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The Baltic German municipalities' inter-territorial strategies: a transition through city networks?

NICOLAS ESCACH

Abstract¹

Since the 1990s, the Baltic region has been undergoing a complete reorganization, which is characterized by a type of regionalization often known as "The New Hansa". The coastline cities of Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, which lie far from the most dynamic German and European areas and often suffer from an economic and demographic decline, see in this the chance for a new start. The question is whether using the supranational scale and in particular cooperating with the Øresund regions can enable public and private stakeholders to offer a real prospect of development to the shrinking cities of Northern Germany.

Shrinking Cities; Regionalism; Baltic Sea Region; City-Networks; Rescaling

Zusammenfassung

Die überstaatlichen Strategien der deutschen Kommunen im Ostseeraum: Wandel durch Städtenetzwerke?

Seit den 1990er Jahren befindet sich der Ostseeraum vollständig im Wandel, der durch eine Art Regionalisierung gekennzeichnet ist, die oft als „Die Neue Hanse“ bezeichnet wird. Die Küstenstädte von Schleswig-Holstein und Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, die weit entfernt von den dynamischsten deutschen und europäischen Regionen liegen und oft unter wirtschaftlichem und demographischem Rückgang leiden, sehen darin die Chance für einen Neuanfang. Die Frage ist, ob die Nutzung der staatenübergreifenden Dimension und insbesondere die Zusammenarbeit mit den Öresund-Regionen es öffentlichen und privaten Akteuren ermöglichen kann, den schrumpfenden Städten Norddeutschlands eine echte Entwicklungsperspektive zu bieten.

Schrumpfende Städte; Regionalismus; Ostseeraum; Städtenetzwerke; Neuskalierung

¹ The author thanks Anne Raynaud for her precious help.

Introduction

The German coastal regions of the Baltic Sea are, with most of their Polish neighbors, special cases among the bordering territories: they present the lowest level of development of their respective states (DE RAUGLAUDRE 1998). Schleswig-Holstein, nicknamed "the Danish peduncle" was, until 1989 the least developed of the western German *Länder*, while Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania was the poorest in eastern Germany. The two *Länder* are still lagging behind the major infrastructures and transport routes along the northern European plains and the industrial centers of median Europe. The development of Schleswig-Holstein has long been hindered by the proximity of the Iron Curtain and the overwhelming influence of Hamburg. The southern part of the *Land* belongs to the Hamburg metropolitan region. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania grew more during the Cold War thanks to the dynamism of the harbor of Rostock, open door on the GDR's world² before becoming a "dead

end" of the European Union until 2004. In 2017, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has the lowest population density in Germany (69,2 inhabitants per square kilometer, that is to say, more than three times less than the national average).

The path of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein merges with the one of their larger cities. They often have welcomed industrial and port activities today in crisis and are, for some people, considered as models of fragility. The atlas of shrinking cities has identified Kiel, Lübeck, Rostock and Schwerin among the European *shrinking cities* with more than 100 000 inhabitants over the period 1950–2000 (OSWALT, RIENIETS 2006). They are the only cities of this type in northern Germany.

The coastal cities of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein certainly present a demographic and economic vulnerability³, which results in a certain

marginalization in a context of economic metropolization and a weak influence within the political Europe. They, however, are located in a border position, on the western edge of the Baltic transnational space⁴, which has emerged since the beginning of the 1990s thanks to a profusion of initiatives launched in particular by local stakeholders⁵ (municipalities, ports, universities ...). The opening of the Fehmarn fixed connection scheduled for 2028 could also contribute to anchoring the north-German coastline to the dynamic urban area of Copenhagen/Malmö (extended Øresund). Likewise, the relative proximity of Polish or Baltic cities can offer, particularly for municipalities such as Rostock, the opportunity to remobilize old cooperation and a position of "guide" for the other eastern cities with the German, Nordic or European authorities.

2 Competing with the Hamburg hub after German reunification, the port of Rostock became a roll-on/roll-off port (4th German port in 2014), mainly oriented to local (Trelleborg, Gedser) and regional (links with the Gulf of Finland) traffic, as well as a departure port for cruises.

3 In a context of strong perturbations, the difficulty of a given spatial organization to protect itself, adapt and/or reorganize. Vulnerability is often cumulative: it is the consequence of a shock that is difficult to cushion (through its intensity, its geographical extent) but also the cause of a lesser capacity to respond to future developments.

4 The term transnational space is here to be understood as an open system of interactions and networks established at different geographical levels, in a given space by stakeholders linked through a community of interests. The limits for the Baltic transnational area will be the eligibility area of the INTERREG IV-B program: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Belarus, Norway and a part of the German and Russian regions. Site of the program: <http://eu.baltic.net>.
5 The creation of the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) and the Baltic Sea Port Organization (BPO) in 1991 is fairly representative.

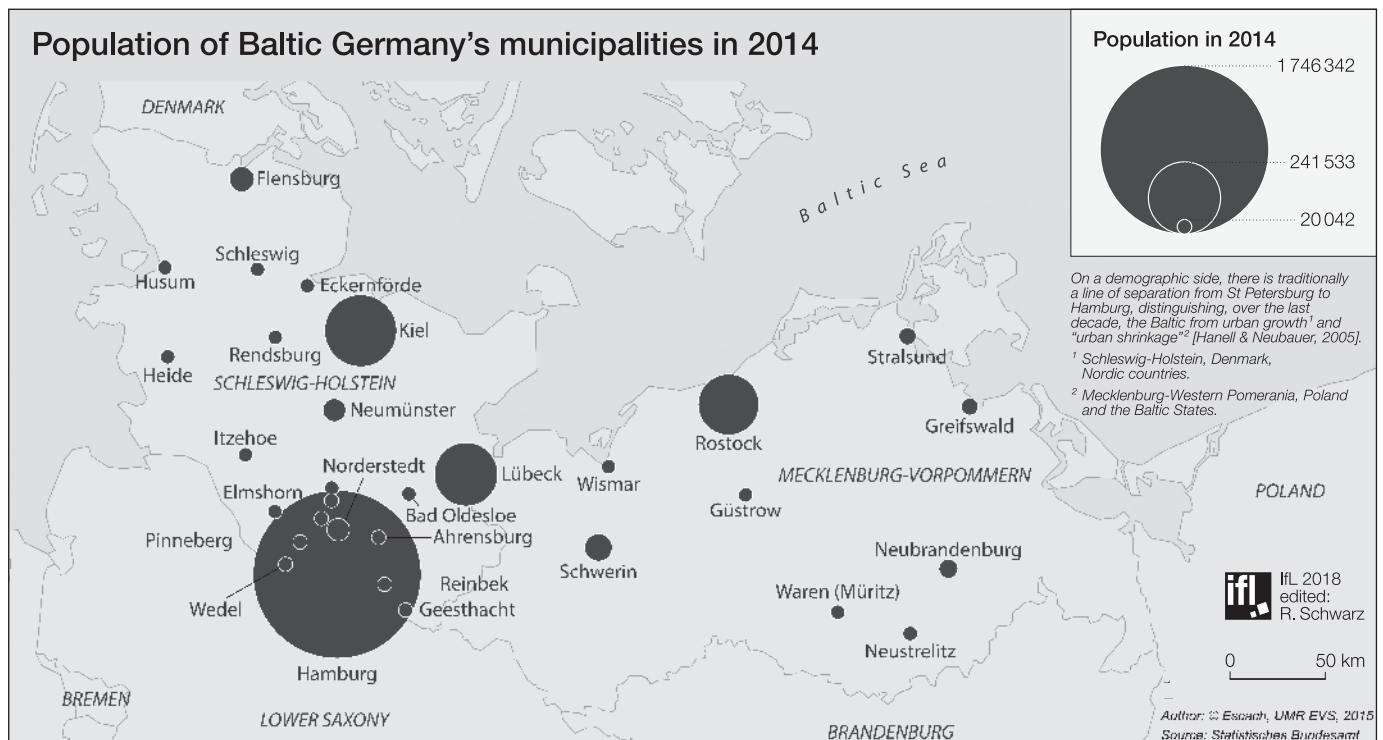


Fig. 1: Population of Baltic Germany's municipalities in 2014

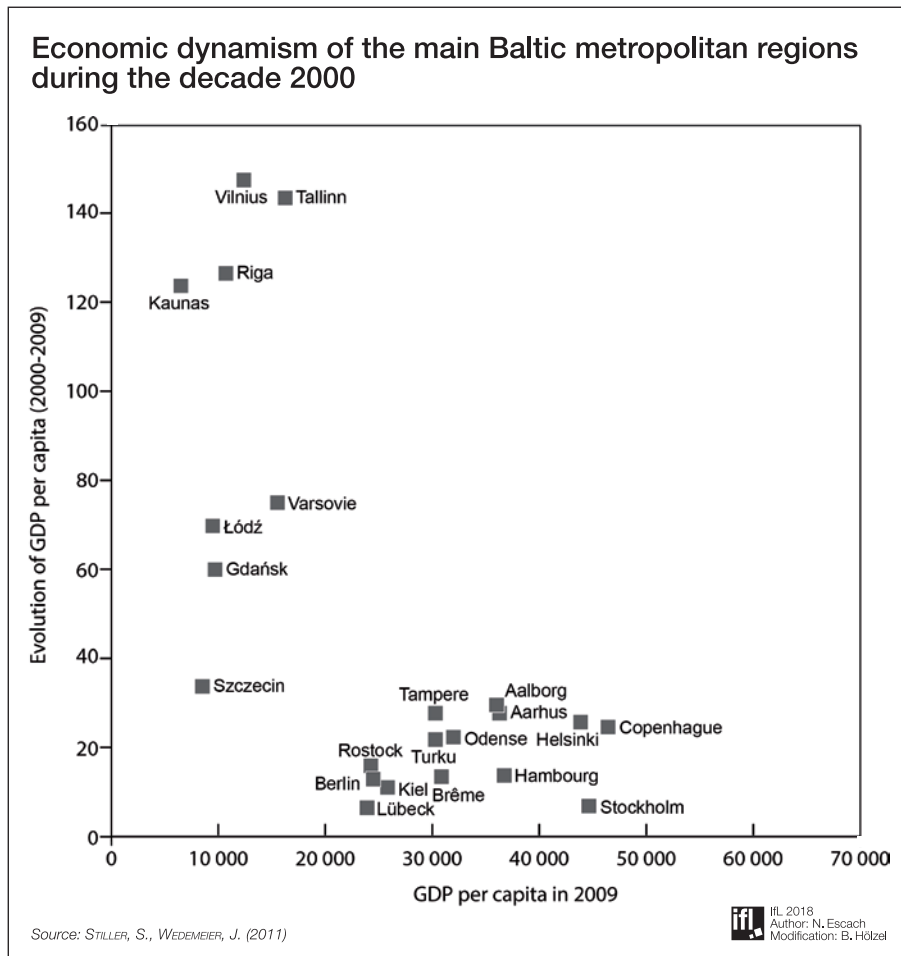


Fig. 2: Economic dynamism of the main Baltic metropolitan regions during the decade 2000

Pierre VELTZ mentions an “archipelago economy” about the spatial polarization’s process in favor of the more developed zones, now more interconnected than dependent of their hinterlands (VELTZ 1996). Can the municipalities of the Baltic coast, although of medium size, redefine their position within the traditional territorial and administrative frameworks through the cities’ networks? The term city network is here to be understood as a voluntarist approach of alliances and cooperations without borders predetermination or physical proximity (PIOLLE 1993). Frédéric TESSON has shown that this tool allows local stakeholders to recompose the usual boundaries of their political action, when this political action occurs at a level where the isolation of the territories is obvious and to identify new solutions to the increasing challenges the local actors encounter. These problems do not necessarily arise in the same terms at

other levels of governance (TESSON 1996). The insertion in a city network therefore often constitutes an answer to a reaction of elected members, especially in a difficult socio-economic context (MAYNTZ 1993; BULÉON, BAUDELLE 1999). The development of an inter-territorial strategy through the geographical levels is all easier as, since the 1980s, the local stakeholders enjoy a greater autonomy in the conduct of their international policy because of a recomposition in the role of the state (ESCACH 2014; JOUVE 2007). However, when looking at the former GDR, this process could not be implemented in the way, because the state remains centralized for a long time.

Vulnerability⁶ is a relative concept according to the scale of observation. It

6 Exposure and sensitivity to damaging an urban space system, see LUSSAULT, M. (2013) → «Vulnerabilité», Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l’espace des sociétés, Paris, Belin, p. 1096–1098.

seems that the Baltic city networks, which have multiplied since the fall of the Iron Curtain, form a transnational space with vague boundaries and allow the neighboring municipalities, despite their fragility, to be part of several geographical levels, offering bridges between levels that are usually little accessible or poorly connected. Would exchanges between cities, because it is a process more flexible than a regional strategy, have become a possible response to urban shrinkage thanks to experience sharing. Can networking be a resource for narrowing cities on the German coast, marginalized on a national scale but possible relays of the northern European networks? The challenge seems to be to mobilize the right networks at the right scale in order to recompose the parameters usually leading to a situation of vulnerability.

The municipalities of Baltic Germany: a shared fragility?

Urban shrinkage is a process that unites demographic decline, loss of duties and employments, rising of unemployment rates and level of poverty (HANNEMANN 2003; HEINEBERG 2004; MEYFROIDT 2011). It can combine up to three forms of vulnerability: a demographic decline, an economic decline and the possibly a spatial retraction. This measure implies covering whole regions and considering a minimal temporal extension (ROTH 2011). Over the period 1990–2010, the most important Baltic cities in the *Länder* of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein have generally met these criteria (Fig. 1).

On a demographic side, there is traditionally a line of separation from St Petersburg to Hamburg, distinguishing, over the last decade, the Baltic from urban growth⁷ and “urban shrinkage”⁸ (HANELL, NEUBAUER 2005).

7 Schleswig-Holstein, Denmark, Nordic countries

8 Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Poland and the Baltic States

The municipalities the most involved in city networks

database from December 2013

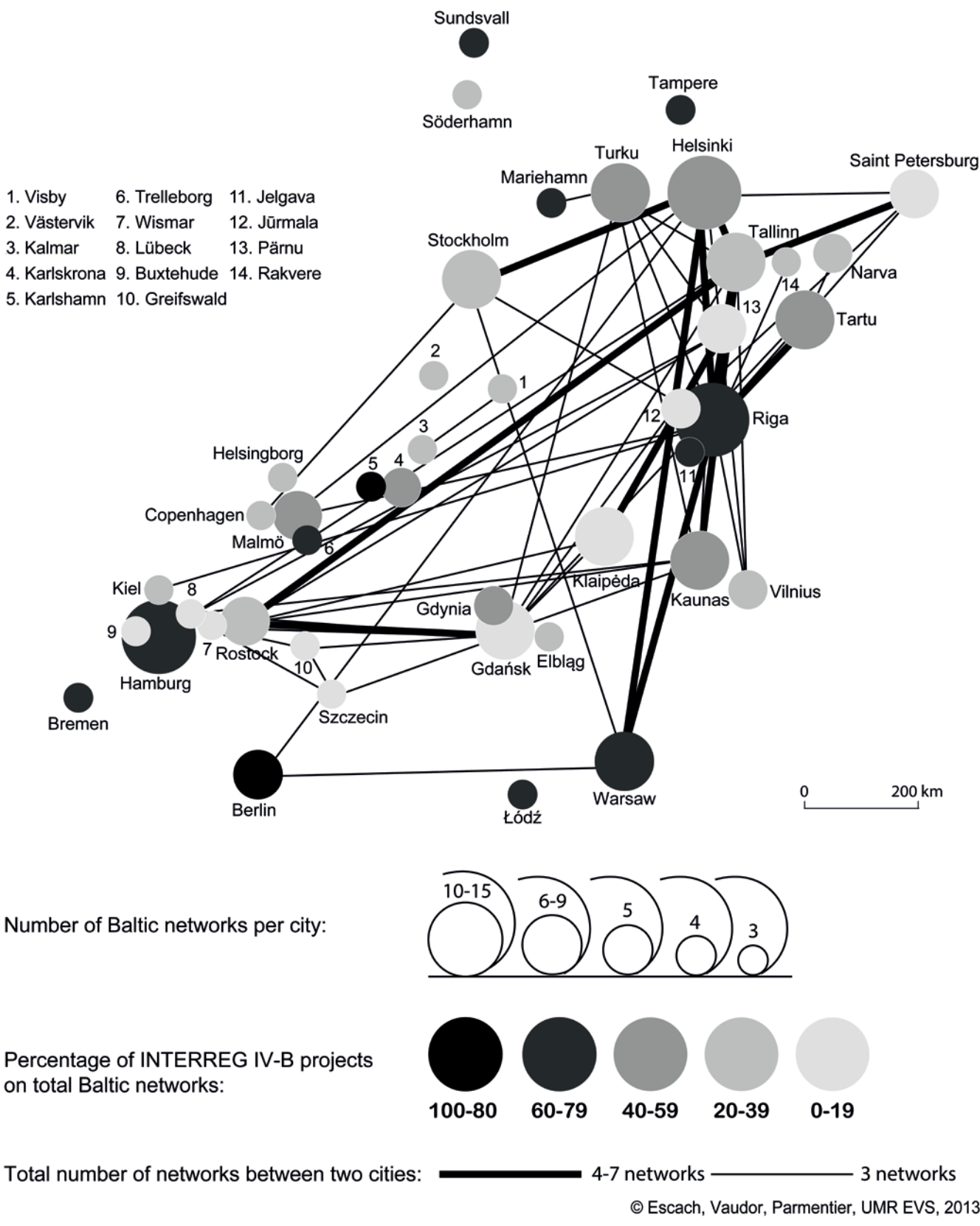


Fig. 3: The municipalities the most involved in city networks

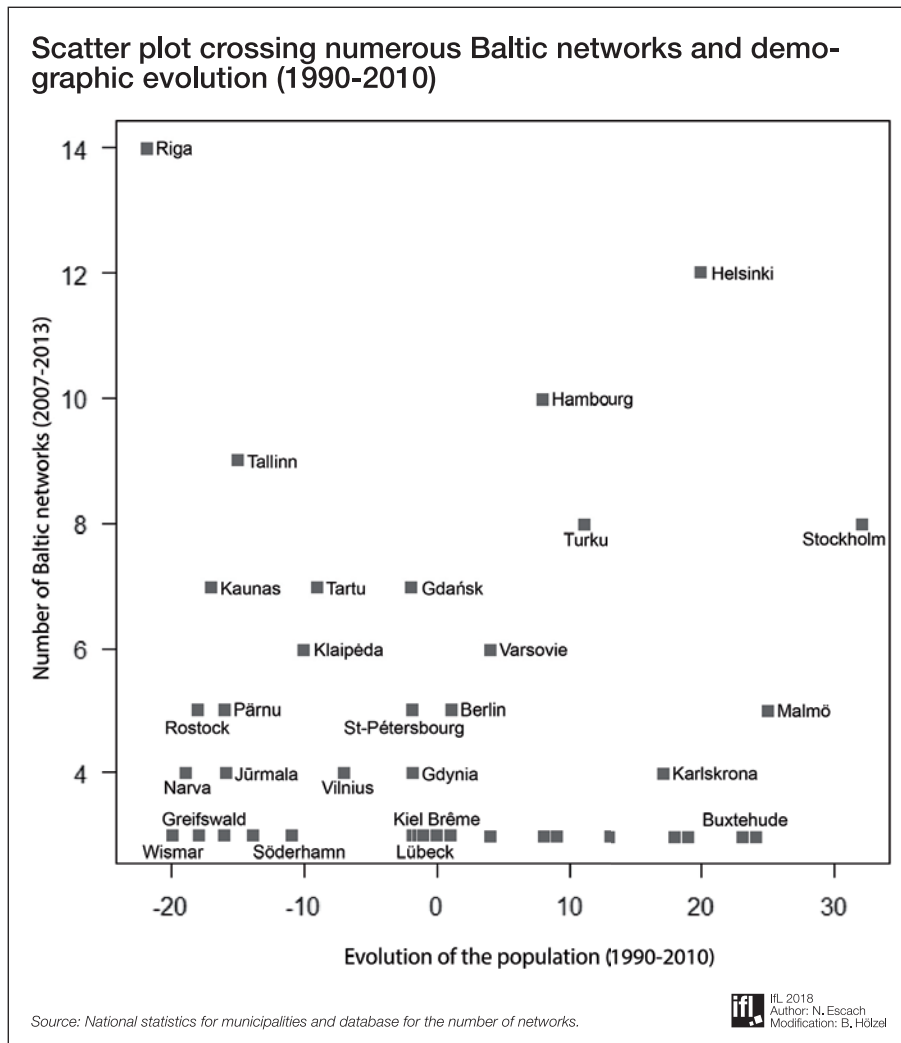


Fig. 4: Scatter plot crossing numerous Baltic networks and demographic evolution (1990- 2010)

The old Iron Curtain line however, does not seem to separate coastal Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania although the reasons for a demographic decline are to be studied on a finer scale. Part of the Baltic coastline of Schleswig-Holstein seems for example to contrast with the condition of the region as a whole.

The ten largest cities of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania have all experienced a demographic decline over the last twenty-five years⁹ with an average of -20.5% , which is in a very particular context (new Germany, territories of the respective states before reunification). Large coastal cities such as Rostock (-17%), Stralsund

(-20%), Greifswald (-13.5%) or Wismar (-23%) have slightly better resisted than inland cities like Schwerin (-24%) or Neubrandenburg (-29%). The largest cities have nevertheless experienced a population growth over the last five or ten years: Rostock (since 2003), Greifswald (since 2005), Stralsund (since 2010), Wismar (since 2014), Schwerin (since 2014) and Neubrandenburg (since 2015).

Schleswig-Holstein has a more dubious profile with significant demographic declines for the first four and only free cities (*kreisfreie Städte*) of Kiel (-2.5%), Lübeck (-1.6%), Flensburg (-0.9%) and Neumünster (-4.8%) over the

period 1990–2010. Over the period 1990–2015¹⁰, Kiel and Lübeck have nevertheless experienced a global population growth (0.3% and 0.7%) contrary to Flensburg and Neumünster (-1.1% and -2%). On the other hand, the other major cities of the region such as Norderstedt, Elmshorn, Pinneberg, Wedel and Ahrensburg are experiencing a population growth due to the process of expansion of the Hamburg metropolis.

The large cities of the two *Länder*, especially Kiel and Rostock share a negative annual balance since 1990. This situation leads to a strong aging of the population. In Kiel in 2010, inhabitants over 65 years old accounted for 18.5% of the population. The annual net migration however has fluctuated for many German cities on the Baltic coast. In Kiel, the negative net migration since 1990 has been reversed in 2001 and remained positive since then, except for 2004. The net migration in Lübeck has followed rather erratic annual trends. In Rostock, the balance was reversed in 2003, which could be analyzed by some as a “re-urbanization” of the city center. Moreover, with the reunification of Germany, the city had experienced the same difficulties as the other eastern *Länder* (economic difficulties, emigration, “brain-drain”).

The two *Länder* are transnationally unique: Baltic Germany is not dominated by a metropolis of national importance but by three medium-sized cities (Rostock, Lübeck and Kiel) of relatively similar size. The sublittoral metropolises of Hamburg and Berlin and, to a lesser extent, the Øresund region¹¹ play an ambiguous role as a call for young students and graduates. The coastal cities of Schleswig-Holstein such as Kiel do not benefit from the periurbanization of Hamburg. The Hamburg extension zone, where one-third of the population resided in 2010 is

9 1990–2015 (31 December 1990–31 December 2015), Statistisches Amt, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

10 1990–2015 (31 December 1990–31 December 2015), Statistisches Amt, Schleswig-Holstein

11 The region extends from northern Germany to southern Sweden and is centered around the cross-border metropolis Copenhagen/Malmö.

a growth area of the highest importance¹², while the west coast¹³, the Danish border region¹⁴ and, to a lesser extent, a part of the east coast has a low attractiveness. Overall, a south-to-north gradient is thus visible, the north of Neumünster being more marked by demographic stagnation or even the land abandonment than the southern/south-western part of the *Land* around Hamburg. The prospects for 2025/2030 show however a positive dynamic for the towns-districts of Flensburg and Kiel.

The city of Lübeck is a special case: it is only 55 km from Hamburg and is connected to the metropolis by the A1 motorway and by the train in 45 minutes with a rate of three departures per hour. In 2011, 52 % of the population leaving Lübeck emigrated to the Hamburg region but 49.6 % of the new inhabitants came from this same region. The urban front between Hamburg and Lübeck, passing through Ahrensburg and Bad Odesloe is thus fully integrated into the Hamburg great metropolitan area¹⁵.

Economically, the cities of Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania *Länder* are at a relatively close level of development (STILLER, WEDEMEIER 2011). The metropolitan areas¹⁶ of Kiel, Rostock and Lübeck have a comparable GDP per capita in 2009 (Fig. 2).

The convergence of Rostock since 1990 is partly explained by central State aid at the time of reunification. The latter allocated 1 250 billion euros to the *Länder* of Eastern Germany in 1990 as a part of the “*Aufbau Ost*” package. At the same time, the equalization scheme between *Länder* “*Länderfinanzierungsungleich*”, extended to the former East Germany in 1995 still aims today to ensure that each federal state (*Land*) has a financial capacity equivalent to 97 % of the amount

corresponding to the average living conditions throughout the territory.

These various measures of economic harmonization have in fact had many perverse effects. The increase in wages in the former GDR has created an incompatibility between wage level and productivity. The *Treuhandanstalt*, a public organization responsible for privatizing companies of the former GDR, has often settled for clearing state-owned firms by reselling them at low cost to companies with their headquarters in the West. Its action resulted in the abolition of 90 % of industrial jobs. It is often accused of having carried out a form of economic colonization.

The municipalities¹⁷ of the two Baltic *Länder* also remain geographically isolated from the main dynamic German regions: Rhine Germany, the most urbanized and industrial region in Germany (Cologne, Duisburg and the other metropolises of the Rhine region), financial heart of the country (Frankfurt and Düsseldorf) and part of the European backbone and the two *Länder* of Bavaria (Munich) and Baden-Württemberg (Stuttgart), which constitute a real Sun Belt. The terms to refer to Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania are often pejorative: “*outside Land*” (*Land am Rand*) (FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG, AKADEMIE SCHWERIN 1995), “periphery of the periphery” (*Peripherie der Peripherie*) (BRAUN 1997), “poor house of Germany” (*Armenhaus*) as in the history book of Rolf SCHNEIDER (SCHNEIDER 1993).

The German municipalities of the Baltic coast: a regional group between urban narrowing and Baltic strategy?

A method promoting the proactive networks of municipalities

In order to test the hypothesis of a correlation between urban shrinkage and Baltic commitment, a main database listing the participation of municipalities in the main Baltic networks and their demographic

and economic profile was developed following the geographical boundaries of the INTERREG IV-B (2007–2013)¹⁸ program. It gathers a list of institutional networks and European projects (ESCACH, VAUDOR 2013). This inventory was made possible through the 2012/2013 annual report of the international organizations of the union of international organizations (DE GRUYTER 2012) and the INTERREG IV-B website. The information gathered allow a fairly comprehensive analysis of the integration of the local bordering stakeholders between 2007 and 2013, taking into account equally institutional public networks that associate members durably by an accession system and temporary European projects. The selection of the networks was carried out according to two criteria: First, the transnational nature of a network was recognized when it involved cities of at least three Baltic States, two of which were not contiguous.

A country should not concentrate more than 80 % of the members of a given network¹⁹. The selected networks also had municipalities among their members, even if the municipal actor was not exclusive.

The database therefore listed a total of 63 networks, including four institutional networks of municipalities²⁰, 12 institutional networks involving municipalities²¹ and 47 INTERREG IV-B projects²². From this initial base of 354 municipalities, a

18 For the municipal networks, the eligibility area of the INTERREG-B program for the Baltic area is an inevitable point of reference since stakeholders wishing to carry out a transnational approach often resort to European co-financing.

19 This criterion led us to exclude the “Baltic Sea Challenge” network as 80.6 % of the member cities are located in Finland.

20 BaltMet, KIMO, New Hanse, Union of Baltic Cities

21 Ars Baltica, Baltic Local Agenda Forum 21 (BLA21F), Baltic Palette, Baltic Sail, Baltic Sea Action Group, Baltic Development Forum, Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation, Baltic Tourism Commission, EuRoB, Hanseatic Parliament, Healthy Cities Network Phase V, Social-Hansa

22 Agora 2.0, BaltCICA, BaltFood, Baltic Biogas Bus, Baltic Bird, Baltic Fashion, Baltic Master II, Baltic Supply, Baltic.AirCargo.Net, Balticclimate, BaltMet Promo, BaSIC, BERAS Implementation, BGLC, BONITA, BSLN, BSR InnoShip, BSR Quick, BSR TransGovernance, BSR InnoReg, CleanShip, COHIBA, Cool-Bricks, Eco-Region, Egoprise, EWTC II, FM, IBI Net, JOSEFIN, Longlife, More Baltic Biogas Bus, NECL II, New Bridges, One BSR, Parks and Benefits, PEA, PRESTO, PURE, RB21T, RBGC, SCANDRIA, Science Link/Link1, Submariner, Trans in Form (TiF), Urb.Energy, Urban Creative Poles, Waterpraxis

12 Districts (Landkreise) of Stormarn, Segeberg and Pinneberg in particular

13 Districts (Landkreise) of Dithmarse and Steinburg

14 Districts (Landkreise) of Schleswig-Flensburg and North-Friesland

15 According to Eurostat, the metropolitan region of Hamburg comprises the following districts: Hamburg (Land Hamburg), Harburg and Stade (Land Lower Saxony), Herzogtum Lauenburg, Pinneberg, Segeberg, Stormarn (Land Schleswig-Holstein).

16 in the sense of Eurostat

17 Kiel and Rostock municipalities are in 2012 respectively at 30th and 37th place in the national ranking in terms of population.



Fig. 5: The partner cities of Rostock municipality

“filtered” database keeping only 43 Baltic municipalities belonging to more than three networks (i.e. 12 % of the total) was designed (Fig. 3). The analysis thus aims to establish if this first decile, bringing together the Baltic cities the most involved in city networks, fit with a profile of decline, particularly demographic.

Baltic networks linking dynamic cities and “shrinking” cities

A first linear regression, carried out using the statistics software R, crossing the evolution of the population between 1990 and 2010 and the number of networks was accompanied by a very strong p-value (0.832) and a R^2 very close from 0 (0.001), which shows the absolute independence of the two variables. The scatter plot (Fig. 4) clearly shows a positive

position of the *Norden* cities²³ such as Helsinki, Stockholm, Turku and to a lesser extent Malmö, which combine population growth with a strong presence in the Baltic networks. This correlation explains why they are attractive partners for the cities of Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Apart from Hamburg and its region (Buxtehude), the most integrated German cities within the Baltic networks are all in demographic decline, more or less important. Rostock, Wismar and Greifswald present one of the most unfavourable demographic evolutions with Riga, Narva and Jelgava.

²³ Geographically, the term refers to a group of five states (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland) and three autonomous territories (the Faeroe Islands, Greenland and Åland Islands). In these countries, the expression was used at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries in order to evoke a wide geographical, historical and cultural unity and was accompanied during the twentieth century by the emergence of institutional cooperations such as the Nordic Council created in 1952.

But Wismar and Greifswald are closer to Kiel, Lübeck and Bremen by associating negative demographic changes with an average integration within the Baltic networks. Only the economic metropolis of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania cumulates a large demographic fall (–18.2 %) with a very strong Baltic insertion (5 networks). The Rostock case seems to perfectly respond to the model of a declining city very engaged within the Baltic area.

A similar logic appears after a second regression involving the evolution of the population between 2000 and 2010 and the number of networks. The p-value (0.825) and the R^2 (0.001) always confirm an absence of dependence of the two variables. The positive dynamic is reinforced at the level of Øresund with a good integration of Trelleborg, in addition to the

one of Helsinki, Stockholm and Turku. Most German cities have a non-existent or very low growth except for the positive growths of Hamburg and Buxtehude and the large demographic decline of Wismar.

The demographic correlation, as well as the economic profile, makes it possible to identify Rostock as the only city of the German coastline with a narrow urban profile and a strong commitment within the Baltic area, which justifies the development of a specific case study.

The case of Rostock: a concrete use of the Baltic networks to fight against marginalization

Rostock, a delicate transition for the former GDR gate

Rostock is the main economic pole²⁴ and the largest city of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania with 206 011 inhabitants in 2016. It is located in sublittoral position, 18 km from the Baltic Sea, on the Warnow estuary upstream from the seaside resort of Warnemünde.

Rostock occupied a special place in the GRD. The municipal population doubled between 1946 (114,869 inhabitants) and 1970 (200,982 inhabitants). The second five-year plan (1956–1960) plans a considerable expansion of the city, particularly around industrial fishing and shipyards (*Warnow Werft* founded in 1947–1948). With the division of Germany, the GDR now needed an ocean port. The traffic of the new port opened in 1960 (*VEB Seehafen Rostock*) increases from 10.1 to 20.7 million tons between 1970 and 1988 and reaches a peak of 21 million tons in 1989. 40 % of trade was with the Soviet Union. Internationally, traffic flew to Central America, Nicaragua and Cuba²⁵. In 1991, traffic declined to 8 million tons (FELLNER 1993).

German reunification is painful for Rostock, for several reasons. The population of the city decreases considerably and without interruption from 1989 to 2003 (–54 653 inhabitants i.e. – 21.6 % of the population). Economically, the municipality is also experiencing significant difficulties. The unemployment rate rises from 1 to 14 % between March and December 1990. With an unemployment rate of 8.7 % in 2017, Rostock is still well above the national average of 5.7 %. At the same time, the city had to cope with the recession of the hinterland and the port foreland, which was competing with Hamburg after the reunification, and a restructuring/relocation of major industries such as shipbuilding or industrial fishing (FELLNER 1993).

The city of Rostock has nevertheless performed better than smaller coastal cities such as Stralsund and Wismar and even more than non-coastal cities like Schwerin and Neubrandenburg. It has received a lot of aid from the State under the reunification programs, attracted more West German or foreign investors than its neighbours and was able to benefit from assistance programs granted by its twin cities. Located reasonably close to Hamburg and Berlin, it possessed the critical mass sufficient for a possible re-conversion. Even today, the challenge for the municipality is to redefine its international policy and its openness, even though the role of gateway to the world is now assumed by its neighbour Hamburg. Baltic cooperation in Rostock is old since it dates from the Baltic weeks²⁶ organized from 1958 (ESCACH 2012). Contacts with riverside towns continued throughout the second half of the twentieth century and took the form of woven relations

with brotherly countries or with certain Nordic States (Sweden, Finland)²⁷. At the fall of the Iron Curtain, almost all the Baltic twinning of Rostock are already established: Szczecin (1957), Turku (1959), Riga (1961), Aarhus (1964), Bergen (1965), Gothenburg (1965), Bremen (1987). The city was one of the founding members of the Union of Baltic cities²⁸ in 1991. Since then, it has held various positions within the network (member of the executive committee, vice-president municipality...). A coordination office for the INTERREG-B Baltic Sea program is also present in the city, which facilitates the involvement of local stakeholders. International relations operate with only two full-time (formerly three) periods to manage the protocol, delegation travels, fourteen twin cities²⁹ in the Baltic Sea Region and around the world, demonstrating that beyond the technical capacity, the political will and the personal commitment of employees are essential.

Marketing around the centrality of the city on a Baltic scale

The position of Rostock on a Baltic scale is regularly presented by the elected representatives as favorable as being able to constitute a point of interconnection (*Drehkreuz*) between Nordic Europe and Central Europe (HANSESTADT ROSTOCK 2010).

On the one hand, the temptation to symbolically join the space of the *Norden* and particularly the dynamic region of the Øresund is great. The ferry connections between Rostock and Danish or Swedish cities provide a functional support

27 For example, on September 17th 1959, a simple friendship agreement between Rostock and Turku stipulates that university, cultural and touristic contacts should aim at a better understanding between peoples and peacekeeping. The text provides the organization of an exhibition on the GRD's ten years anniversary in Turku. GDR days are held in Turku in 1973 and in 1984 with the participation of PhD students from Rostock university. It was finally necessary to wait more than 50 years for a written twinning to be signed between Turku and Rostock on September, 18th 2004.

28 The Union of Baltic Cities (UBC), created in 1991 with the Gdańsk declaration is a network of Baltic cities involving municipalities of varying sizes around multiple theme of cooperation: sustainable development, culture, city planning, health and social cohesion.

29 Thirteen twin cities plus Guldborgsund (partnership concluded in 2014).

24 The political capital is Schwerin.

25 Interview with Andreas Schubert, employee of the city planning department of Rostock's town hall, meeting at the town hall of Rostock on January 16th 2012 at 2pm.

26 In Kiel, the Social-Democratic Mayor, Andreas Gayk had transformed a traditional regatta from the empire period (1882) into an international, cultural, political and sporting event called "Kiel Week" after the war. From the middle of the 1950s, its programming evolved surreptitiously: the municipality of Schleswig-Holstein invites increasingly regular military units of NATO. The GRD then decides to set up a Rostock Baltic week from 1958 as a response. The Rostock's week brings together elected representatives, athletes, artists and academics from sisterly countries or Nordic countries such as Sweden or Finland.

for these vague hopes (Rostock-Gedser, Rostock-Trelleborg). The transfer of the German capital from Bonn to Berlin placed Rostock halfway between western Scandinavia and the Berlin area. The municipality of Rostock certainly cannot stand on an equal footing with the Danish or Swedish neighbours, particularly dynamic in the Øresund, nor even hope to fully integrate into the Nordic space, but it feeds on the ambition to become a gateway.

The instrumentalization of the *Norden* image is not insignificant: the region is associated with economic dynamism and to high social and ecological standards in the global comparison. In 2007, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway accounted for the equivalent of 73 % of Baltic GDP³⁰. On the other hand, the areas of the strait experienced a great resistance to the crisis. The overall innovation index in 2011 ranked Sweden second and Denmark sixth in the world. The cities between Hamburg and Helsinki have sometimes been described as “Baltic blue banana” (JOENNIEMI, WÆVER 1992; HELMRYD 1993). The dynamism of the Øresund region contributes to an anchoring (*Andockung*) research carried out by the peripheral areas. For both *Länder*, this approach consists in assuming their peripheral status by associating themselves with external growth poles (BRAUN 1997; BRAUN 2004). The endogenous potential is not enough, since economic growth necessarily involves an extroversion: selling of organic products on the Hamburg and Copenhagen markets, developing tourist offers for Scandinavian metropolises, subcontracting in the medical field or in some sectors for companies based in Denmark or Sweden.

The city of Rostock can also play the role of relay to the municipalities of the East (Poland and median Europe). Karin Wohlgemuth, Head of the International Relations department of the municipality

of Rostock, said: “We share the same problems and the same past as other cities in the East. Between us, we understand each other”³¹. Berndt Seite, Minister-President of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania from 1992 to 1998 had already highlighted at the beginning of the 1990s a comparative advantage of his region. It could become a “guide for the East” to its Scandinavian neighbours because of its linguistic capital and the cultural proximities maintained with the former Soviet hemisphere.

The city banks now on a north-south axis between northern and central Europe, and even between northern Europe and the Baltic Sea Arc³² (Fig. 5). While cooperation within the Baltic and even cross-border areas remains a top priority, cooperation on a wider, central European scale will allow for recognition by the Nordic partners. Rostock is caught in a double set of scales: to exist on the Baltic stage to reinforce its centrality at a national level and to exist on the European stage to strengthen its legitimacy on the Nordic/Baltic level.

The preliminary document *Guidelines for Urban development of the Hanseatic city of Rostock*³³, published in 2010 by the Rostock City Council set the objective of converting Rostock into a *regiopolis*, drawing on a reflection carried out in the city since 2006–2007³⁴. The term is used again in a final version of the strategic framework published in 2012, *Rostock 2025, Urban Development Guidelines: “As regiopolis, Rostock will be engaged on a wider international scale in the future, mainly within the Baltic region and in the area delimited by the metropolises of Berlin, Copenhagen/Øresund, Hamburg, Szczecin”*³⁵. The

term *regiopolis* was invented by professors Iris Reuther and Jürgen Aring in Germany in 2006. It refers to an average city (more than 100,000 inhabitants) located outside a metropolitan area but performing certain metropolitan functions, has high-quality infrastructures, good accessibility, is an economic centrality for its surrounding areas and forms an innovation pole. The concept aims at highlighting the potential of previously neglected urban spaces and to announce their return to the European and national map. Rostock is the first recognized *regiopolis* in 2009, year of the first national conference on *regiopolis* in Germany³⁶. The term of *regiopolis* condenses projects contributing to a reorientation of the city in a post-communist context.

An inter-territorial approach through city networks?

The recovery of a symbolic centrality based on the concept of *regiopolis* finds several spatial translations on three main scales: integration within transport networks between northern and southern Europe, a symbolic anchorage to the *Norden* cross-border space and intra-urban recompositions through exchanges established within the Baltic networks.

A first strategy is for the municipality to rely on its modest port, which is a definite comparative advantage, in order to gain integration in European trade networks and thus in influence. This topological centrality is possible only at the cost of a reconversion of port activities. Of course, transits of goods between the Nordic countries and the Adriatic Sea are not neglected with the proliferation of North-South multimodal corridor projects. The European project INTERREG IV-B SCANDRIA thus aimed to offer an alternative to the *Fehmarn* crossing while reusing the former Berlin-Prague-Budapest-Bucharest route, taken by the

31 “Between eastern cities, we have the same problems and background. We understand each other”, meeting in Rostock on January 16th, 2012.

32 The Baltic Arc is an expression used by Roger Brunet (Brunet 2002) to designate an area of the European Union which extends from Hamburg to Helsinki, via Riga and the former medieval Hanseatic trading posts to the south of the Baltic Sea.

33 Hansestadt Rostock 2010, p. 7

34 See the history of regiopolis’ Rostock : <http://www.regiopole-rostock.de> [seen the le 08/03/2014].

35 Quoted from the summary version: Hansestadt Rostock (2013): *Rostock 2025, Leitlinien zur Stadtentwicklung, Kurzfassung*, p. 1.

36 This conference was organized by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK) and the municipality of Rostock, the planning company Planungsverband Region Rostock and the Land of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

30 According to the limits of the INTERREG IV-B Program, Baltic Space 2007–2013.

trades in COMECON. At the same time, the reception of cruise ships constitutes a new axis of development for port and municipal authorities. It involves capturing visitors who have only been traveling through the city and optimizing the transfer from the landing docks to a city center with an embellished waterfront. Several cruise companies such as MSC Cruises have even chosen the German port of Rostock-Warnemünde as a bridgehead for few routes. Competition was severe on the German coastline according to the Baltic Transport Journal, the 300,000 passengers in Rostock in 2012 being overtaken by the 348,000 calling at Kiel (BTJ 2013). Rostock has however had the highest recent growth rate of 14 % growing from 485,000 passengers in 2015 to 553,000 passengers in 2016 (CRUISE BALTIC 2017). In 2016, Rostock attracts more passengers than Kiel (485,497) according to the network "Cruise Baltic".

A second, more topographical axis of development consists in printing the idea of territorial continuity between the cross-border region of the nearby Øresund and the Mecklenburg coast. Scandinavian initiatives are regularly taken as an example in the city. The Rostock Department of Urban Planning learned a lot from Gothenburg about how to reorganize its water fronts for the "WUD-Waterfront Urban Development" (INTERREG II-C) project. Several Finnish weeks, involving cultural events and conferences were also organized, notably in 2004. Anchoring with the Nordic countries takes the form of concrete institutional tools, for example, on an economic level. Operators from Mecklenburg use the INTERREG IV-A "Southern Baltic" instrument for joint research programs with Sweden and have joined the BSR STARS project on clusters' networking for SMB. The *Land* specializes in health economy through the establishment in 2001 by public authorities and private stakeholders³⁷ of *Biocon Valley*

GmbH, one of the organizations behind the global *ScanBalt-Initiative* network which brings together several Scandinavian actors. The geographical influence of the Øresund on Mecklenburg is nevertheless very controversial: projections by 2020/2030 place sometimes Mecklenburg in the Berlin area (VASAB 2010) with a strong integration potential in the Northern area, sometimes in a large area extending from Amsterdam to Copenhagen via Berlin (ESPON 2006). Institutional frameworks are in fact lacking in Rostock to interact with the nearby Copenhagen/Malmö urban area: the municipality is neither part of the INTERREG-A Øresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak program nor of the NORTH SEA program INTERREG-B.

Finally, the city of Rostock seeks to transform its image by changing face and reinvesting the urban attributes of centrality. Several wastelands, in the heart of the city, revealing a spatial retraction, must be the subject of renovation programs. The use of European projects also creates a "leverage effect" to mobilize local stakeholders around a cause. The theme of culture is, for example, sensitive in the city and has been the subject of numerous citizen initiatives. At the beginning of the decade 2000, several elected representatives in Rostock wanted to close two important museums (the Kloster zum Heiligen Kreuz museum and the former August-Bebel street Maritime museum) to develop new functions within their walls. The two relatively old buildings have indeed decayed and it is impossible to set up exhibitions on the city's history. An employee of the city planning department of the municipality then decided to participate in international projects to save them. Rostock enters into European projects devoted to the possibility of public/private partnerships such as ACT-4PPP (INTERREG IV-B Central Europe, 2008–2011) or the installation of a cultural marketing such as the CULTMARK (INTERREG III-C, 2004–2006) project. The organization of a seminar of the "city planning" commission of the Baltic Cities'

Union³⁸ in 2006 allows other bordering municipalities to reflect on the theme of city's museums renovation. The idea of an international architectural competition for the construction of an attractive building entrance is proposed in order to revitalize the museum of August-Bebel-Street (2009–2010). The seminar finds an important echo in the local press and among the citizens (setting up of the *Societät Rostock Maritim e.V.* association). In the autumn 2011, 6 million euros from the State (*Städtebauförderung*) and the EU raised, notably through the mobilization around the different projects. They have enabled the museum function to be maintained on the renovation plans and on the land-use plans and thus, created an area of right access. Both museums are saved, and the elected members were forced to come back on their decision. The Baltic level was used to reverse a situation of local conflict.

Conclusion

The bordering cities of the Baltic space have taken a new leap in scale. After having sought a greater convergence between two former blocs and then adapted to European standards, municipalities of Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania today tend to benefit from a multi-scalar Baltic networking. They multiply the cooperations within the different zones integrated in the image of Rostock whose contacts are in a triangle between the Nordic world, German metropolises and former communist Europe. The objective is above all a change of image and the association with a modernity that would turn the page of economic and demographic declines. The case of Rostock underlines the role of political discourse and the vocabulary used: there is a competition to the geographical argument, each redefining its regional anchors to erase national boundaries leading to a situation deemed too peripheral. Finally, this race to the "jump of scale" often appears as a detour: it questions the position the city occupies in the traditional

³⁷ See the list of members on the website of the association: <http://www.bioconvalley.org>.

³⁸ Other name of the Baltic Cities Union.

hierarchy (local stakeholders, regions, State) and its positioning in a competition now widespread. A new status in the Baltic would allow for a different negotiation of daily working relations with regional and state actors who have the legal competences to conduct real international policies. The German coastal cities therefore do not seek to depart from the traditional vertical hierarchy, of which they are a full part, but rather to recompose it to their advantage.

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Резюме

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Межтерриториальные стратегии развития балтийских немецких городов: новая жизнь благодаря союзам городов?

Начиная с 1990-х годов балтийский регион переживает полную реорганизацию, сопровождающуюся процессом регионализации, который часто называют "Новой Ганзой". Прибрежные города земель Шлезвиг-Гольштейн и Мекленбург – Передняя Померания, расположенные далеко от наиболее динамично развивающихся регионов Германии и Европы и зачастую переживающие экономический и демографический спад, видят в этом возможность для новой жизни. Вопрос заключается в том, смогут ли государственные и частные предприятия благодаря межгосударственному взаимодействию и, в частности, сотрудничеству с Эресуннским регионом предложить реальную перспективу развития постепенно увядающим городам северной Германии.

Увядające города; регионализм; регион Балтийского моря; союзы городов; перемасштабирование

Résumé

Les stratégies interterritoriales des municipalités de l'Allemagne baltique: une transition par les réseaux de villes?

Depuis les années 1990, la région baltique connaît une intense recomposition prenant les traits d'une régionalisation souvent qualifiée de «Nouvelle Hanse». Les villes littorales du Schleswig-Holstein et du Mecklembourg-Poméranie-Occidentale, situées en marge des régions allemandes et européennes les plus dynamiques et souvent touchées par un déclin économique et démographique, y voient l'occasion d'un nouveau départ. L'utilisation de l'échelle supranationale et notamment de collaborations avec les régions de l'Øresund permet-elle aux acteurs publics et privés de proposer une réelle perspective de développement pour les villes rétrécissantes d'Allemagne du Nord?

Villes rétrécissantes; Régionalisation; Baltique; Réseaux de villes; Rescaling