network mobilisation requires that an issue is recognised and acted on by several actors in the network, and their actions/reactions cause changes into their relationships, which in turn, may cause the changes to spread further in the network (Havila and Salmi, 2000). Earlier investigations on ideological changes affecting network composition mostly concentrate on major political changes such as transition into a market economy (Salmi, 1995, 2004) or EU integration (Elg and Johansson, 1996). Current problems, such as global warming and poverty are not geographically isolated but raise global concerns. Solving such issues requires changes in social and political values and behaviour that are reflected in changing rules and regulations, and eventually in network relationships and activities (Welch and Wilkinson, 2004).

We expect that individual actors (both organizations and individuals) play a key role in mobilizing others around a common issue. The individual people may also resort to their personal contacts for this purpose. Each individual has his/her personal contact network, which is based on his/her personal history, family, friends, education, and earlier tasks in various firms and organisations. This network, 'the relationship sediment' as called by Agndal and Axelsson (2002), provides a basis for business interaction, and may be used for working on the emerging issue. Accumulated social capital also several potential benefits, relating to information exchange; influence, control and power, as well as solidarity (Adler and Kwon 2002), which may be used for mobilization purposes too. Network mobilizers need to act as institutional entrepreneurs, and they need to possess a multitude of skills, including not only social and interactional skills but particularly political skills (e.g. Fligstein, 1997; Garud et al. 2002) to attract financial and political support and legitimacy for their cause and further actions. Still, the question remains of what makes some actors to become initiators for change.

For our study, given the common concern – environmental condition of the Baltic Sea - the question then becomes of the actors to giving not only lip-service, but also entering into actions that then result in changes in business and other relationships. Based on the above discussion, the key research question of this paper is *How the interest in the issue of clean Baltic Sea is turned into concrete actions*? We investigate the early emergence of (collective) action in the issue and, hence, we are interested in *who the key network mobilizers*

are and *what the mobilization mechanisms are that they are using?* This study focuses on the initiatives conducted in Finland, but in the future we shall extend the study into other countries, as it is our aim to understand how different economic and institutional environments of the Baltic Sea Region countries may affect network mobilization.

3. Research Design, Data and Analysis

We use a single in-depth case study to investigate how network mobilisation around a common issue unfolded over time and how collective action enabled institutional change. Single cases are often used to extend existing and build new theories (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991; Siggelkow, 2007) and are commonly used to study both network dynamics (Easton, 1995; Halinen and Törnroos, 2005) and institutional change (e.g. Zilber, 2002; Maguire and Hardy, 2009). We adopt a processual case-study approach where not only the legacy of the past but also processes in present and future (Pettigrew,1997) are studied "hands-on" (Dawson, 1997, p. 402) to map network changes. The initial analytical frames are built on the earlier studies, but we adopt an abductive approach (Dubois and Gadde, 2002), with close interaction between the empirical and theoretical areas and where the framework may be redirected during the process.

The empirical case focuses on the efforts to improve the environmental state of the Baltic Sea. We selected this particular case because it represents a contemporary pressing issue the solving of which requires new types of networks across national borders. Motivating different actors in different countries is also challenging, particularly as visible results from efforts made are visible after a long delay. This type of context provides us with a rare setting to study network mobilization around a common issue, and enables us to make new theoretical insights on actual mobilization mechanisms. Due to the public interest on the issue, it is rather well-documented in scientific and popular press. This made data collection feasible as comes to finding the key actors and initiatives.

We use an embedded single case study design (Yin, 2003) with three embedded units of analysis formed by three distinctive project to protect the Baltic Sea. Our first case is the Baltic Sea Challenge by the cities of Helsinki and Turku in Finland. In June 2007 the two cities launched a challenge to 600 actors around the Baltic Sea to join forces in the matter (www.balticseachallenge.net). Our second case is the Clean Baltic Sea Project by the John Nurminen Foundation, where we concentre on the efforts to introduce phosphorus removal from the wastewater in the City of St. Petersburg. The third case is the formation of the Baltic Sea Action Group, and its recent formation of a project to treat manure from animal production in the Leningrad Region.

We started collecting data in the form of secondary documents to ensure that we cover all important projects around the clean Baltic Sea. This ensures convergence and triangulation of events (Yin, 2003; Maguire and Hardy, 2009), but also increases our understanding of the multitude of ways that the issue is seen by different actors (Stake, 2005). A multitude of data sources include, for instance, diverse records, brochures and action

plans of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM, see Section 4 below), written material and presentations from the three projects around clean Baltic Sea, including both public material and organizations' internal material. The use of these documents allows us also to corroborate and augment evidence from interviews (Yin, 2003).

Six in-depth interviews of nine people were conducted in Helsinki in February-May 2009 in order to reveal the motivations of various actors, and measures taken in the projects around the clean Baltic Sea. The interviewees were representatives of private foundations, the city of Helsinki, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finnish Business & Society Network, and a shipping company. Our interviews have focused on the network mobilizers, because our theoretical interest was in the early network mobilization. The interviews lasted between one and half and two hours, and all interviews were digitally recorded. Each semi-structured interview covered five broad areas: 1) the history and background of projects related to the environmental state of the Baltic Sea; 2) key actors and roles; 3) operating principles and decision making in projects; 4) international cooperation in projects; 5) the impact of key individuals and their social networks in mobilizing issue networks.

Our data analysis proceeded in the following manner. We initially built an event history database (Van de Ven & Poole, 1990) based on the secondary data, where we collected data on the key events, actors and projects around the environmental state of the Baltic Sea. In the second stage of our analysis, we analyzed the interview data to find out different actions taken within the three distinctive projects. In these within-case analyses (Yin, 2003) we tried to find out various mechanisms that were used, either consciously or unconsciously by the network mobilizers, to get other actors involved, and what actually motivated different actors to participate in the projects. In the next stage of our analysis we compared the underlying mechanisms and activities across the cases to find out whether similar or distinctive patterns are found (Eisenhardt, 1989). Some basis for comparison was found also in a study concerning another globally important issue relating to health and heart disease (see Ritvala, 2007, Ritvala and Salmi, 2008)

In the next section, we start by setting the scene for analysis by introducing our case on the clean Baltic Sea and the three embedded cases.

4. Turning words into action in the case of clean Baltic Sea

Common concerns

The Baltic Sea is in alarmingly poor condition. Eutrophication, i.e. high nutrient enrichment which stimulates the growth of algae, has long been recognized as the biggest and most serious threats to the Baltic Sea. Eutrophication leads to reduced water quality, which is reflected in blooms of potentially toxic cyanobacteria that are a nuisance to bathers and other recreation along the coasts of the Baltic Sea. (Olofsson, 2008). It is a consequence of human activity such as agriculture, community wastewaters, industry, energy production and

traffic (excessive loads of nitrogen and phosphorus). Besides nutrient discharges, hazardous substances and increasing ferry traffic are among the key issues. Since eutrophication first become apparent in the 1970s and 1980s, considerable financial investments have been directed into reducing nutrient discharges into the sea. Generally, efforts at reducing phosphorous from municipal and industrial sources have been more successful than those aimed at reducing agricultural loading. (Helsinki Commission, 2004; Baltic Sea Challenge, 2007).

This issue of environmental state of the Baltic Sea is not new, however. Already three centuries ago, Tsar Peter the Great, was the first authority to suggest measures to protect the Baltic Sea (HELCOM, 2004:5):

> *"The riverbanks and sewers [of St Petersburg] must be well contained so that they are not covered with earth. Every citizen is responsible for keeping the bank in front of his house clean. All garbage should be collected and brought to certain place- but in no way dumped in the river. Culprits must be punished harshly."*

While in the 1960s there was an increasing awareness of the deteriorating environmental situations of the Baltic Sea, it was only in the 1970s that significant measures were taken to protect the sea. In 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm, and subsequently in 1973 the first intergovernmental expert meeting about the Baltic Sea took place. Finally, in 1974 a historical milestone was reached along the signing of the Helsinki Convention where all the sources of pollution of the sea were made subject to a single convention and along the founding of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM). HELCOM works to protect the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution through intergovernmental cooperation between Denmark, Estonia, the European Community, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. It is noteworthy that, co-operation around the Baltic Sea started during the Cold War era, when the region was divided by the Iron Curtain. The protection of the Baltic Sea was among the first issues that the states of the Baltic Sea area decided to cooperate on. (HELCOM, 2004, 2007). HELCOM is not a regulative body, rather it gives recommendations and acts as a watchdog and caretaker of the Baltic Sea region. It has gained, however, a strong status and legitimacy, and all the actors we interviewed build their actions heavily on the recommendations made by HELCOM.

The environmental state of the Baltic Sea is the common concern of all coastal states of the Baltic Sea. Yet, earlier studies suggest that often countries have small incentives to participate in cooperation to protect the Baltic Sea unless they are compensated by other countries (Olofsson, 2008). Therefore, an important question is how to get all countries to cooperate as there may be a temptation to free-ride. This question is a serious one, particularly, when visible results from the cleaning-up the sea become visible with a delay.

However, from our analyses it is clear that many actors from different countries are involved in the protection of the Baltic Sea. These actors range from governmental and research bodies to city and regional networks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society, to firms and private foundations. Figure 1. visualizes the key actor types that participate in the protection of the Baltic Sea and lists some examples.

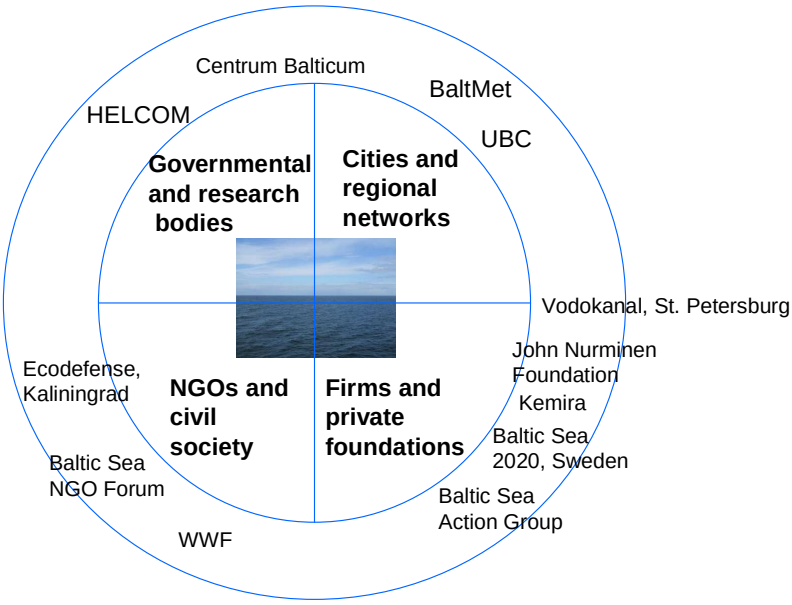

Figure 1. Key Actors and Examples

We concentrate on three different initiatives to protect the Baltic Sea. First, we discuss the Baltic Sea Challenge campaign of the cities of Helsinki and Turku in Finland, and how the challenge aims to mobilize the international city networks called the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) and the Baltic Metropoles Network (BaltMet). Second, we analyze the pioneering work done by the John Nurminen Foundation in removing phosphorous in the wastewater in St. Petersburg in cooperation with Vodokanal St. Petersburg, a state enterprise wholly owned by the city of St. Petersburg. Third, we describe the recent efforts of the Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG), one year old Finnish private foundation, in the treatment of manure from animal production in the Leningrad Region. After describing these initiatives, we discuss central network mobilization mechanisms that we found and, finally, we propose a model of value-based mobilization of networks around a common issue.

4.2 Baltic Sea Challenge by the Cities of Helsinki and Turku

In June 2007 the Finnish cities, Turku and Helsinki, made a commitment to improve the environmental state of the Baltic Sea as declared by their mayors. The goal is to improve both the local waters and the entire Baltic Sea. The cities encourage each other in positive competition in improving the state of sea together with other actors: public sector including research and education organizations, farmers' associations, environmental NGOs, sailing clubs, and especially firms. The cities' direct activities tackle problems such as point source load and scattered load of nutrients from settlements and agriculture, management of contaminated sediments and handling of wastewaters from shipping. The indirect measures include taking part in research together with universities, funding of research, public awareness-raising and international co-operation. The goal of the

Baltic Sea Challenge is to involve and commit as many actors as possible to protecting the Baltic Sea. The protection measures start with considering sustainable development in everyday choices, and gradually make them inseparable from actors' regular activities. Both cities have coordinators of the Challenge and a joint steering group to supervise and plan the activities. The challenge was first sent to local regional authorities and organizations directly related to eutrophication and other major environmental hazards concerning the Baltic Sea. Later private organizations and companies were challenged. In the first phase 600 challenges were sent. In June 2008 Helsinki challenged international cruising companies to discharge their waste waters from passenger ships to city sewer systems in harbours' waste water receiving facilities without a separate charge. In early 2009, the challenge was sent to the 100 biggest Finnish companies.

The Baltic Sea Challenge is in the process of internationalizing, the goal being to start a municipal level challenge project including all countries around the Baltic Sea. The challenge has received already positive responses from Tallinn in Estonia, Riga in Latvia and Stockholm in Sweden. In May 2008 a letter was sent to all UBC member cities regarding the acceptance of the challenge in their own activities. Besides UBC also BaltMet network has accepted the Challenge in its action plans. BaltMet represents a forum for capitals and large metropolitan cities around the Baltic Sea. It brings together the cities of Berlin, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Malmö, Oslo, Riga, Stockholm, St.Petersburg, Tallinn, Vilnius and Warsaw. The main goal of the network is to promote innovativeness and competitiveness in the Baltic Sea Region by engaging cities, as well as academic and business partners, into close cooperation. Another focus area is identity building and marketing of the whole Baltic Sea Region. One of the key drivers of the Baltic Sea Challenge is to maintain the business and tourism image of the region, including the gateway between St. Petersburg, Helsinki and Tallinn (Interviews and Baltic Sea Challenge, 2008; http://www.balticseachallenge.net)

4.3 Clean Baltic Sea project of the John Nurminen Foundation

The John Nurminen Foundation maintains Finnish cultural heritage through maintaining seafaring traditions and maritime history, and protecting clean water, which is a significant part of Finnish national identity. The foundation has acted as a pioneer in the protection of the Baltic Sea through mobilizing funding from Finnish companies and private donors. In spring 2004 the foundation decided to start a concrete project for the protection of Baltic Sea. This initiative was created by the Chairman of Foundation's Board, Juha Nurminen, whose hobbies have since childhood been related to the sea (e.g. navigation). The goal of the Clean Baltic Sea project is to reduce the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea in a quick and visible way. In accordance with its ideology, loaned from business life, the rule of thumb of the Clean Baltic Sea project is to allocate the activities to where the best results can be achieved with the lowest cost (http://www.johnnurmisensaatio.fi/?cat=13). The foundation takes donations from private citizens and enterprises. An important form of donations is made by companies who donate their own expertize to such as consulting and advertising services. Further, media space donated by the main Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat, has been crucial for the project.

The first target of the foundation was the chemical phosphorus removal to the three biggest wastewater treatment plants in St. Petersburg, which is the biggest point source of phosphorus of the Gulf of Finland. The Clean Baltic Sea project aims to cut up to 70 percent of the phosphorus emissions, which corresponds to 27 percent of the total algal phosphorous load in the Gulf of Finlans (Nurminen, 2006). The project is, hence, aligned with the international policy debate, where investment in wastewater treatement capacity in the countries of south and east of the Baltic Sea is considred to be most cost-effective (Olofsson, 2008).

The Clean Baltic Sea project kicked off in 2005 in St. Petersburg. The cooperation between the Clean Baltic Sea Project staff, Vodokanal and the City of St. Petersburg has proven to work well. Establishing a relationship of mutual trust with Vodokanal, and particularly with its Director General Mr. Felix V. Karmazinov, has been the most important element of the Clean Baltic Sea project (Nurminen, 2006). Wide social networks across the levels of the society are a key asset in the implementation of such a wide project. For instance, the Clean Baltic Sea project is under the patronage of the President of Finland, Tarja Halonen. The project reached an important milestone when the largest wastewater treatment plant in St. Petersburg deployed an efficient chemical phosphorus removal method. Participants at the inauguration held on October first 2007 included, for instance, President Halonen, the Minister of the Environment of Finland Kimmo Tiilikainen, and St. Petersburg's Debuty Governor Mikhail Oseyveski. The role of the Finnish Ministry of the Environment has been central as it has funded the necessary equipment deliveries as well as various on-site tests. Extensive cooperation with the Finnish Kemira Group, which provides water treatment solutions, have also taken place. In 2006 Vodokanal and Kemira signed an agreement extending to the year 2015 and having the objective of developing and producing new chemicals in St. Petersburg to be used in producing drinking water and cleaning waste water

While the wastewater treatment is now in a relatively good shape in St. Petersburg, the situation is worse in other Russian cities along the coast of Baltic Sea, for instance, in Kaliningrad where there is not yet any cleansing of waste water. In terms of the amount of nutritions, Poland is the biggest source, as it is a home to almost half of the residents based in its watershed of the Baltic Sea. The John Nurminen Foundation works in co-operation with other actors such the Swedish Foundation Baltic Sea 2020, Polish cities and the city of Helsinki in Poland.

4.4. The Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG)

The Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG), officially known as the Foundation for a Living Baltic Sea, was registered on March 2008 by Mr. Ilkka Herlin, Ms. Saara Kankaanrinta and Ms. Anna Kotsalo-Mustonen. Similar to Juha Nurminen's personal commitment to the issue of clean Baltic Sea, strong personal motivations drove the establisment of the BSAG. Ilkka Herlin had for a decade considered various ways to protect the Baltic Sea, while Anna Kotsalo-Mustonen had kept a sabbatical year and donated countless working hours in order to work pro bono for the state of the Baltic Sea (in John Nurminen Foundation). The idea of Herlin,

Kankaanrinta and Kotsalo-Mustonen, who all have a background with the John Nurminen Foundation, was to address a wide range of critical issues of the Baltic Sea region. This is quite opposite of the John Nurminen Foundation, which focuses on municipal waste water. The mission of BSAG is "A holistic overview and well targeted concrete actions", and it divides its actions into four programs: agriculture & bioenergy, clean and safe maritime activities, hazardous waste and innovative solutions. This division follows the guidelines of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (2007).

The basic operation model of BSAG is with the help of scientific experts to identify and analyze a problem based on latest research findings and then to build a project that outlines concrete action. Central tasks beyond financing are, for instance, removing various types of friction from collaboration, lobbying high political forces, and to lessen bureaucracy. BSAG aims at bringing together a wide variety of actors from the public, private and civil sectors and to use the know-how and resources of the private sector to concrete actions throughout the Baltic Sea area. BSAG argues that it is natural that the businesses that have operations somehow related to the Baltic Sea also engage in the preservation process. The key asset of BSAG is a broad and complementary network of contacts that the founders bring together: from political decision makers to business leaders. (Vuorinen, 2008; http://www.bsag.fi/en/bsag/)

BSAG's first project of the Agriculture program concerns the treatment of manure from animal production in the Leningrad Region. BSAG argues that the manure from 20 million chickens creates a nutrient input which is of the same magnitude than the phosphorus load from the St Petersburg wastewaters (http://www.bsag.fi/en/bsag/). The biggest poultry farm with 3 million birds in the Leningrad Region corresponds to all lay chicken in the whole Finland. The farm has started cooperation with the Finnish company Biolan, manufacturer of growing medias, fertilizers, soil improvement materials and environmental products, in order to process the manure into usable energy. BSAG joined the cooperation in order to hasten the process by keeping it also at the political agenda, both in Finland and Russia. BSAG actively searches cooperation with major Russian companies to start similar types of projects in other poultry farms in the region. The foundation argues that solving this manure problem is essential and the most cost-efficient mean to reduce euthrophication and related blue green algae in the Baltic Sea.

One of actions where BSAG is involved is The Baltic Sea Action Summit, which will be organised in Helsinki in 2010 to offer a platform for heads of state, companies, business leaders, NGOs and individual citizens to contribute to the carrying out of actions to save the Baltic sea (www.bsas.fi). The opening ceremony involved representatives of the Finnish state: "President of the Republic of Finland Tarja Halonen, Prime Minister of Finland Matti Vanhanen and Chairman of BSAG Ilkka Herlin opened the Baltic Sea Action Summit (BSAS) joint venture. They invited the heads of state and governments around the Baltic Sea as well as public and private sectors to participate with commitments for concrete actions to save the Baltic Sea."(www.cargotec.com). In the video clip from the opening ceremony, e.g. President Tarja Halonen was asked whether we still can save the

Baltic Sea. She replied that this is still possible, as there is an apparent common will to 'cure the patient'. She noted that this will however be a long process, just like the worsening of the state of the sea has taken a long time, and it will take stamina and extensive cooperation involving actors from both the public administration and other sectors. She also pointed to the key role and activities of nongovernmental organizations, as well as companies, which can in their own activities and innovations advance the common cause (see Baltic Sea Action Summit , 2009, videoclip, in Finnish).

4.4. A Model of Value-Based Mobilization of Networks around A Common Issue

In this section, we enrich our findings with interview quotations and propose a new mobilization mechanisms we term "value-based mobilization"; thus we start building a model of value-based mobilization around a common issue.

All of our three embedded cases strongly suggest that *personal commitment and face giving by the top management* is crucial for successful network mobilization. This was reflected in our interviews in the following manners:

> "I believe that the key explanator for the success of the concept is its origin. I can assure that we've done nothing – How delighted I would be to say that I've came-up with the initiative - that I've produced this. But I haven't. It was in the minds of the top management. The initiative came from them and in every stage they have supported and been personally involved." – *Director*

> "This started extremely well as there was a clear target- there was an order. First private money came and then company money. I started with my own money and then mobilized my personal relationships." -*Chairman of the board*

Our findings suggest that network mobilization around a common issue commences with eager and ambitious people that are willing to capitalize on their old social networks:

> "…it is the social network in my childhood [that has supported their project], they are people who have succeeded in their life. That was something I didn't realize beforehand. " – *Co-founder*

It seems to be typical for these types of networks that they consists of rather weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) such as school classmates networks or business acquaintances, which are then activated for the common good purpose. While the idea that the network of relationships possessed by an individual forms a critical precondition for successful network mobilization is not new (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Partanen et al., 2008), our findings stress the relational dimension (common norms), and suggest a particular precondition and driver for network mobilization. This is a *shared value base* that makes the protection of Baltic Sea a

meaningful and important undertaking. We term this *value-based mobilization*. Shared value base appears to legitimize the 'exploitation' of relationship sediment (Agndal & Axelsson, 2002) for the common goal. It also acts a kind of glue that connects individuals with heterogeneous backgrounds: from political decision makers to business leaders and researchers:

> "We kept a seminar where we said, that with these tiny things we can fix this…The athmosphere at the seminar was extraordinary – like in a religious movement where people stand up." – *Director*

> "At the beginning I was suprised when when I went to talk to them [potential donors] I got the exact same response – word by word: 'I remember when I as a child wade across the [clear] water ' I realized that it is in the collective memory of the whole generation in Finland. And now we are so concerned that we'll loose this." – *Co-founder*

Individuals' values are naturally embedded in the broader national and societal values. According to a recent survey, the majority of Finns think that protecting the Baltic Sea should get more emphasis on the foreign policy of Finland (EVA, 2008). In fact, the state of the Baltic Sea is the top concern by Finns, followed by climate change; hence, the two top concerns are surprisingly related to the environment rather than "traditional" foreign policy issues. But to channel broad concern into concrete action necessitates mobilization across different sectors of an economy, and across national boundaries. Indeed, to repeat Axelsson and Johanson's question (1992, p. 221): "who could be mobilized for what, by what", it seems that in the context of clean Baltic Sea, anyone can potentially be mobilized. Yet, the most important parties to be mobilized seem to be the political decision makers who may affect the behaviour of both individuals and organizations, as well as firms whose behaviour may have a great impact on the environmental state of the Baltic Sea. Mobilizing such a broad group of actors necessitate that network mobilizers possess "network capital", the form of "social capital" that makes resources available through interpersonal ties" (Wellman & Frank, 2001). The personal network sediment seems to be valuable for this purpose, as they easily reach people and actors outside and beyond the current task related (Hallen 1992) contacts that people have.

While international cooperation at different levels (from NGOs to policy makers and regulators) has already produced measurable improvements in the environmental state of the Baltic Sea, network mobilization across national boundaries appears to generate new challenges. Besides social networks remaining often nationally confined, different economic and institutional environments make acting on the common issue more difficult. It has proved to be challenging to mobilize countries recovering from social upheavals and environmental crisis to invest in the protection of the Baltic Sea, particularly when the impact of actions is visible after a long delay (Nurminen, 2006). This resonates well with the recent study by Kuznetsov, Kuznetsova and Warren (2009), which shows that the majority of large and medium sized firms in Russia feel that the conditions and lack of financial resources do not motivate them to act more in socially responsible way.

One of our interviewees describes:

> "Let's be honest - it hasn't always been easy…They are concentrating on the point source loads, as we did at turn of the 1970s and 80s…Further, the whole idea of cities to challenge firms is

absurd…But if they consider that they don't wish to be in contact with firms, they can challenge other cities there…You need to have a humble mind." -*Director*

Figure 2. summarizes our argument on the value-based mobilization of issue networks. Our findings suggest that in the Baltic Sea case initial network mobilizers had a strong emotional relationship with sea. Their strong will to protect the sea led them to search for meaningful and realistic ways to act on the issue. By showing their strong commitment through making financial investments and giving their "faces" to the projects, they could mobilize other individuals and organizations. In this task, they heavily build on their existing social networks to find possible donors. The shared concern over the environmental state of the sea legitimized their exploitation of these old (latent) relationships.

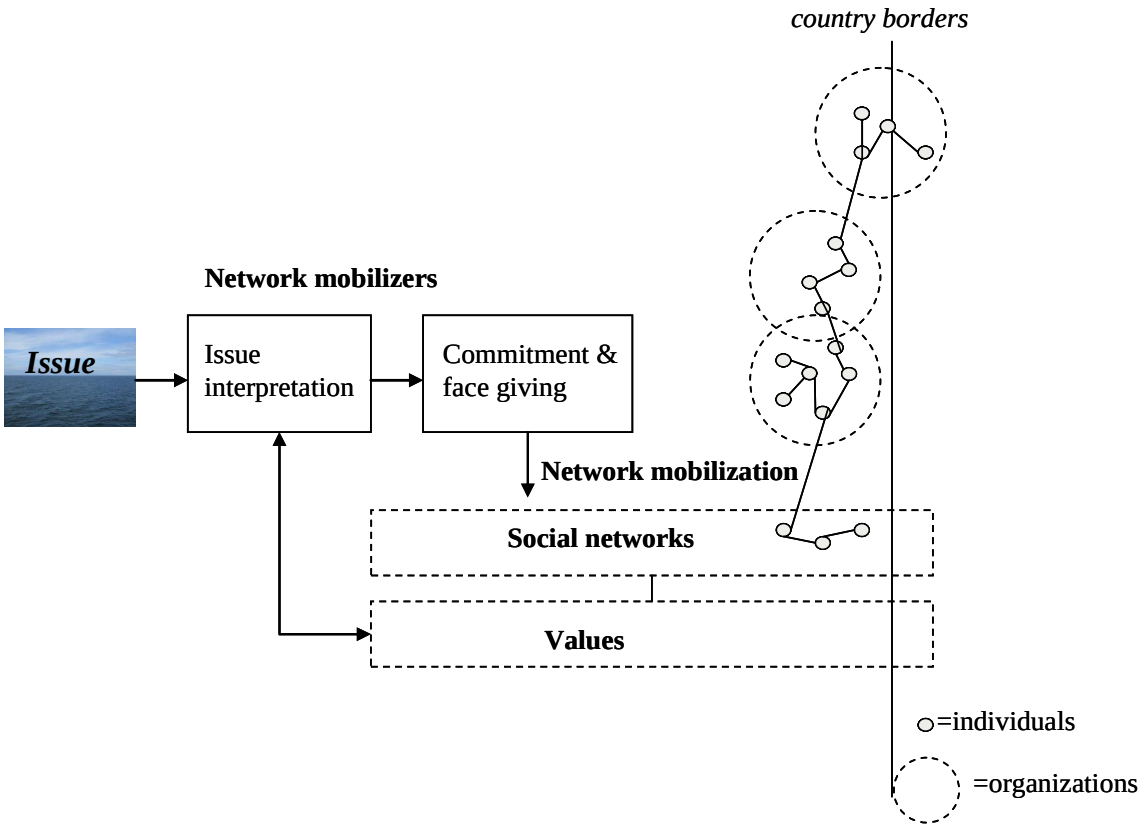

Figure 2. Value-based mobilization of issue networks

Overall, our findings stress the role of few individuals that were willing to act on the issue which at the first sight would seem too big to act on. This meant keeping-up a good spirit even in the middle of challenges, as Juha Nurminen, Chairman of the Board of John Nurminen Foundation, put it (2006:10) "Where there is a will, there is a way". The central role of few individuals who acted as institutional entrepreneurs by raising the public awareness of an issue, has come up also in previous studies. The study by Ritvala on network mobilization in heart disease prevention in the province of North Karelia in Finland (Ritvala & Salmi, 2008; Ritvala & Granqvist, 2009), show that also in that context these individuals were central in overcoming

"collective inaction" (Olson, 1965) on a locally perceived problem. While the Baltic Sea case is more complex in terms of international reach of the problem, it is rather "conflict free" issue to echo the words of our interviewees. All actors agree that the state of Baltic Sea is an important issue, which should be acted on. In the North Karelia case, dairy farmers and the food industry were initially more reluctant to change their behaviour (e.g. decrease the use of dairy fat in foods). Further, in our study the underlying values for network mobilization seem to play a central role, while in the prevention of heart disease such values were not decisive for change. Rather the question seemed to be of "life or death", and the issue itself rather than the values was the driving force of changes.

5. Conclusions

This study contributes to our understanding of change and dynamics in business networks. In particular, it looks into how networks may be mobilized for solving complex contemporary issues. We have used the condition of the Baltic Sea as our empirical case, but on this basis also other contemporary issues may be investigated. Conceptually, we advance the discussion on the interaction between mobilization, values and relationship sediments. In particular, we suggest value-based mobilization as an important force for initiating change in business networks, through mobilizing actors. In addition to the IMP concepts we have relied on the institutional entrepreneurship and social capital literatures. We share the concern of scholars who argue that the concept of institutional entrepreneurship too often invokes the image of a single heroic individual or firm acting alone (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007). Our analysis shows that different networks need to be existing and activated for change to take place. As comes to social ties, our study shows that interpersonal network sediments may act as key resources when activating other actors. Similar value basis seems to be needed for people to act positively to the joint concerns.

The limitation of our study is that we have relied much on secondary data sources, and conducted only a limited number of interviews. Still, these interviews cover the key actors around the issue, and also, represent different types of actors. Further studies may extend the analysis into the international direction, by involving actors (interviews) from other countries in the Baltic Sea region. As we see it the pressing contemporary issues that call for global action are largely social by nature. So far, IMP scholars have stressed change and dynamics in business networks, focusing, in particular, on the economic and technological factors that cause network dynamics (Brito, 2001). Our study focuses on social factors; which will also have economic and technological outcomes at some point. For further studies on industrial network mobilisation processes, it is important not to limit only to the perspective of firms and private interests. In addition to vertical and horizontal business relationships, understanding of the role of various types of socio-political actors is crucial if we are to better understand the mechanisms of network mobilisation.

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