Baltic Sea Region and Northern Dimension – competing region-building projects?

Bachelor Thesis

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CONTENTS:

Introduction 3

1. Regionalism as a theory and a process 5
   1.1. Concept of neo-region 7
      1.1.1. Different approaches to regions 9
      1.1.2. Europe of Regions instead of Europe of States? 11
   1.2. Genealogical approach to regions: region-building 13
      1.2.1. Region-building projects 16

2. Qualitative method of analysis 18

3. Regionalism and region-building in Northern Europe 21
   3.1. Baltic Sea Region as the region-building project 26
      3.1.1. Region-builders and contexts 28
      3.1.2. Terminological variations 29
      3.1.3. Territorial definition of the Baltic Sea Region 30
      3.1.4. Internal and external justifications of the Baltic Sea Region 32
      3.1.5. Images of the Baltic Sea Region 38
   3.2. Northern Dimension as the region-building project (in comparison with the Baltic Sea Region) 40
      3.2.1. Region-builders and contexts 43
      3.2.2. Terminological variations 45
      3.2.3. Territorial definition of the Northern Dimension 46
      3.2.4. Institutional framework of the Northern Dimension 48
      3.2.5. Internal and external justifications of the Northern Dimension 50
      3.2.6. Images of the Northern Dimension 56
   3.3. Similarities and differences between the two region-building projects 58

Conclusions 62
Abbreviations 66
References 67
Resümee 76
“It is possible to draw a circle on a map and define this circle as a new region and await the events (…) We invented a region, and a bit to our surprise, it became a reality” (Jervell 1996)

**Introduction**

Regionalism is one of the most current and dynamic processes in contemporary Europe - regions emerge all over the continent and they are much talked about. The most innovative type of region is a neo-region - international formation, crossing national borders and connecting different states and areas with each other. Regions do not have natural geographical borders, but only politically naturalised boundaries. They are not taken as something natural and given, but instead similarities and dissimilarities between areas are politically communicated as relevant or irrelevant. Politicians define and build regions, deciding what belongs to a certain region and what is left outside for some political reason. Regions are discursively produced through political projects: region-building projects. As different political actors have different interests, there are several region-building projects under creation in political discourse. These projects can be mutually reinforcing, but also competing in nature, trying to fend off rivalling ideas and put in operation a new vision of a certain political space. One of the most active and interesting processes of regionalism and region-building is occurring in contemporary Northern part of Europe.

In this thesis two leading region-building projects in contemporary North European political discourse – the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and the Northern Dimension (ND) - will be analysed and compared to each other. The reason behind the choice of the topic is vacuum of research in this field. The Baltic Sea Region concept has been analysed quite thoroughly and some theoretical work has already emerged interpreting the concept of the Northern Dimension. But these two concepts are generally analysed separately and have not been compared to each other. The Northern Dimension is generally not defined as a region but mostly as an “umbrella” for different policies of
the European Union or as Finland’s strategy to get her national interests on the wider European agenda. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the Northern Dimension is a region-building project like the Baltic Sea Region.

As a theoretical framework, the region-building approach will be used, which has been given scant attention compared to other scholarly approaches to regions – cultural, geopolitical and network approach. While all other approaches take regions as given, the region-building approach investigates specifically the constitution process of them. It investigates why regions emerge and how they are constructed discursively by politicians. The region-building approach somehow connects the two other - cultural and geopolitical - approaches, as focuses on which internal and external factors are used by region-builders in naturalising the existence of a new region.

The main goal of the thesis is to find out how the two region-building projects – the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension - are constructed in international political discourse. The Baltic Sea Region concept was initiated in the beginning of 1990s by several political actors, especially by German and Danish politicians. The Northern Dimension concept was launched in 1997 by Finland. The hypothesis is set up as follows: the concepts of the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension have similar and overlapping patterns, which make them competing region-building projects in international political discourse. As the aim is to investigate how the concepts are constructed in communication, international political speeches, held in English from 1996 to 2001, will be used as the empirical material.

Firstly, the development of regionalism will be introduced, which can be defined both as a theory and a process. After highlighting different definitions, approaches to regions and future prospects of the relationship between regions and nation-states, the region-building approach will be specifically focused on. Next the qualitative method of analysis will be presented, by which the construction processes of the two regions will be later analysed and compared to each other. The analysis of the Baltic Sea Region precedes the research on the Northern Dimension in order to give a framework for analysing the latter and make comparisons between the concepts. The institutional framework of the Baltic Sea Region will not be analysed in a specific chapter as it will be done in connection with the Northern Dimension, as it is unquestionably the Council
of the Baltic Sea States. Finally the similarities and differences between the two leading region-building projects in North European political discourse will be brought out and main conclusions of the analysis will be made.

1. Regionalism as a theory and a process

The term “regionalism” can be defined both as a theoretical approach and as an actual processes in world politics. Regionalism as a process means emergence of regions and regionalism as a theory explains and investigates these emerging political spaces. The two meanings of regionalism are closely connected with each other, as research on regions has always followed the spread of regionalist ideas in politics.

Regionalism does not have a clear-cut definition, as the terms of “regionalism” and “region” may represent different phenomena. The definitions of regionalism and region vary according to a particular problem or a question under investigation. Regionalism has been defined in literature as the formation of interstate groupings on the basis of regions (Fawcett 1998:11), as regionalpolitik inside states, as state-to-state co-operation or as a combination of these two (Joenniemi 1993a:4), as a process that is the result of design and conscious policy (Smith 1997 in Haukkala 1999:80). These definitions are different in nature, but still have something in common - they are connected with emergence of regions.

As there are no absolute or naturally determined regions, there is no single explanation that encompasses the origins and development of the regional idea (Fawcett 1998:10). Still, it is possible to describe some basic steps in the development of regional ideas in world politics. Regionalism is a phenomenon of the 20th century. In earlier history the term “region” had only a narrow meaning – it was defined as a region of the state, an administrative unit, composed and controlled by a central authority. The original feeling seems to have been that regionalism has an innocent, functional and low-key profile (Wæver 1992a:48) and the concept of region has a connotation of secondary, derived or marginal (Wæver 1997:299). Regionalism was categorised as part of the administrative rather than the political sciences; geography rather than social affairs (Joenniemi
The world order was dominated by bloc politics, struggles for hegemony, and annexation of areas by brutal force.

The changed way of thinking about the political space has been clearly connected with the structural processes in world politics - especially with the three “Big Wars” during the 20th century - the First World War, the Second World War and the Cold War. After each of these wars the regional ideas developed a step further, culminating with the end of the Cold War in the end of the 1980s/early 1990s.

After the end of the First World War the regional idea started to spread to some extent, but by the Second World War regionalism had still not entered the vocabulary of International Relations (Fawcett 1998:11-12). At the end of the Second World War the trend towards regionalism was more evident, but the meaning of region in the post-war period was still neutral. It could be extended to include quite distinct types of spatial units fused into a single persuasive figure (Peterson 1996:6). Although the period of the Cold War has not been generally described in positive terms, for the development of regionalism it was only contributing, as the heterogeneous international system was divided into subsystems. In the 1960s the literature on regionalism flourished; social scientists tried to describe, explain and predict the consequences of the new regionalist trend (Fawcett 1998:14).

Still, the scope of regionalism was limited during the Cold War and its end produced a new way of thinking about regions. New political spaces were constructed, provided with names and sometimes equipped with institutions (Wæver 1992a:35). The areas were not united by force anymore, but by a common will to co-operate. There emerged new possibilities for constructing political spaces, crossing strict national borders, previously unthinkable to realise.

Regionalism is no longer solely an issue of low politics; its importance and constitutive power have increased considerably (Joenniemi 1993a:2). Regionalism has become fashionable and desirable; a commitment to regionalism is likely to receive approval from the international community (Fawcett 1998:29-30). Regions have become important political spaces, involved in the sphere of “high politics” and penetrating into the field of international relations.
1.1. Concept of neo-region

Different definitions and uses characterise the term “region”, as regions are seen to emerge at different levels and scopes. The definition of region stretches from a unit inside one state to the continents of the world. It is possible to bring forward national and international regions. There are different types of international regions. Some of them connect states as whole entities, the others are seen to include also only certain parts of states. According to Wæver (1997:298) distinctions can be drawn between four main uses of the term “region”:

a) **Micro-regions** within the states (e.g., Lombardia, Catalonia);  
b) **Interstate regional co-operation**, made up of states (e.g., CIS, Visegrad group);  
c) **Trans-regions** that cross borders (like type b) but are made up of non-state as well as state actors, include the micro-regions (type a) as actors and possibly have borders that do not coincide with state boundaries (e.g., Baltic Sea Region) and basically take a network form finally;  
d) **Quasi-continental regions** (e.g., Europe, Middle-East, South East Asia).

Theorists use different labels in defining regions, definitions are debatable and not commonly used. An international region (type-c), described as crossing national borders and uniting areas of different states, is nominated as a trans (border) region, as a macro-region and also as a neo-region in the literature.

Neo-region is the most innovative and interesting type of international region. It plays a specific role in the emerging division of labour between Europe, nation and region (Wæver 1992a:14). Neo-regions’ peculiarity is that they are not formed on the basis of historical co-operation, but there is a search for new forms of co-operation, previously impossible and unthinkable. They are interesting projects, because the regions do not exist yet but need to be constructed. The novelty deprives them of a clear identity and discourages the arousal of a people's sense of belonging. Identity lies in memory, but neo-regions have no easily reconstituted history, common language or shared mythology (Wagstaff 1999). All this should be done through the process of discursive work in order to justify the existence of a new region. While they are new projects without a strong historical basis, economic factors play an important part in their constitution -
they are defined as having economic potentiality, which makes their existence necessary and natural. Neo-regions are more functional (based on common goals and problems) than identity regions (based on common history and culture) and therefore can be dissolved if functional justification for existence disappears.

How can one recognise a neo-region, i.e., which key characteristics does it possess? Two dominant characteristics of neo-regions are territory and institutional framework. But it is a debatable question how precisely the territory should be defined and what structure the institution should have.

According to some theorists, it is an essential rule for the meaningful usage of the term that a region is territorially defined (Wæver 1997:299); others emphasise the necessity to set only some loose geographical limits to regions (Hurrell 1998:38). In addition, various studies define regions largely in terms of non-geographic criteria and place relatively little emphasis on their physical location (Mansfield 1999:2). As political space is politically constructed, its territorial definition may be quite loose. The concept of neo-regions makes differences between borders (older, static, between the states) and frontiers (modern, flexible, imagined). In context of neo-regions frontiers are important, but not strict ones and the new frontiers do not always overlap with the old borders (Christiansen 1999:100). The frontiers can be easily moved, by measures of political inclusion or exclusion, they are not something given, but rather fluid and changeable.

There exist opinions that for regionalism to be something real, it needs institutionalisation (Wæver 1992a:46); the institution typically becomes the focus of attention, the criteria of membership for a region (Wæver 1997:308-309). According to many other researchers, the institutionalisation of region is not an urgently needed aspect. Regional co-operation may entail the creation of formal institutions, but it can often be based on a much looser structure (Hurrell 1998:42). The foundation of the institution helps to clarify the regional concept and give it formal recognition. It becomes part of a concept by which a region is identified with and associated in peoples’ memories.
1.1.1. Different approaches to regions

Regions can be investigated according to several scholarly approaches, which focus on different aspects. Joenniemi, Neumann and Wæver (Wæver 1992a:14, Neumann 1992:68, Neumann 1999:120-121) distinguish between three main approaches to regions - the cultural, geopolitical, and genealogical approaches:

1) **Cultural (inside-out) approach.** By this approach regions are defined by shared traits of a topographical or cultural nature, e.g., internal similarity distinguishing a region from neighbouring and different areas. It concentrates on the naturalness of cultural criteria in delineating a region’s borders. The inside-out approach operates with different regional actors.

2) **Geopolitical (outside-in) approach.** According to this approach regions are defined by external factors (e.g., great power rivalry in the international system), generating regional arenas as a product of great power politics and local reactions. The outside-in approach tends to stress systemic factors, states and geography, and sees criteria as natural strategic landmarks such as mountain ranges, rivers, and bodies of water.

3) **Genealogical (region-building) approach.** By this approach regions are constituted by political projects where stories are often told about similarity, shared history, geography or external threats and pressures. The emphasis in this approach is on the way these “facts” are selected and arranged as part of a political and discursive rearranging of geographical space.

Wæver and Joenniemi (Wæver 1992a) have added to the above mentioned list one more approach, which can be called the **Network approach.** According to this approach, regions come into being as a result of revolutionary changes in technology, transport and communication. Regions can be mapped and localised by studying the actual patterns of interaction and processes.

The region-building approach investigates which internal and external factors are discursively used in order to define and justify a region. Therefore, the two other approaches - cultural and geopolitical - are actually themselves partaking in the process of region-building. The region-building approach somehow unites these other scholarly approaches. Regional awareness - the shared perception of belonging to a particular
community - can rest on internal factors, but it can also be defined against some external “other” (Hurrell 1998:41).

The main difference between the region-building approach and other approaches is the treatment of the nature of a region. All other scholarly approaches focus on regions as entities whose contents and borders are in the process of change; their quarrel is about how change occurs. The existence of a region is treated as given. But according to the region-building approach, the focus of inquiry is taken to be exactly the constitution (perpetual genesis) of a region (Neumann 1992:69).

Internal and external factors are definitely necessary to explain the existence of regions, but history, culture, and geography are not objective standards to which adjust. They constitute a reservoir being drawn on by political projects and this reservoir has a certain importance of its own – not every identification project is possible – but many are (Waever 1993:24). History is always a popular reference, somehow establishing a pattern as natural or original. One can often find a time in history that suits a plan one wants to put forward. History is an important factor in region-building, but mostly in terms of writing and re-writing of history (Waever 1997:293). The same seems to apply to geography; geographical peculiarities are often defined as demonstrating naturalness of a region.

The region-building approach is given scant attention in literature compared to the others, though it is an undoubtedly important approach in explaining the nature of a region. Because in order to understand why a specific region is taking shape – why it is coming forth at all, and why it is taking the shape it is – one should not study primarily resources or market structures, history or geopolitics. One should also study the political projects in and among the states in the area and how these converge in a drive to form a “region”. (Waever 1992a:15).

The region-building approach investigates how and why the existence of a given region was postulated in the first place; who perpetuates its existence with what intentions; and how students of regions, by including and excluding certain areas and peoples from a given area, put their knowledge to the service of its perpetuation or transformation. The region-building approach insists on going to the root of things and asks where the
criteria for what is “natural” came from, who formulated them, who chose to apply them and thereby made them relevant, and who stands to gain from them. (Neumann 1999:117,140).

These different approaches - cultural, geopolitical, region-building and network - are necessary and important to consider if one wishes to understand the nature of regions. They focus on different aspects and complement each other in the literature.

1.1.2. Europe of Regions instead of Europe of States?

The re-organisation of the European Union and circulation of regional ideas has given rise to fears about the future of nation-states. As fixed borders between states lose previous importance in favour of more flexible frontiers between areas, it is possible to claim that nation-states also have a less important role. The concept of the nation-state is being deconstructed; the self-evidence of nationality, sovereign statehood, and national written histories are fading (Wæver 1992a:44). With rising regionalism, some have argued for the revival of the Hanseatic League (HL), the trade organisation that dominated Europe between the 13th to 15th centuries. The existence of the Hanseatic League preceded the emergence of nation-states in the 17th and 18th centuries. History seems to be turning back; nation-states with strict borders are not seen as the single best distribution of Europe any longer.

According to some opinions, a nation-state is an old-fashioned and artificial formation. A variety of movements inspired by post-industrial values, including the wish to remove the “artificial” structures of nation-states in favour of “natural” ethnic or spatial communities (Keating 1995:10). Regions are perceived as something much more natural, connecting areas and people that really belong together. There is a tendency to present in regionalist circles regions as more true than other communities; their correctness is given as a pre-political datum (Wæver 1993:28). Kenichi Ohmae (1995:80) has a special term for new regional formations, calling them “region-states”. According to Ohmae, nation-states will be replaced by region-states in the future, because in a borderless world, these are the natural economic zones.
It is possible to some extent to agree with these arguments because, historically, areas have been frequently connected by violent methods. In the contemporary world, on the contrary, the power connecting areas with each other is a common will to co-operate. Still, as will be analysed in the next chapter, both nation-states and regions are social constructions, talked into existence by political actors. There are no natural borders, only politically naturalised borders.

It depends largely on policy makers whether the nation-states will survive or not. There are many reasons to believe that nation-states will not disappear in the near future, if ever. The reason regions come into being is because they are nation-states manqués. It is easy for states to regulate their invention and to put them in the service of state foreign policy. The politicians are extremely voluntar when it comes to imagining regions. They try to place the cities and countries, to which they give voice, at the hub of the regions they imagine. (Neumann 1999:66).

Nation-states will survive as long as they are politically necessary formations; still, they are not seen as the only actors in world politics anymore. The new world order can be seen in the overlap of authorities, where supranational, national and regional powers will interact. And it is important to think of regionalism in a nonexclusive manner, not beyond the nation-state but together with nation-states and with supranational and international European structures (Wæver 1993:38).

The national idea is obviously not dying out, nor is politics as such. Instead, the relationship between territory, authority, and national identification is no longer the same fixed package that it has been for quite some time. The link between state and nation is not as firm as it used to be (Joenniemi 1993b:6) and regions are seen as visible players on the European stage. Regionalism changes the comprehension that the geographical and political distributions should overlap. The Europe of Regions and the Europe of States will exist in parallel, complementing each other.
1.2. Genealogical approach to regions: region-building

The region-building approach focuses on regional awareness, on the shared sense of belonging to a particular regional community. Attention is paid to the processes by which interests/identities are created and to the language/discourse through which these understandings are expressed. It is a new scholarly approach, the emergence of which has been conditioned by the regional processes in Northern Europe since the end of the Cold War. It has an interdisciplinary nature; there exist contacts between geography, political science and international relations, blurring the academic boundaries (Jauhiainen 1999:48). The theorists of this scientific approach have been called the distinct school of “discourse regionalists”. The three most important researchers in this school are the previously repeatedly referred to Pertti Joenniemi, Iver B. Neumann and Ole Wæver. They are all Nordic researchers and have focused on explaining the emergence and existence of the Baltic Sea Region.

According to Neumann (1992:69-70, 1999:115), the region-building approach springs from two main sources of inspiration:

- Genealogical analysis of social phenomena, advanced by Michael Foucault. According to genealogical analysis, the purpose of genealogy, guided by history, is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation (Foucault 1977 in Neumann 1992:69).

- Nation-building theories, which stress the nation’s ontological status as an “imagined community”, advanced by Benedict Anderson. According to Anderson (1996:5-6): “I propose the definition of the nation: it is an imagined community. Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist. All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but the style in which they are imagined”.

The discourse regionalists have connected the idea of genealogical analysis (it is important to investigate the genesis of social phenomena in order to find out where the natural criteria come from) with the idea of nation-building approach (most
communities are imagined and we should investigate the style in which they are imagined). The ideas advocated by Foucault and Anderson have common traits, which makes them complementary, reinforcing each other and therefore important to connect in creating a new theoretical approach. According to discourse regionalists, it is a neglected fact in the academic literature that not only nations, but also regions are imagined communities (Neumann 1992:69-70). As in regionalism, the concept of nation-state is used more than the concept of nation, we can say that nation-states and regions are imagined communities. Both of them rest on mental maps whose lines highlight some features while ignoring others.

“Region-builders”, who define and build regions, are called both academic and political elite in the literature. Still, the political elite can be perceived as more important group of region-builders, as it communicates regions “into existence”. Academic circles may give ideas, but politicians have power to realise these ideas by political projects. A political space is first produced in the rhetoric and actions of the policy makers (Lehti 1999:30). They see it in their interest to imagine a certain spatial and chronological identity for a region, and to disseminate this image to a maximum number of other people. In this thesis, only policy makers (politicians and high officials) are treated as region-builders.

Regions are constructed in political discourse, as politicians draw mental maps by including/excluding certain areas and giving names to these constructions. Regions lie where politicians want them to lie (Nye 1968 in Neumann 1992:70) and region-building is a conscious practise where, for some political cause, one area is distinguished from surrounding areas. The similarities and dissimilarities between areas are processed politically by region-builders, who decide which similarities will be politically important. Similarities do not exist as something given before they are being communicated as politically relevant (Neumann 1992:69-71). Regional discourse aims to impose, as legitimate, a new definition of frontiers and to get people to know and recognise a region.

The process of region-building precedes the birth of real economic and political processes in a given territory later. After some time a region is taken already as a natural fact. According to Wæver (1992a, 1997), it is important to emphasise a stage of
constructing regional identity before a stage of regional economy. The regional identity is, according to him, the most important precondition of a new region, because it is first of all an identity project. The prerequisites for the emergence of new concept are regional identity in the first place and secondly economic success stories. However, in context of neo-regions the word "identity" has lost its significance, as identity associates mostly with the cultural criteria (e.g. common history, cultural heritage). Region-building can be called also as the period of naturalisation (Lehti 1999:22) during which naturalness of territory is assured. This gives the basis for emergence of different practices within new territory, strengthening a self-evident nature of a region and make it a natural way of dividing the world.

The process of region-building is never ending. A region will never be completed. Region-building ends only with deconstruction of a region, if this is necessary for some political reason. Just as the similarities may be perceived as politically relevant one day, they may also become politically irrelevant. Where a region has been part of a discourse for so long that it is taken as a given fact, the region-building approach shows that structures which may seem inevitably given at first sight, will only remain so as long as they are perceived as inevitably given. Just as the regions come into existence they may also disappear as a result of re-definition of a certain political space.

The region-building approach is a useful theoretical framework in order to investigate how regions emerge, why they take particular shapes and also why the concepts may disappear from communication. Still, it is possible to stress two main deficiencies of the region-building approach (see Neumann 1992). First, to the extent that a region has created a sense of identity on behalf of its inhabitants, its reduction to a purely political phenomenon may involve a sense of loss. Second, the analogy to nation-building may not be correct. Nation-building has often been preceded by state-building (it has often taken place within a given jurisdiction), but region-building is generally not occuring within an already existing jurisdiction. It is also necessarily not intended as a state-building project.
1.2.1. Region-building projects

As different political actors may have specific interests and different visions of a political space, several region-building projects are possible in discourse at the same time. Region-building projects can be mutually reinforcing and complementary in nature, in case they are focused on different (or somewhat overlapping) territories and are based on dissimilar institutional frameworks. For instance, smaller projects can exist inside the larger ones. But the region-building projects can also be competing in nature, in case two projects try to define the same geographical area and pretend to the same institution to further their aims.

Every region-builder’s goal is to make its region-building program as natural as possible. In a situation with increased room for regionalism, competition sets in for which regions to place on the map and what shape to give them. Region-building projects try not only to impose their own definition of the region but may also to fend off rival projects (Neumann 1999:132-133). The process of region-building is a kind of battle-field where the weaker ideas disappear and only the strongest ideas remain on the surface. But the criteria of the successful projects are not clear; their success depends on various aspects. Political actors involved in the region-building process should definitely accept the idea and find it in their specific interest to participate in the process. In addition, the region-building projects do not proceed simply from a reified national interest, but evolve within the parameters set by the existing discursive structures (Neumann 1992:82).

Regions are constantly defined, re-defined and the definitions under use have a crucial significance. The success of a region-building project depends largely on which term is used to define a new region. Words are more than terms; with words, we create and share views of reality; we use words to name things and evaluate them (Hacker 1996:33). Behind a denomination of a region it is possible to see for instance the aspiration to transform political geography, to change centre-periphery relations and geopolitical location of a certain area. Through the definitions and re-definitions of the regions, the core areas are being shifted. These cores are both territorial and functional,
and the way to take hold of them is through the manipulation of knowledge and power (Neumann 1999:114). Extensive region-building projects may have multidimensional aspirations - to define the core area both in context of smaller geographical area and in a wider context, e.g., Europe.

One can always find an intellectual argument for a new region, but politically there are many ideas and regional identities that have no chance of getting into circulation. Wæver (1993:34-38) has emphasised some aspects which are important to take into consideration in the process of region-building:

- **Novelty**: a vision about something new is necessary; there is an interest in developing co-operation and seeing cohesiveness where it has not been visible before.
- **Historical reference**: region-builders should find an era of history appropriate to refer to in defining and justifying a region.
- **Functional logic for co-operation**: there should be some functional justification why this region should come into existence.
- **Driving forces in a structural perspective** should be analysed, answering to the main question: Is there a general explanation, a general force pulling or pushing the regionalism?
- **Different actors** should see an interest in acting in this space in a way that does not exclude the interests of other key actors.
- **A region should not be internationally in conflict with other regions**, and/or in national discourses in conflict with other important identity formations.

In some respects it is possible to agree to the principles presented by Wæver. Although new ideas are attractive, they seem unnatural unless some reference to common past is stressed in discourse. The functional logic behind region-building is also of crucial significance, without which a new political space has no carrying idea, i.e., a general force towards regionalism. In addition, consensus and interdependence between different political actors is definitely necessary for success of a project. The last standpoint of Wæver is the most debatable, as a region-building project, being in conflict with the existing projects, can be stronger and therefore more successful. The competition between regional ideas is natural and only positive, as it contributes to the emergence of the strongest region-building projects.
2. Qualitative method of analysis

The carrying idea behind the region-building approach – that concepts are constructed discursively - is not something specific to this theoretical framework. There are several scientific approaches in social sciences which focus on the analysis of how phenomena and meanings are created in discourse. The method of discourse analysis as an interdisciplinary project arose in 1960s; it is a modern qualitative methodological approach in contemporary social sciences. Although different scientific approaches investigate different phenomena in society, they always have something in common. Whatever discourse is, and however concretely or abstractly the term is used, there is at least agreement that it focuses on language, meaning and context (Jaworsky 1999:xi). The general aspects on which discourse analysis relies are: how the meanings are constructed by language, by whom, and in which context it is done.

The most important classical theorists in the method of discourse analysis are Pierre Bourdieu, Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough and, as mentioned earlier Michael Foucault. All of them have emphasised the power of language. According to Fairclough (1992) discourse can be defined as language use, seen as a type of social practice, which is shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies. Discourse not only reflects social order but also shapes it (Jaworsky 1999:3); discourse transforms and changes social reality. The political concepts, which can form the basis for debates and actions, are created by political language. Language and power are closely related; there are seen connections between language use and unequal relations of power (see Fairclough 1989). Discourse is a communicative act (Dijk 1985), a system where different meanings interplay and intersect through the participation of several actors. The construction of meaning, which will be treated as naturally given later, is a complicated and long process. Discourse analysis offers means to investigate how social reality and meanings are formed in communication. It helps to expose or deconstruct the social practices which constitute “social structure” and what might be called the conventional meaning structures of social life (Jaworsky 1999:6).
Political scientists are mainly concerned with the consequences of political decisions for a society. They are also interested in political realities and concepts which are constructed in discourse. In political science, the discourse analysis means above all the investigation of political communication, e.g., political speeches. In connection with the sphere of regionalism, discourse analysis is research on how regions are defined and which images are discursively attributed to them. It is a complicated process to figure out how the idea of a new region will be brought into being in the form of a recognised concept. It has to go through the long process of political discourse. The factors of crucial significance, which should be taken under observation in the analysis of construction of a regional concept in political discourse, are shown in Figure 1.

Fig. 1

Scheme of constructing a region in political discourse
The factors are listed, taking into consideration the principles of the region-building approach and the method of discourse analysis. By region-builders the policy makers defining/building a region, are investigated. It is important to analyse whether a concept is commonly used in discourse or has parallel denominations. Territorial definition and institutional framework are the two key characteristics of a region. Internal and external factors play an important role in the naturalisation of a region. The most important internal factors, which are used in justifying an emergence and existence of a region, are based on common history, cultural heritage and economic potentiality of an area. The dominant external factors, through which the naturalness and necessity of a region is defined, are based on the perceived geopolitical location and its role in wider security system. All other factors have an important role in creation of certain images around the regional concept. The constructed images demonstrate nature and future prospects of a region.

In the next chapters the analysis of political discourse of the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension will be made in order to investigate how these two regions are discursively constructed. Different speeches by international politicians (held in English) are used as the empirical material; under analysis is the region-talk both in and among the states in Northern Europe. All member-states of the Council of the Baltic Sea States are observed. The empirical material includes collections of different international conferences, official state web pages from the Internet, official web pages of the institutions in Northern Europe (the CBSS, the Nordic Council of Ministers) and the archives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Estonia and Sweden. The period under analysis are the years 1996 to 2001. The ministers (especially prime ministers and ministers of foreign affairs), presidents and also some high-ranking officials (making speeches in conferences) are observed as the region-builders.
3. Regionalism and region-building in Northern Europe

One of the most interesting and active processes of region-building is occurring in contemporary Northern Europe. Part of it - Scandinavia - has historically been one of the most regional areas in Europe, but the end of the Cold War enabled us to think about regionalism in much more extensive terms. Regionalism, as an organising principle and a mode of visualising political space, has become a distinct feature of politics in the northern part of Europe. Here, post-modernist international relations have turned to region-building (Wæver 1997:295). Northern Europe consists of different states, all involved in active region-building process. It is natural that every state wants to have the best position as compared to others, usually in the centre of recognised political space or fairly close to it. This has brought along the emergence of several region-building ideas offered by different political actors.

Most of the regional ideas have not been realised and have remained on the level of a loose idea. For example, in the beginning of 1990s Russia, as expressed by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrej Fjodorov, supported regional co-operation throughout the so-called Nordic-Baltic Belt. The project was supposed to include the Nordic states, the Baltic states and four Russian political entities: Murmansk, St. Petersburg, Karelia and Kaliningrad (Neumann 1992:78). In this project, Russia presented itself as the only great power and therefore tried clearly to get the leading position in the region. As the other political actors in the area did not see this idea in their interests, the region-building project fell through.

In contemporary North European political discourse it is possible to distinguish between (loose) ideas of region-building projects, secondary (smaller) projects and a dominant region-building project. The ideas may pretend to become both a secondary and a dominant region-building project. The secondary project may become a dominant project, but may also disappear, dropping to the level of an idea. The dominant region-building project may drop either to the level of a secondary project or pass away
completely, due to some political cause (e.g. emergence of a new and more successful project).

Fig. 2

Levels of region-building projects in Northern Europe

![Diagram showing levels of region-building projects](image)

Although there may be several region-building projects offered by different actors, only the most successful of them will stay on the surface. The Nordic region, the Baltic region, the Barents region and the Arctic region are examples of smaller and successful region-building projects in contemporary North European political discourse. The dominant region-building project has been, since the beginning of 1990s, the Baltic Sea Region, when the Nordic region was not seen as the dominant project in the area anymore. The relationship between the secondary and the dominant project has been mutually reinforcing and complementary in nature. In 1997 one more extensive and vigorous region-building project emerged - the Northern Dimension - which may endanger the domination of the Baltic Sea Region in future political discourse.

The concepts of the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension have emerged in different global-political contexts. The Baltic Sea Region was constructed at the end of the Cold War, when it was important to over the confrontation and develop good-neighbourly relations between the states around the Baltic Sea. The Northern Dimension was born when there was not such confrontation anymore and it became important to redefine the European Union and develop co-operation with Russia.
The spatial images which are being used with the concepts are old, despite the fact that the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension are both phenomena of the 1990s. It is of crucial importance to explain the background of these images, as they have played an important role in the construction processes of the two regions. The analysis of spatial images is helpful in understanding why one or another region-building project has come forth at all. The terms like "the North" and "the Baltic" have been the characteristics of the geopolitical rhetoric for constructing a new Europe. They look, at first sight, like purely geographical concepts, but at closer inspection they turn out to be anything but neutral co-ordinates (Lehti 1999:21). They are discursively produced cultural constructs. It is not coincidental that old images are used in defining the new regions; it has been rather a conscious activity of politicians to rely on the historical associations and connotations. Both "the Baltic" and "the North" have historically been rejected and limited images, which are glorified and extended through the concepts of the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension.

The Baltic as a spatial image first had quite a neutral geographical meaning, as was associated for a long time with the Baltic Sea (Mare Balticum). Since the 19th century the Baltic has been associated with the area around the sea. An important factor has been language, because "the Baltic" has had different meanings in different languages. In English, "the Baltic" has symbolised the small states around the sea, including Denmark and Sweden. In German, at the turn of the century, "the Baltic" symbolised the contemporary areas of Estonia and Latvia (provinces of Estonia, Livonia and Courland), which was determined by the community of Baltic-Germans living in this territory (Jaanson 1994).

The idea of a region around the Baltic Sea arose long before the 1990s, but this idea had no chance to come into reality. The important factor hindering the development of a regional idea has definitely been the era of wars in the 20th century. But it is possible to claim also that the idea of a political space connecting the states around the Baltic Sea was not supported by different political actors until the end of the Cold War. It was not in the interests of the majority of states.

The most active region-builders after the end of the First World War were the politicians of Estonia and Latvia, trying to construct a region from the states around the
Baltic Sea. The idea of Baltic-Scandinavian co-operation, proposed by Jaan Tõnisson, was a stage in the formation of the idea of Estonian independence (Jaanson 1995:79). The new region was called the Baltic League and was seen to include Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden. But the idea of identifying with the neighbouring small states was opposed by the Scandinavian countries and the region-building project ended in fiasco. All other countries except the Baltic nations rejected the Baltic label (Lehti 1999:36). In addition to Estonia and Latvia also Lithuania and for some time Finland was called a "Baltic nation". After the Second World War Finland was able to align itself with the Scandinavian countries, while Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania suffered from their designation as “Baltic states” (Kirby 1995: 6), while occupied by the Soviet Union. Thus, "the Baltic" was a limited and rejected image for a long time.

At the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, the image of "the Baltic" changed considerably. It was perceived as an useful label in constructing a new region – The Baltic Sea Region - in Northern Europe. The regional idea, proposed by small states like Estonia and Latvia, which was rejected in the beginning of the 20th century, was now advanced successfully by states like Germany, Denmark, etc. "The Baltic" aquired a positive connotation, symbolising the whole area around the Baltic Sea. Still, what this area is called depends on language. Therefore, in this thesis only the speeches held in English are used as empirical material. In contemporary political rhetoric (in English) "the Baltic" has two meanings - a broad one symbolising the whole Baltic Sea Region and a narrow one symbolising the three Baltic states.

**The North** is an elder spatial image of "the Baltic". "The North" was present already in the rhetoric of the ancient Greeks and Romans, having the meaning of wildness, rudeness and something different from Europe. The origin of discourse of the North lies outside the area itself. It was used to give a concrete form to otherness and the myth of "the North" proved to be a lasting one (Leete 2000). The wild North was for a long time contrasted with the prosperous and well-developed South. The image improved somewhat with the division of Europe between East and West in the 19th century. Still, the northern part was perceived as something remote and different from the rest of Europe.
After the Second World War, Finland joined with the Scandinavian countries and together they formed a Nordic region. Different from their southern neighbours - the Baltic states - they were all independent countries and the Nordic region became a strong political community. At the end of the Cold War, Europe was opened up and the ideas about new modes of co-operation were developed. The Nordic region was reproached by its isolation and exclusiveness towards the other parts of (Northern) Europe. The new Baltic Sea region was promoted as being totally different - inclusive and open for co-operation between different states. The Nordic region was a perfect example of regional cohesiveness and successful region-building, but it did not suit the new processes of regionalism. It was perceived as a bit old-fashioned in a new Europe.

Since 1997 the image of "the North" has changed considerably as a result of the emergence of the Northern Dimension. "the North" acquired two parallel meanings - the Nordic (region) and the Northern (dimension). A new image of "the North" has come closer to the rest of Europe; this new image is not exclusive and limited, but rather inclusive and extended. The old Nordic co-operation had been private about the outside world and about all internal Nordic affairs. The new Northern co-operation is much more open about external affairs, about trying to deal with challenges in several directions (Wæver 1997:322). "The North", a marker that used to have a rather fixed and “natural” meaning, has suddenly been opened up and applied outside its previous sphere. The borderlines that furnished northerness with connotations of something remote, isolated and even opposite have become far less strict.
3.1. Baltic Sea Region as the region-building project

Although between the two World Wars many ideas were generated (e.g., by Estonia, Latvia) on how to construct a common region from the states around the Baltic sea, they were in some respects, different from the concept of the Baltic Sea Region. The previous ideas were based mostly on the community of the Baltic states and Scandinavia - the so-called Baltoscandia. But since the end of 1980s/early 1990s, Russia and Germany were included in the regional ideas, as well. The latter has been one of the most active actors in the process of constructing the Baltic Sea Region. In addition, while in earlier history the states as whole entities were seen to form a region, the Baltic Sea Region has been constructed according to much more flexible structure.

The Baltic Sea rhetoric has many sources and it is not possible to trace any single initiator (Lehti 1999:23). A large role in developing the regional idea was played by a community of “Nordic” foreign policy intellectuals (Wæver 1997:295). The two most active political actors in constructing a new region have been Denmark and Germany, who institutionalised the Baltic Sea Region concept in 1992. All the states around the sea have been actively participating in creating a new political space in Northern Europe.

Many ideas emerged on what to call the new region. Different region-building projects were presented under labels such as the New Hansa, the Baltic Sea Region, Mare Balticum, the Euro-Baltic Region and the Scando-Baltic Space (Wæver 1997:295). Although the projects had different labels, all of them took the Baltic Sea as their geographical base. The Baltic Sea, located at the centre, became a symbol of unity and played an important symbolic role in the construction process of the new region. Despite of divergence of possible definitions, the Baltic Sea Region was the most successful of them. Various actors aimed at different things, but the Baltic Sea Region was found to be a useful label to promote these aims. The international political community started to construct the new political space, through different conferences and seminars. All these
meetings played a considerable role in myth making as ideology producers. It was necessary to talk the new region into existence, to make it natural and necessary for people.

The general explanations behind the emergence of the Baltic Sea Region can be highlighted as follows:

a) Novelty and attractiveness were factors advancing the idea of this kind of political space among different political actors. It was a challenge to construct a common region of the states which were separated from each other by the confrontation line during the Cold War. There was a need to decrease and bridge East-West divide in Europe bringing all shores of the Baltic Sea into co-operation.

b) Regionalism in Europe was advancing well and regions were under construction. For example, the concept of the Mediterranean region was launched already in the 1970s. It was in the interests of different political actors to participate in the formation of new Europe and have a region of one’s own in the northern part of Europe.

c) A counter-force to the European economic centre was created in Northern Europe in the form of the Baltic Sea Region (Wæver 1992b:25). It became important to define the role of Northern Europe in the new European architecture and present the area as a growth centre instead of a periphery.

d) The Baltic Sea Region was presented as an outer circle around Scandinavia and the Nordic region, and was therefore, at least to some degree, compatible with other projects. The two actors, who stood to lose were Iceland and Norway, being too small to have effective veto power. They were included together with north-western areas of Russia as an outer periphery of the region (Neumann 1992:82).

The institutionalisation of the region has been a step of crucial importance in the region-building process. In the beginning, the definition of the region was quite loose. The Baltic Sea Region came under discussion, but it did not instantly take firm root in the debate. Some clearness was brought into the process by the foundation of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) by Germany (specifically by Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher) and by Denmark (by Minister of Foreign Affairs Uffe Ellemann-Jenssen) in 1992. The institution includes 11 member states: Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, and Poland. All these countries border the Baltic Sea except Norway and Iceland, which
were included in the region for political reasons. In addition, the European Commission was asked to participate in the meetings, which underlines the role of the BSR as a sub-region of Europe. The foundation of the CBSS gave some kind of official recognition to the project. The CBSS was identified with the Baltic Sea Region, it became its symbol and a motor. The CBSS can be treated as the most important single region-building project in the wider project of the BSR (Lehti 1999:24), which demonstrates the success of region-builders from Germany and Denmark.

3.1.1. Region-builders and contexts

The Baltic Sea Region is an internationally accepted and widely used concept. The political figures from the states around the Baltic Sea – Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden - can be called the main region-builders. Not as active region-builders, but still to a certain extent participating in the construction of the region, are the policy makers of Norway, Iceland and Russia. Although they are taking part in different meetings where the development of the BSR is being discussed, this region is not a priority subject in their ordinary, inter-state political discourse.

The contexts where the BSR concept is advanced are regularly held traditional conferences and meetings. One of the most important contexts is the annual meetings of the Council of Baltic Sea States, held since 1992. Every year the prime ministers and the ministers of foreign affairs of the member-states meet to discuss the modes of co-operation. The second outstanding context promoting the BSR project is the Annual Stockholm Conferences on Baltic Sea security and co-operation, organised by the Embassy of the United States of America in Sweden, the Swedish Institute for International Affairs and the Stockholm Peace Research Institute. Since 1996, five annual conferences have been held with the most important policy makers from all the North European countries (plus the representatives of the USA). The Baltic Development Forum has also played a significant role in the construction of the region, organised by Uffe-Ellemann Jensen (previous Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and one of the founders of the CBSS). In addition, there are several other international conferences and meetings held on the Baltic Sea Region.
3.1.2. Terminological variations

Although the BSR is a widely used concept, it is still somewhat contested in discourse. The concept used in the debate is not always static, but frequently re-defined. There have emerged parallel terms beside the BSR, of which the most frequently used is the **Baltic region**. As mentioned earlier, "the Baltic" as a spatial image, has acquired two meanings in rhetoric - the narrower symbolising the three Baltic states and the broader one the whole Baltic Sea Region. This has brought about a mess – one term has two different and overlapping meanings. Sometimes this makes it complicated to understand exactly which political space is under discussion.

There may be different reasons behind the use of the Baltic region instead of the Baltic Sea Region. The simplest explanation is that the shorter term is easier to use in the communication. But it can also be seen as a conscious activity of the politicians to substitute the elder and narrower meaning of the term for some political cause with the younger and broader one. The Baltic region has not only been used by politicians outside the Baltic states (e.g. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder), but the Baltic politicians use this term parallel to the BSR, as well. For instance, Toomas-Hendrik Ilves, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia identifies the Baltic region with the Baltic Sea Region:

> While the European integration process is shaping the Baltic Sea Region within Europe, the largest country in the Baltic region, Russia, is currently more of an observer to this process than a participant (Ilves, Toomas-H. 19.11.98).

As Mr. Ilves has repeatedly expressed his sceptical attitude towards Baltic unity in public (claiming that Estonia belongs more to the community of Nordic countries than the Baltic states), it is possible to see here the attempt to create the larger meaning of the term instead of the narrow one.
In addition to the Baltic region, the term of the **CBSS region** is used in parallel to the BSR in discourse. This has been mostly visible in the speeches held in meetings of the Council of Baltic Sea States:

* A regional tool for the enhancement of democratic development is very much needed in the CBSS region (Espersen, Ole 21-22.06.00).

Behind the use of the CBSS region it is possible to see an attempt to identify and interweave the region with this institution. As soon as an inter-state institution is defined for a region, there is a tendency for it to become the metonym for the region in the wider sense. The CBSS is clearly connected with the BSR concept in discourse. Beside the terms of the Baltic region and the CBSS region, for instance the Baltic rim and the Baltic Sea area are used parallel to the BSR.

### 3.1.3. Territorial definition of the Baltic Sea Region

Territorial definition of the Baltic Sea Region can be separated widely into the broadest and the narrowest definition of the region. According to the former definition of the region, it includes all the member-states of the CBSS. The narrow perception defines the region through the small states around the Baltic Sea and the border areas of the larger states. The narrow definition of the region is always more important, as this is the focal point of the region, surrounded by flexible external boundaries.

Although the foundation of the CBSS has clarified the BSR concept, the boundaries of the institution (national borders) are not taken as the strict borderlines of the region. As characteristic to the neo-region, the frontiers of the BSR are seen in more flexible terms. As the relevant participants change from subject to subject, so does the list of “Baltic Sea Members”; the region changes its size, shape and constituent units according to the issues. There are different opinions about the shape of the region, which is natural, taking into consideration the divergence of political actors included in one political space.
The focal point (narrow definition) of the region is generally uncontested. There are, for the most part, no disputes about whether the whole entities of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania belong to the region. Their inclusion is taken as a natural fact. These states have a long border with the Baltic Sea and are not very large territorially, as well. In connection with Russia and Germany, generally only northern länder of the former and north-western areas of the latter are taken as the parts of the region:

*The entire BSR includes 10 countries: Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Denmark and in Russia the area around Saint Petersburg. We may use a broad definition and include the entire Poland and Germany or we may include only the northern parts of these countries (Lykketoft, Mogens 26.08.00).*

As it is possible to see from the citation above, sometimes the entire inclusion of Poland is put under question in addition to Russia and Germany. And Mogens Lykketoft, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark has left Iceland out from his list of the BSR states. Not only Iceland but also Norway can be seen as a debatable member of the region. Neither of them has a border with the Baltic Sea and they stand aloof from the focus point of the region. The BSR is not the prior political space in political discourses of these states and in some cases this region is classified simply as the neighbouring area by the politicians:

*The BSR is part of Norway’s new neighbouring areas in which structures of regional co-operation have been built across old divides. In BSR we find many of our main friends and partners, Nordic countries, Russia, Germany, Baltic states and Poland (Bull, Bernt 26-28.04.96).*

Despite the fact that Russia is generally included in the region only by the north-western areas, Russian politicians themselves have been quite eager to classify Russia as a full member in the BSR. It is possible to see a strong desire of Russia to participate in the European regional processes:

*I would like to stress that Russia itself is a Baltic state. Russia is more interested in the stability in this region than any country outside its area (Shustov, Vladimir 19.11.98).*
Here Mr. Shustov, Ambassador at large of Russia, means by calling Russia a Baltic state the Baltic Sea Region as a whole, not just the community of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. As in the question of inclusion of entire Russia in the region have emerged two contradictory opinions (Russia versus other actors), the broad definition of the region is marked partly with the disjointed line on the map.

By 1997 the construction of the BSR had reached the phase where major disputes over the territorial coverage of the region were generally over. Even though there are still different interpretations of the frontiers of this political space, quite rarely do politicians draw lines of it. Notwithstanding, the discussions about the possible numbers of people living in the BSR have begun. Politicians offer different figures for the number of people living in the area, which generally extends from 50 million to 100 million people:

*The BSR consists of 10 countries, with more than 100 million inhabitants between them (Gjellerup, Pia 18.09.00).*

The size of the population is even more debatable than the number of states belonging to the region.

There are no visions about a single gravity point of the region; instead there are several visible centres. Although Sweden can be geographically seen as closest to the centre of the region, it is not presented as having a leading role. Different political actors do not fight for the status of the leading actor in the area. Perhaps the existence of the Baltic Sea in the centre of the region has played a balancing role and has avoided the controversies about the dominant regional leader.

### 3.1.4. Internal and external justifications of the Baltic Sea Region

Both internal and external factors are clearly visible in justifying the naturalness of the Baltic Sea Region in discourse. The internal justifications emphasise the historical past of the region in the form of the Hanseatic League, the traditionally close cultural links and common cultural heritage of the states, and the economic potentiality of the area. The external justifications stress the geographical and geopolitical naturalness of the
region resulting from the existence of the Baltic Sea, and the role of the region in guaranteeing the security and stability of Europe and in communicating with Russia.
Common history of the states in the Baltic Sea Region

The dominant reference used to justify the historical roots of the Baltic Sea region is the era of the Hanseatic League (HL), the huge trade organisation that bloomed during the 13th to 15th centuries and connected over one hundred German merchant towns around the Baltic and North Seas. The idea to refer to the Hanseatic League in constructing the new region has been propagated by German politicians since the end of 1980s. At first the policy makers from other states were quite suspicious about it, interpreting this as Germany’s aspiration to glorify its hegemonic history. But after some time they realised that the era of Hansa was an excellent chance to refer to the historical links between the states in the emerging region. At present the period of the Hanseatic League is described only in highly positive terms in discourse. It is defined as “good times in our common history”, which should be followed as a model and retrieved in contemporary regionalising Europe:

I dare say that the spirit of co-operation among the members of the Hanseatic League is worth remembering and retrieving; this spirit is now part of our Baltic heritage of which we may be proud (Birkavs, Valdis 17.11.97).

Some region-builders have remarkably re-written the history, describing the Baltic Sea Region as a centuries old concept. The regional co-operation around the Baltic Sea is represented as having continued for centuries. The only negative period since the Middle Ages is seen in the era of the Cold War, during which the “traditional links” between the countries around the Baltic Sea were broken for 45 years:

Through centuries the Baltic Sea united the nations around its shores. During the Cold War the traditional links were broken. The dividing line between East and West went right through the Baltic Sea (Halonen,Tarja 26-28.04.96).

A vision is constructed that until the beginning of the Cold War an active and friendly co-operation prevailed among the states around the Baltic Sea. But as history shows, the period since the Middle Ages until the end of the Cold War was filled with power struggles between different great naval powers for the control over the Baltic Sea. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about the historically active and friendly co-operation
in the area. The world was dominated by bloc politics and the possibilities for free co-operation were not opened up until the end of the Cold War.

The Baltic Sea Region is called a **New Hansa** in discourse. It is possible to see both negative and positive aspects behind the reference to the Hanseatic League as the historical predecessor and a political model for the Baltic Sea Region. On one hand, the reference to the Hanseatic League (HL) may not be appropriate, as it did not represent free trade, but instead a form of protectionism. On the other hand, the metaphor of New Hansa can be seen as a good slogan for a neo-region without strict boundaries and lacking feelings of unity. The HL was based also mostly on economic interaction and not on a strong cultural community. It can be seen as an useful tool in creating an economic identity around the regional concept. The HL was for over 200 years the greatest naval power in Europe, controlling East-West trade. Therefore the New Hansa metaphor can be also useful in raising the image and status of the BSR and of Northern part of Europe as a whole. The new Hansa has stimulated the idea that Northern Europe can gain in importance and become one of the political, commercial and cultural centres of Europe.

- **Common cultural heritage of the states in the Baltic Sea Region**

The states converged upon the common denominator – the Baltic Sea Region – are rather different in nature. Considerable cultural differences, based on divergent languages and religious systems exist between them. Still, the region-builders have tried to talk the cultural similarities between the states into existence in order to naturalise the region. They have emphasised the close cultural links between the areas, the common cultural heritage and the existence of regional identity in the BSR:

*The rediscovered common heritage and regional identity of the countries around the Baltic rim will be an important positive factor for generating economic development* (Lindh, Anna 19.11.98).

One of the most active and well-known persons searching for cultural links between the states on the different shores of the Baltic Sea has been the Estonian president Lennart Meri. He has imagined the BSR as the historical community of Baltic Sea peoples, based on the traditional cultural, economic and political links:
We all have belonged to the community of Baltic Sea peoples, which has been existed for centuries. The end of Soviet rule over the Baltic states made possible to restore the traditional cultural, economic and political links between our peoples (Meri, Lennart 08.11.99).

The cultural rhetoric in the BSR discourse is a good example of how it is possible to construct discursively a vision of something which has not been seen before. Although there seem to be considerable cultural differences inside the region, the similarities can be politically communicated into existence, as well. And afterwards, it is taken already as a natural fact that there are cultural similarities between the areas belonging to the common region.

- **Economic potentiality of the Baltic Sea Region**

The BSR includes both the EU member-states and the non-EU states, and therefore the economic interaction inside the region is to a certain extent restricted. Despite this, the economic potentiality of the area is strongly visible in the BSR discourse. Although there exist historical and cultural references justifying the naturalness and historical contiguity of the region, the most important internal factor referred to by the region-builders is the economic potentiality of the BSR:

*We speak about the Baltic Rim, first of all, as a region of high economic potential* (Adamkus, Valdas 04.11.99).

The words frequently used in the Baltic Sea Region rhetoric are dynamic, prosperous, potential, promising, fast developing. They all refer to the definition of the region in economic terms. The economic potentiality is the argument that matters more and more in justifying the existence of the neo-region. Every actor is interested in increasing economic potentiality, prosperity and development of the area:

*If you listen to most people talking about Baltic Sea issues, you will be struck by their constant use of the key words of “opportunity” and “potential”. Over the past ten years countries throughout the region have benefited from the vast*
opportunities for free and unrestricted exchanges across the Baltic Sea (Heimsoeth, Hans-Jürgen 19.10.00).

The economic potentiality of the region seems to be the most truthful internal justification, as it is the least measurable and determinable factor. It is possible to claim that the region-builders are re-writing history and seeing the cultural unity of the area while it is highly questionable. But it is hard to claim that a certain political space does not have an economic potential taking into consideration the future developments. While the other internal factors are tied with finding justifications from the past, the economic potentiality is connected with the future and it is hard to predict it.

- **Geopolitical location of the Baltic Sea Region**

Geopolitical location of the BSR is defined through a geographical factor - the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Sea has played an extremely important role in the discursive construction of the BSR. It has developed into a clear anchor of the regional concept, which location is taken as a proof of the region’s geographical naturalness. But the Baltic Sea is not an ordinary geographical co-ordinator referred to in justifying the existence of the region. It has acquired important symbolic significance, it is represented as the symbol of unity, of the end of confrontation and the Cold War, of peace and friendly coexistence between the states around the sea:

> In Cold War times, the Baltic Sea was a zone of separation. Now we have a Baltic Sea zone with the potential to unite the countries on the Baltic Rim (Birkavs, Valdis 19.11.98).

The Baltic Sea is closely connected with the BSR in discourse, they are frequently identified with each other. Taking into consideration the next enlargement round of the EU and the Baltic Sea becoming the inside sea of the Union, the role of the BSR may increase considerably. The existence of the Baltic Sea within the BSR concept is another opportunity to raise the image of this region and the status of Northern Europe as a whole:

> We will attempt to turn the slogan “The Baltic Sea is an European sea” into reality by achieving prosperity, stability, upholding peace and democracy and
moving the BSR away from periphery and closer to the centre of Europe
(Birkavs, Valdis 05.03.97).

The presence of the Baltic Sea has contributed considerably to the advancement of the BSR concept. It has been a good slogan in defining the geopolitical location of the region. The Baltic Sea carries along strong and positive historical connotations and associations, which has helped to anchor the BSR concept in discourse.

- Role of the Baltic Sea Region in context of European security

As the BSR consists of the EU and non-EU states, it also includes the NATO and non-NATO states. As the former factor may hinder economic interaction, the latter could be seen as restricting the co-operation in the field of security. But it is important hereby to take into consideration beside hard security also the concept of soft security, which emphasises achieving security through economic, social and political interdependence between the states. The existence of the BSR is frequently justified as being a necessary political space for guaranteeing stability and security of the whole of Europe. It is defined as a bridge between East and West, which avoids the emergence of new divisions and grey zones in Europe. Its role is presented as not only advancing local regional co-operation, but as having a broader significance in terms of co-operation and influence in the continent:

The development of the BSR is an integral part of security and stability of Europe as a whole. The region is not confined to the shores of the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Sea is a vehicle for much broader significance – as history testifies- both in conflict and co-operation. For West and for Russia the Baltic Sea is a channel of co-operation and influence (Blomberg, Jaakko 16.05.97).

Closely connected with the vision of the BSR as the stabiliser and the security guarantee of Europe is its attributed role in communication with the neighbouring previous great power - Russia. The BSR is presented to function as a channel of communication between Europe (the EU) and Russia, helping to develop good-neighbourly relations in the continent. The BSR has been referred to as a Russia’s window to the West:

Being Russia’s window unto the rest of Europe, the BSR will become the focus of the EU’s relations with Russia (Lindh, Anna 19.11.98).
The existence of the BSR is justified in much broader terms than just through common internal factors or by the presence of the Baltic Sea. It is constructed as the European stabiliser and the security guarantee, as a channel of communication between Europe and Russia.

### 3.1.5. Images of the Baltic Sea Region

As the definition of the BSR through the economic potentiality is strongly visible in discourse, the images attached to the region in political rhetoric are mostly economic in nature. These images are highly positive and promising, interpreting the BSR against the background of its economic success stories and future prospects. The development of the region is described as having been “unexpectedly rapid”, “extremely successful” and “with a great future potential”. It is referred to as one of the most dynamic and potential growth areas. The prevailing images of the BSR can be classified as defining its role firstly in Europe and secondly in the context of the whole world.

The BSR is referred to as a model region of Europe, setting a good example to all other regions in achieving regional co-operation and cohesiveness. It is constructed as a model for growth and stability; as the example of successful economic, social and political integration between different states:

> Our model of co-operation has increasingly drown the attention of other regions which are searching for ways to achieve common political and economic goals (Adamkus, Valdas 04.11.99).

The dynamic development and the economic potentiality of the BSR are evaluated so highly that the region is imagined as becoming a growth centre of Europe in future. Below, it is possible to see how Leif Pagrotsky, Minister of Trade of Sweden has nominated the BSR as one of the most attractive regions, the fastest growing economic areas and the potential growth engine of the whole Europe:

> The BSR is already one of the fastest growing areas in Europe. And this gives us a unique opportunity to turn this region into a growth engine for the whole Europe. We have a unique opportunity to make this region the most attractive in Europe (Pagrotsky, Leif 07-08.02.00).
In addition to its possibilities to become an economic engine and centre, the future prospects of the BSR have also involved becoming a political gravity point of Europe.

The vision of the BSR as the potential economic and political centre of Europe is not the top of the list of future prospects offered by the region-builders. The region is also interpreted in the context of the whole world and its developments. The BSR is presented as the potential global gateway for trade and the frontrunner in economic growth:

*The BSR is a global frontrunner in terms of economic growth (Heimsoeth, Hans-Jürgen 19.10.00).*

The region is highlighted as one of the fastest developing and hottest growth areas in the world, whose future prospects are comparable to these of the successful economic “Tigers” in Asia and Japan:

*It is possible that the Baltic Sea Region will become as important for the world economy as Japan (Lykkeoft, Mogens 26.08.00).*

The future prospects attributed to the BSR in discourse are the highest which are possible to imagine. We can say that they are exaggerated and evidently impossible to realise. The area of the BSR is too peripheral to become European economic and political centre and also too small to catch up with Japan and become global economic frontrunner. The images created by rhetoric are always exaggerated and rarely overlap completely with the actual processes in world politics. But important is that the BSR is constructed both as the region of Europe and the whole world.
3.2. Northern Dimension as the region-building project (in comparison with the Baltic Sea Region)

The discourse on the Northern Dimension has similar characteristics as are visible in constructing the BSR by the politicians and therefore can be defined as the new region-building project in Northern Europe. If in the case of the BSR concept it was impossible to identify one single initiator, the ND has been initiated clearly by one state - Finland. The concept was used by Finnish politicians years before it was brought into international political discourse. Examples of the early use of the northern dimension are present in the speeches of President Martti Ahtisaari (in Tartu) and Minister of Foreign Affairs Heikki Haavisto in 1994. Paavo Lipponen, Prime Minister of Finland and the main advocate of the ND, was the first to introduce the idea of the ND to the wider political community in 1997. In his speech at the “Barents Region Today” conference in Rovaniemi he proposed the establishment of a “Northern Dimension of the European Union” (see Lipponen 15.09.1997). This is the moment referred to as the beginning of the circulation of the ND in international political discourse.

The development of the ND concept has been closely connected with the European Union. Finnish politicians’ and high officials’ diplomatic abilities have been impressive, as within two years the ND was acknowledged as a EU initiative and a policy in Northern Europe. The ND was first put on the EU agenda during the Luxembourg European Council in 1997. The Helsinki European Council in 1999 invited the Commission to prepare an Action Plan for the Northern Dimension, which was endorsed in 2000 during Feira Council. Considerable differences in the starting point can be observed between the ND and the BSR – the ND was launched by the (EU) political decision. The logic has perhaps been to bring in a new driving image from above (Lehti 1999:26). Being approved as the EU policy has certainly facilitated the acceptance of the ND by other political actors and penetration into political communication. The ND acquired a prestigious image from the start. Since Finland aimed at getting the idea accepted among the other participants, its politicians emphasised the importance of making the concept visible within an EU context.

There are several interpretations of the Northern Dimension concept. The multitude of approaches can be described both as its weakness and a strength. On one hand, the fact
that it is not perceived in common terms has made it somewhat vague and ambiguous. But on the other hand, the divergence and obscurity may have facilitated its acceptance (something for everybody) and launched the discussions around it. According to Haukkala (1999:10) it is possible to highlight five different interpretations of the ND concept:

- The version which prevailed at the beginning stresses the ND as of special interest to Finland in the sphere of common agricultural, regional and security policy of the EU.
- The ND can be analysed using the concept of the “northern north” - the ND as both a place of vast resources and as a source of potential security threats and environmental problems.
- The ND can be seen as “an umbrella” for different policies, financial instruments, separate organisations and initiatives that are not an integral part of the EU structure.
- The ND as an instrument which the Finnish government is trying to use in order to promote its vital national interest in its neighbouring areas. By this version the ND has been “manufactured” by the Finnish government in order to get Finnish problems and needs on the wider European agenda (concept of Realpolitik).
- The ND as a future economic area and a region undergoing a process of regionalism.

The classification of Haukkala is generally acceptable, but the last definition of the concept needs definitely more specification, it is too generally presented. As the concept of the ND is quite a new, not much literature has been published on it. Research has paid especially little attention to the last treatment of the concept – the ND as a region undergoing a process of regionalism. This thesis aims to fill this theoretical vacuum in some respects providing the analysis of the ND on the basis of regionalism.

The general explanations behind the emergence of the Northern Dimension in the region-building perspective can be brought out as follows:

a) It was important for Finland to include Russia in the region, as its role in the BSR was peripheral. The relationship between Finland and Russia has historically been quite special, but in the first place the inclusion of Russia in the region was
significant for economic reasons. (There was an interest to develop co-operation and interaction with north-west of Russia because of the large reserves of natural resources existing there. But as the railroads in Northern Europe are running mostly from North to South it has become necessary to create the connections also in East-West direction).

b) Behind the ND concept it is possible to perceive the attempt of Finnish politicians to place Finland in the centre of a region, which has not work out in the BSR concept. There was a need for a new project to change and re-define the centre-periphery relationships in favour of Finland. In order to achieve this, the Baltic and Russian areas were linked with the Nordic region, through which Finland was geographically centrally placed in the new region.

c) The “Baltic orientation” had remained somehow alien to the Finns. The spatial images of the Baltic and the North were seen as alternatives, and it was the North that appealed to the Finns. Finland took it its task to change the old image of the North from something “exclusive and isolated” to something “inclusive and open” to make it attractive and suitable in new Europe. It was still important to define Northern Europe and find it a suitable image and a status in European configurations.

d) In the end of 1990s the next enlargement round of the European Union became quite probable, involving many states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech) around the Baltic Sea, plus some states (Cyprus, Malta) in other parts of Europe. As a result of this enlargement process the area of the Union and its border with Russia would increase considerably. It became important to define the future perspectives of the Union and its relations with Russia, which carried towards creation of the concept of the ND.

Why the concept is called a dimension? We can say that it has been an imitation of the Southern Dimension, created a few years before the Northern Dimension, but it is not that simple. Behind the Northern Dimension concept much deeper philosophy is hidden, based on two main assumptions. Firstly, in the use of the word “dimension” it is possible to see a smart strategy by Finnish politicians to establish a new definition of the region without calling it a region. In the first instance the dimension is presented as being above the regional categories and later, after the wider acceptance of the concept, it is already constructed as the new regional space. Secondly, with the emergence of the Northern Dimension the concept of (neo) region has been advanced a step further. In
contemporary world, in “new Europe”, a region is not only something strictly geographically limited, but rather flexible and open. It is possible to perceive an attempt to define a neo-region differently and to distinguish it from the older connotation of a region by using an innovative geopolitical term “dimension”. The importance of territory in constructing the modern political spaces has decreased. More important than the strict territory is the ability to bind different areas functionally with each other.

Currently two meanings of the ND are prevailing in international political discourse – the Northern Dimension as the policy, initiative of the EU and as the new region in Northern Europe. The former prevailed at the beginning, but step by step the ND is being defined as a new sub-region of Europe. These two meanings are interrelated and it is sometimes impossible to separate them from each other. The definition of the ND as the EU initiative has played an important part in constructing it as the new regional space.

3.2.1. Region-builders and contexts

Although the ND was launched as a purely Finnish project, other states have quickly adopted the concept. They have not criticised the ND, but instead have tried to take a maximum profit on it. The main and dominant region-builders behind the ND have been the Finnish politicians and high officials – e.g. Prime-minister Paavo Lipponen, Under-Secretary of State Jaakko Blomberg, President Tarja Halonen. As secondary prominent region-builders the following other policy makers should be emphasised: Göran Persson (Prime Minister of Sweden), Anna Lindh (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden), Igor Ivanov (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia), Chris Patten (Commissioner of European Commission), Knut Vollebæk (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway), Toomas-Hendrik Ilves (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia), Algirdas Saudargas (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania) and Valdis Birkavs (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia).

The most important context where the Northern Dimension concept has been advanced is the First foreign ministers’ conference on the Northern Dimension, held 11th - 12th November 1999 in Helsinki. The second conference was held on 9 April 2001 (but
The content and the use of the Northern Dimension concept depends considerably on the context. At some conference on the Baltic Sea Region, the Northern Dimension is generally not defined as the new region, but simply as the policy of the EU, promoting co-operation in the BSR. In these contexts the BSR is seen as the dominant political space in Northern Europe. In case the conference is co-organised by the USA (e.g. Annual Stockholm Conferences on the Baltic Sea Region), the ND concept is used even less in discourse. This is so because the USA has its own policy towards Northern Europe – the Northern European Initiative (NEI) and the ND is taken as a rivaling concept to this. The NEI was established in the same year as the ND - 1997 - and it is established to unite the Baltic States, the Nordic states, Russia, Poland and Germany (Park 1999:119). Differently from the ND the BSR is a region-building project recognised and supported also by the USA. In case a seminar/conference is held specifically on the Northern Dimension (e.g. Foreign Ministers’ Conference on the ND), the situation is quite the opposite of course. In this context the ND is treated as the dominant region-building project (ND defined as the new region) and the concept of the BSR is paid marginal if any attention in communication. It depends largely on the context which region-building project is considered important for the future development of Northern Europe.

3.2.2. Terminological variations

Similarly to discourse on the Baltic Sea Region the variations exist in the terminology of the Northern Dimension concept. These variations are mostly connected with the word “region”, which is being tried to bind with the term “Northern Dimension”. On one hand it is possible to see a smart strategy by Finnish politicians at first to use the term Northern Dimension and later bring parallel denominations in discourse, like Northern Dimension region and Northern region. On the other hand, it can be explained with the fact that although the word “dimension” sounds well, it has remained abstract and alien to the politicians, and the more familiar term - region - is still preferable. The word region is clearly visible in the Northern Dimension discourse, the concept is defined as a region:
Never before has the EU taken a stand on questions related to the Northern Dimension region in such a comprehensive and at the same time, detailed manner (Tuomioja, Erkki 21-22.06.00).

Behind the use of the Northern Dimension region we can see a kind of contradiction, as the words of “dimension” and “region” are incompatible with each other. They have overlapping meanings and therefore the Northern region is more appropriate to use:

The EU gained the Northern Dimension and with this, the Union became a major player in the Northern region (Lipponen, Paavo 19.02.98).

But the problem with the Northern region is its likeness to the Nordic region concept and these two terms are already being confused discursively. In context of the ND there appears quite a resembling situation to the BSR discourse, where two regional concepts have similar and confusing terms. The new and broader meaning of the North - the Northern Dimension - has been referred to in discourse as the New North. The content and geographical scope have changed considerably compared to the previous understanding of this spatial image.

3.2.3. Territorial definition of the Northern Dimension

The difference between the territorial definitions of the Northern Dimension is much greater than was visible in the Baltic Sea Region discourse. The narrowest definition of the concept exists between the two definitions of the BSR - involving the states around the Baltic Sea, plus north-western Russia. The broadest definition of the concept extends from American continent to the Pacific coast of Russia, including the whole northern hemisphere. The narrow definition of the concept seems to fit more with the word "region", while the broad one represents better the word "dimension".

If the maps of the BSR were generally drawn by 1997, the map-drawing process of the ND just began this year. Considerably different opinions have emerged about how the territory of the ND should be defined and limited. Up to now some geographical parameters of the new region have been located, i.e. its focal point has been generally crystallised (narrow definition). But the area has quite loose external boundaries (broad definition) and therefore a much more open and flexible character than the BSR. Within the ND concept the importance of geographical proximity between areas has decreased.
Paavo Lipponen, one of the main advocates of the concept, has outlined the territory of
the Northern Dimension in his speech (referred to as the starting point of the ND
concept) in 1997 as follows:

_The region from Iceland in west across to North-western Russia, or from Polar
Sea in North to the Southern coast of Baltic Sea. It includes not only countries
around the Baltic Sea, but also all the other Nordic countries, Great Britain,
USA, Canada are more or less directly involved (Lipponen, Paavo 15.09.97)_

Although Lipponen defines as a region the area from Iceland to North-western Russia
and from Polar Sea to the Southern coast of Baltic Sea, he has surrounded it with the
far-reaching external borders (including Great Britain, USA, Canada). It is possible to
see a contradiction in his definition of the covered area of the ND. On one hand, he
focuses on the countries around the Baltic Sea and stresses the looser involvement of all
other Nordic countries. On the other hand, he starts to define the region from Iceland
(which together with Norway are the two Nordic countries that do not border the Baltic
Sea).

The importance of Russia has clearly increased in the ND discourse compared to the
BSR. As we can see above, Lipponen does not mention just the area around the Baltic
Sea, but emphasises strongly north-west of Russia in the ND. For example Kaliningrad
has played a part of crucial importance in the ND discourse. A debatable question in
communication is whether the rest of Russia, beside north-western areas, is also
included in the ND concept. This has been a visible (but not so topical) theme in the
BSR discourse, as well. And quite similarly to the latter Russian politicians define
whole Russia as belonging to the ND. Below is demonstrated how Igor Ivanov, Minister
of Foreign Affairs of Russia refers to the ND as “our region”:

_The Northern Dimension/.../The example of our region should convince all the
Europeans of the feasibility of ensuring security, stability and prosperity
through meaningful and equal international co-operation (Ivanov, Igor 11-
12.11.99)._ 

If we look at the map and include USA and Canada in the area of the ND, then it seems
only natural to include the whole Russia, as well. Therefore, the interest of Russia to be
involved entirely in the ND is not so miraculous idea at all.
However, the vision to include USA and Canada in the ND concept has met a strong resistance, it is not a widely supported idea. As mentioned earlier, it is possible to see a kind of competition between the ND and the NEI, advocated by the USA. There have emerged opinions that the ND should remain an European project:

*The ND/…/France wants to maintain this activity as a purely “European” exercise. We do not exclude the participation of non-European countries, such as the US and Canada, in the carrying out of individual projects case by case. This must, however, lead to a possible acknowledgement of their institutional position (Hennekinne, Loic 11-12.11.99).*

But in case the “transatlantic link” of the ND is cut through and the USA, Canada are not involved in the ND arises another important question - what about the Arctic areas between American continent and Europe? Especially concerns this Greenland, which belongs to Denmark, but is generally left out from Europe. Greenland has been active in searching itself a place in the map of the ND, inventing even a new term for this - an Arctic Window:

*We have noticed that European Union’s ND includes Iceland and Norway. We do feel that Greenland should be included in the ND. We see the Arctic Window as the political space within the ND (Motzfeldt, Jonathan 11-12.11.99).*

Although there are attempts to include the Arctic areas, USA and Canada in the ND, the focal point of the region is seen to lie in the Baltic Sea area. All other states and areas leaving out from this space are forming the loosely bounded external frontiers of the ND. The carrying idea behind the two region-building projects – the ND and the BSR - is quite similar. Both of them focus on the area around the Baltic Sea, including the bordering states or some regions of them. While in the BSR discourse it was impossible to bring out a single core actor, in the ND discourse project Finland clearly promotes itself as the leading centre of the emerging region.

### 3.2.4. Institutional framework of the Northern Dimension

While the BSR has been institutionalised with the CBSS, the ND does not have a specific institutional framework. Still, similarly to the BSR the institutional level has played an important part in the development of the ND concept - it has been
considerably created by the institutions of the European Union. It is frequently stressed fact in discourse that no new institution will be created in Northern Europe specifically for the Northern Dimension. Instead, it is described to function within the already existing institutional frameworks. At the moment three main institutions exist in Northern part of Europe - in addition to the CBSS also the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council. The second institution is associated with the Barents region and its members are Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russian Federation and the EU Commission. The Arctic Council is connected with the Arctic region concept and includes Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden and the USA. These three institutions have overlapping borders, involving similar states.

Why there is no intention to create a specific institution for the ND concept, if the existence of the institution is one of the key characteristics of a region? It is possible to see several reasons here. Firstly, the argument that no more institution will be created (i.e. no additional money will be wasted) has definitely contributed to the success of the ND concept among different political actors. Secondly, it was unnecessary to establish an institution in order to clarify and naturalise the concept, as it was done by the EU institutions. Thirdly, no more institutional framework is needed because there are already enough of them in Northern Europe. The creation of one more overlapping institution would be probably an extravagance.

Despite the fact that the ND does not have a specific institution, it is clearly connected with the existing institutions in discourse. Although it is possible to find some reference to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council as the necessary frameworks for the development of the ND, the dominant institution in the ND discourse is clearly the Council of the Baltic Sea States. This is explainable with the territorial definition of the ND, which focuses on the area covered by the CBSS.

The CBSS has been associated in discourse mostly with the BSR concept, but it is possible that one day this institution will be identified instead with the ND concept. Already now a clear strategy to bind discursively the ND and the CBSS with each other
is visible. It is frequently emphasised fact by the politicians that the CBSS is of crucial
importance for the development of the ND and that all the countries of the ND are
represented in this institutional framework:

All the countries involved in the ND are represented in the CBSS, it constitutes a
co-operation framework that encompasses all countries in the region
(Heimsoeth, Hans-Jürgen 08-10.02.01).

This has been supported and promoted also by the representatives of the CBSS, who
have started to use the ND concept instead of the BSR in some contexts. Below we can
see how Knut Vollebæk (Commissioner of the CBSS, Minister of Foreign Affairs of
Norway) expresses the readiness of the CBSS to serve as a regional forum for the ND,
emphasising the resemblance of focuses of the ND and the CBSS:

The focus of the ND is also the focus of the CBSS, the Council has stated its
readiness to play an active role in the implementation of the ND. Since the CBSS
also includes the partner countries, it can serve as a forum for co-ordinating the
activities of all the actors in the region (Vollebæk, Knut 11-12.11.99).

The question which political space will be identified with the CBSS in the future is an
open one. The close ties between the BSR and the CBSS seem to be loosening in favour
of the ND concept.

3.2.5. Internal and external justifications of the Northern Dimension

While in the BSR discourse all three internal factors are clearly visible in justifying the
naturalness of the region, in the ND discourse the history and the culture rhetoric are
marginal. But instead of that, the economic potentiality of the area is emphasised even
more than in connection with the BSR. The two external factors play an important role
in the both discourses. Differently from the BSR the geopolitical location of the ND is
defined not by the Baltic Sea, but through the geopolitical situation in Europe after the
enlargement of the EU in 1995. Similarly to the BSR the ND is also defined as an
important political space for security and stability of the whole Europe, but in the ND
discourse the role of Russia has increased. While in the context of the BSR the
communication with Russia has been emphasised, within the ND concept the word communication is substituted with the word co-operation; i.e. Russia is taken as a partner.

- **Common history of the states in the Northern Dimension**

The construction process of the ND has not begun with the insistence on common history of the states belonging to the region. The history rhetoric has been marginal in the ND discourse compared to the BSR. This can be explained with the different starting point of the ND – it was acknowledged as the policy of the EU and therefore it was not necessary to find justifications from the past. And it would require hard discursive work from the region-builders to construct a common history for the ND. It is probably thinkable mostly in connection with the focus point of the region and much more complicated if all external boundaries are taken into consideration.

But in order to be successful and become natural for people, the region-building project should involve also historical reference. Up to now some historical reference to the ND concept has been looked for. Generally it has not differed from the reference used to justify the historical past of the BSR. The Hansa metaphor which is strongly visible in the BSR discourse, is also brought into the ND discourse:

*By including regional players one of the most fruitful traditions of European history can be revived. This is the tradition of the Hanseatic League. Now, within the framework of the ND of the EU, we have the chance to revitalise this successful form of co-operation* (Zöpel, Christoph 11-12.11.99).

This is emphasised mostly by German policy makers, the main advocates of referring to the era of the Hanseatic League as the proof of historical past of the regional space in contemporary Northern Europe.

- **Common cultural heritage of the states in the Northern Dimension**

As the reference to common history is marginal in the ND discourse, the culture rhetoric is almost lacking, as well. History and culture are always closely connected with each
other and form together the main basis for regional identity - the feeling of belonging together. While from the BSR discourse it is possible to find some reference to the (imagined) common cultural heritage of the states forming the region, this is not visible in the ND discourse. In some degree Finnish politicians are trying to stress “special Nordic values”, which should be protected in the ND. But this argument seems not to be appropriate in connection with the whole area covered by the ND, staying outside the Nordic states.

The values seen as holding together the ND are more of a functional sort. The region-builders insist instead on common problems and goals, values of transparency and neighbourly relations as the consolidators of the region. As unifying factors are highlighted mutual desire and urge to act together:

*In the North of the continent the states have such unifying factors as mutual desire to strengthen relations, the urge to seek together ways of meeting the challenges of our time (Ivanov, Igor 11-12.11.99).*

All these functional type of justifications are quite abstract, rhetorical and may not form a strong basis for regional identity. In this respect the BSR has clear advantages over the ND concept. Obviously the construction of the regional identity has been an impossible task for the region-builders of the ND. The lack of regional identity, based on history and culture, is definitely connected with the loose definition of the region. It is quite complicated to construct the history and culture rhetoric for the area, which boundaries have such an abstract and flexible character.

- Economic potentiality of the Northern Dimension

Instead of searching justifications from past the ND concept is directed towards future. The dominant argument in discourse of why the ND should come into existence is its economic potentiality. The emphasis on economic factors prevails also in the BSR discourse, but in connection with the ND it has acquired even more importance. To a great degree thanks to the deficiency of history and culture rhetoric, but also because the increasing significance of the area’s economic potential, high future prospects. The ND is seen to fulfil the highest economic expectations in Northern Europe:
The ND is a conceptual framework for realisation of the potential of ever growing economic interdependence between the states and regions of the Northern Europe. It is aimed at fostering the joint efforts to increase prosperity, strengthen confidence and security throughout the area (Usackas, Vygaudas 11-12.11.99).

A frequently emphasised viewpoint in the ND discourse is that economic development of Northern Europe should be much faster and more impressive than it has been so far. Although the development of the BSR has been described in positive terms, in the ND discourse it is possible to perceive some dissatisfaction with that. A vision has emerged that the ND concept is more able to turn this part of Europe into the future growth area and raise the status with respect to the rest of Europe. The hitherto existing economic co-operation and integration in Northern Europe is described as insufficient due to the unwillingness or inability of the regional structures to improve them:

One of the ways in which the ND could provide “added value” to existing regional co-operation is by focusing on areas that other, more limited, regional structures have either not wanted to or not been able to pay more attention to. In particular, I see the ND as an opportunity for developing economic co-operation and integration in Northern Europe (Ilves Toomas –H. 11-12.11.99).

The main geographical area of the two regions is basically the same. Where then does the greater economic potentiality of the ND lie? One of the aspects stressed by politicians is the stronger inclusion of Russian north-western areas in the region and the creation of communication routs in East-West direction, which makes it a more viable project in comparison with the BSR. Analogous to the BSR the ND includes both the EU-states and non-EU states, but many of the states belonging to the last group may become the members of the first group in the next years. Resulting from this, the economic potential of the area certainly would increase in the future and the ND is constructed as the future project.
- Geopolitical location of the Northern Dimension

Similarly to the BSR the geopolitical justifications have played an important role in the construction of the ND. While the geopolitical location of the BSR is defined by the existence of the Baltic Sea, the ND is justified largely through the geopolitical situation in Europe since the enlargement of the EU in 1995. During this enlargement process Finland and Sweden (plus Austria) joined the Union and its border shifted considerably towards the north. The Northern Dimension is presented in discourse not as a Finnish idea, but as a geopolitical reality in Europe:

*The Northern Dimension is by no means a Finnish idea but a geopolitical reality (Valtasaari, Jukka 14.09.99).*

A frequently used argument by Finnish region-builders in reasoning the ND is that after the enlargement the EU acquired a “natural northern dimension”. The naturalness of the ND is justified widely through two main aspects. On one hand it is done by predication that the EU already has a Southern Dimension in the south of Europe. It is proposed as natural to construct a similar counterbalancing space in the north of the EU. But it is possible to see a difference between the concepts of the SD and the ND: if the former has meant only the policy of the EU (advancing development of the Mediterranean region), then the ND is discursively constructed also as the new regional space. The Southern Dimension is not defined as the Southern (Dimension) region, while this is the case with the Northern Dimension. One the other hand, the naturalness of the ND is explained by insisting on the special conditions existing in the North of Europe:

*The EU has acquired a natural “northern dimension”. The special conditions existing in North – cold climate, sparse population, proximity to Russia – should be given due consideration in internal policies of the EU (Lipponen, Paavo 15.09.97).*

In addition to the cold climate and sparse population the proximity to Russia is defined as the special condition in the North. Taking into consideration the area, which the ND covers, the two first justifications do not seem appropriate. The cold climate and sparse population match more with the Arctic areas, which are not treated as the focal point of the emerging region. On the contrary, these areas are left with rather little attention in communication.
Role of the Northern Dimension in context of European security

Similarly to the BSR the role attributed to the ND in context of European security and stability is remarkable. The ND is also considered an important stabiliser and a security guarantee of the whole Europe. But the relationship between the ND and European security is even more complicated than it was the case with the BSR. In addition to the fact that it includes the NATO and non-NATO states, in taking into consideration the broad definition of the space, we can see here from one side the USA and from the other the Russian Federation. Although Russia is included in the concept, the ND’s role in guaranteeing European security and stability is still defined in context of improving relations with Russia. Therefore, it is possible to talk about the ND as the stabiliser and the security guarantee taking into account the narrow definition of the region. It is important to keep in mind that Russia as a whole belongs to the ND mostly by the definition of Russian politicians, while the other political actors see only its northwestern areas as included.

The role of the ND is defined through the necessity to avoid the emergence of new divisions in continent after the next enlargement of the EU, which would bring along the lengthening of the border between the Union and Russia:

*The Northern Dimension reduces the risk that new dividing lines would be created on the European continent (Lipponen, Paavo 11-12.11.99).*

The insistence on the avoidance of new dividing lines has also been visible in the BSR discourse, as the latter was defined as necessary for bridging East-West gap after the end of the Cold War. The ND concept is connected with the next stage in the structural changes in Europe, one of the most important enlargement process of the EU. The ND is referred to as the Union’s link with Russia, the significant space for developing co-operation between the EU and Russia:

*The Northern region is the Union’s only direct geographical link with the Russian Federation and is important for co-operation between the EU and Russia (Smadja, Daniele 19.10.99).*
While the BSR is presented as a channel of communication between Europe and Russia, in the ND discourse the word “communication” is replaced by the term “co-operation”. Russia is taken as a partner in new Europe.

3.2.6. Images of the Northern Dimension

The interpretations of the ND have several similar traits with the images attached to the BSR by political rhetoric. The ND has also acquired economic images, as it is defined and justified mostly in economic terms; even in greater extent than the BSR is. The future prospects of the BSR are described as being highly promising and a resembling rhetoric has come over to the ND discourse. But it is possible to say that the future perspectives of the BSR are defined more excessively compared to the ND. For instance the ND is not (at least so far) referred to as a potential political centre of Europe or a future global economic frontrunner, catching up with Japan. But similarly to the BSR the ND is imagined to become an European economic engine:

We all have a common goal - to make the North of Europe growth and progress engine for entire EU. This is what we can achieve by using the Northern Dimension (Laar, Mart 03.10.00).

The aim of the both concepts is to define Northern Europe and turn it into the prosperous and prestigious growth area, recognised in the whole Europe. This is done by political rhetoric, describing the area as a potential economic (political) centre and a model region.

Similarly to the BSR the ND is also defined as a model region of Europe by politicians. Still, it is possible to see a considerable difference in how their modelling nature is introduced. The BSR is described as the model resulting from its successful development, regional cohesion and co-operation in different fields. The ND, one the other hand, is presented as a model, which can be followed in constructing the future European Union. The ND is defined as a European test case, a sort of laboratory where new modes of co-operation are developed for Northern Europe:
Regional co-operation in Northern Europe is a sort of laboratory, a wellspring of creativity in a dynamic region at a time of change both within and outside the EU. The new modes of cross-border co-operation that can be developed for Northern Europe should inspire the Union to also address issues of concern to other regions in new ways (Eliasson, Jan 11-12.11.99).

The outcome and success of the ND in Northern part of Europe is considered as decisive for the future of the whole European Union. The ND concept is closely connected with the EU and there is a hope that it would contribute in forming a new, regional Europe. The projects of the Northern Dimension and the European Union can be seen as inter-depending and interrelating, the former being as a miniature EU. In the success of the ND concept is seen a creation of the model to follow in constructing the other regions in new Europe:

We are not talking about a regional affair. The success of the ND project is decisive for the project of Europe. If we fail here in this area bringing together what belongs together, we will fail in the whole of Europe. But being successful we will have a model valid as well for other parts of Europe (Walter, Gerd 11-12.11.99).

While the role of the BSR is defined in addition to the European context also against the background of the whole world, the future prospects of the ND are limited to the European continent. The ND is constructed as a region of Europe, more precisely of the European Union, not of the whole world. Although if we look at the broad definition of the ND on the map it seems to form much more a region of the world, covering the whole northern hemisphere, than the BSR does. But despite of its loose and uncertain external borders, the concept is clearly focusing on the area around the Baltic Sea, playing an important role in the next enlargement process of the EU.
3.3. Similarities and differences between the two region-building projects

The factors analysed in political discourses on the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension are drawn together in Table 1. In the first column we can find the list of analysed factors and the values given to them according to the following scale: a factor similar in the two discourses - 1 point, almost similar - 2, almost different - 3, different-4. The second column consists of the head-words, which characterise the discourses in connection with factors and the third column explains the choice of the given points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>factor, points</th>
<th>head-word</th>
<th>comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. region-builders</td>
<td>North European politicians</td>
<td>The main region-builders of the ND are Finnish politicians and the secondary region-builders are policy makers from all other North European states. All of them are taking part also in the construction of the BSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. contexts</td>
<td>different conferences</td>
<td>The concepts of the BSR and the ND are advanced in different conferences. In some context the ND is not defined as a region, while in other it is referred to as the dominant political space in future Northern Europe. Differently from the ND the BSR concept is supported also by the politicians of the USA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. terminological variations</td>
<td>resemblance to other concepts</td>
<td>Both concepts resemble terminologically the other, secondary region-building projects. The term Baltic region is used parallel to the Baltic Sea Region and in some cases the terms of the Nordic region and the Northern (Dimension) region are being confused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. territorial definition</td>
<td>Baltic Sea area, flexible frontiers</td>
<td>Both regions have flexible frontiers, including not only whole states but also parts of them. Although the ND has quite loose external boundaries, the focus point of the concept is similarly to the BSR in the Baltic Sea area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. institutional</td>
<td>Council of the</td>
<td>The dominant institutional framework in both discourses is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>framework</td>
<td>Baltic Sea States</td>
<td>the Council of Baltic Sea States. Similarly to the BSR concept the attempts to connect the ND concept with the CBSS are visible in communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. historical reference</td>
<td>Hanseatic League</td>
<td>Unlike the BSR discourse, historical reference is marginal in the ND discourse. The reference used to justify the historical past of the region in Northern Europe is the era of the Hanseatic League.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. cultural reference</td>
<td>common cultural heritage</td>
<td>Reference to common cultural heritage of the areas is missing in the ND discourse, while the BSR is presented to a certain extent as the region, based on traditional cultural links between the included states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. economic reference</td>
<td>economic potentiality</td>
<td>Reference to economic potentiality of a region is visible and prevailing in both discourses. Either of concepts aim to achieve fast economic development of Northern Europe and raise the status of the area with respect to the rest of Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. geopolitical location</td>
<td>Baltic Sea versus European Union</td>
<td>While the geopolitical location of the BSR is defined by the existence of the Baltic Sea, the emergence of the ND is justified through the enlargement of the EU in 1995. The ND is presented as the geopolitical reality, the natural result of the extension of the EU to the north.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. role in European security</td>
<td>avoidance of dividing lines, Russia</td>
<td>Both regions are defined as necessary for avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe and for developing relations between Europe (EU) and Russia. While in the BSR discourse the communication with Russia is emphasised, in the ND discourse it is substituted with the word co-operation. In the ND concept Russia’ role is increased, it is taken as the partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. images</td>
<td>growth centre, model region</td>
<td>Both concepts have acquired economic images and promising future prospects in discourse. Either of them are seen as potential European growth centres. Differently from the ND, the BSR is constructed also as the region of the whole world. While the BSR is seen as the model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
region because of its successful regional co-operation, the ND is defined as the European test case, the decisive project for the wider project of the EU.

Fig. 3
Factors on similarity-difference scale

- region-builders  - territory  - history  - contexts
- terminological variations  - security  - images  - culture
- institution  - geopolitical location
- economy

similar (1)  almost similar (2)  almost different (3)  different (4)

As we can see in figure 5 shown above, the discourses on the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension involve both similar and different factors. To a certain extent the similar (region-builders, terminological variations, institution, economy) and almost similar (territory, security) factors prevail compared with the different (history, images) and almost different (contexts, culture, geopolitical location) factors.

Conclusions:

The word “region” has turned out to be a natural and an important part of political discourse in Northern Europe. Differently from the traditional meaning of this term, modern international regions have flexible borders and loose territorial definitions. The territory is loosing its significance in connection with neo-regions; the new political markers tend to be more spatial than territorial. Instead of strict geographical limitations of a region the question how to bind areas functionally together is becoming essential. As neo-regions are newly “invented” formations they have no easily reconstituted history nor shared mythology. The novelty leaves them of a clear identity and may
discourage the arousal of peoples’ sense of belonging. Historical and cultural rhetoric are the necessary parts of discourse on a neo-region in order to naturalize its existence. Still, more important from finding justifications from past is searching new challenges from future for emerging regions. The economic potentiality of an area is the argument, which matters more and more in defining a political space in contemporary world.

The general trend towards regionalism is strong in Northern Europe and several region-building projects constitute an essential part of international politics. The analysis of political discourse of the Northern Dimension has demonstrated that we are concerned with the new region-building project beside the already existing ones. The discourse on the Northern Dimension has similar characteristics to the region-talk on the Baltic Sea Region. The Northern Dimension is frequently defined by a word “region”, it is clearly constructed as the new political space in Northern Europe by region-builders. Behind it we can see the concept of neo-region developed a step further compared to the Baltic Sea Region. The importance of geographical proximity between areas forming a region has decreased in connection with the Northern Dimension. The Northern Dimension with loose and flexible external boundaries is a region, but also a new dimension in understanding the concept of region.

The region-building projects like the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension have carried along the change of the old spatial images - the Baltic and the North. These images are not exclusive and limited anymore (as they have historically been for a long time) but have rather an inclusive, an extended and a positive connotation in contemporary political discourse. Resulting from the use of old and traditional spatial images in defining new regions the situation where different region-building projects are mixed up in communication has emerged. The term of the Baltic region, which symbolises generally the three Baltic states, is being used parallel to the Baltic Sea Region. And since the emergence of the Northern Dimension the new term - Northern region - is sometimes confused with the Nordic region, involving five Nordic countries.

The analysis of the two leading region-building projects in contemporary North European political communication has confirmed the hypothesis set up in the introduction. The political discourses on the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension have several similar and overlapping traits, which make these region-
building projects competing in nature. The competition appears in the first place through the two key characteristics of a neo-region - territory and institution. Both concepts aim to define Northern Europe, give it a new image and raise its status with respect to the rest of Europe, developing the northern part into prosperous and recognised growth area. The two concepts are seen to cover an almost similar geographical area. Although the Northern Dimension has quite loose external boundaries (extending according to the broadest definition to the American continent and the Pacific coast of Russia) the focus point of the concept is similarly to the Baltic Sea Region in the Baltic Sea area. The institution described as the most important for the development of a region is in the both discourses the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Similarly to the Baltic Sea Region the concept of the Northern Dimension is discursively connected with this institutional framework. In addition, there are several other factors which produce the competition between these two region-building projects. The Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension are used in parallel to each other in political discourse. While the region-builders of the concepts are similar, the contexts in which they are being advanced are different. Both regions are surrounded with the highly promising future prospects by region-builders. The emergence of either of the concepts has been closely connected with the important structural processes in Europe and they are similarly defined as the significant political spaces for guaranteeing security and stability in the continent. Both regions are presented to function as a link between Europe (EU) and Russia, developing good-neighbourly relations between them.

Whereas important competing traits exist between these two region-building projects, their future perspectives become essential to clarify. In order to find out which concept has more potential to define Northern Europe in the future it is necessary to compare their advantages with respect to each other. The clear advantage of the Baltic Sea Region is the Baltic Sea as the anchor of the concept. The Baltic Sea has strong historical associations and connotations in people’s memories and its status may increase considerably after becoming an inside sea of the European Union after the next enlargement process. Therefore it can be a useful metaphor in defining Northern Europe. The Northern Dimension does not have such a conceptual anchor, as the terms “northern” and “dimension” are both quite abstract without associating with anything concrete. The Baltic Sea Region has been institutionalised with the Council of the Baltic Sea States, while the Northern Dimension concept does not have a specific institution
on its own. The latter has been created instead through the institutions of the European Union. The existence of the identity rhetoric is the advantage of the Baltic Sea Region concept. Although it can be classified as the economic region, the construction of the regional identity (through insistence on common history and cultural heritage) has played a visible role in the discourse. The region-builders have tried to naturalise the Baltic Sea Region searching justifications from past. The identity rhetoric is lacking in the Northern Dimension discourse, which is largely explainable with its contestable territorial definition - the loose external boundaries - and novelty. Although according to the broadest definition of the Northern Dimension, the concept involves also the USA, the latter has not generally supported the Northern Dimension. The Baltic Sea Region concept, on the contrary, is accepted and supported also by the policy makers of the USA. Largely resulting from this, the Baltic Sea Region is constructed as the region of the world in addition to its image of being the European model region.

The Northern Dimension, on the other hand, has its own strong advantages compared with the Baltic Sea Region concept. The most important advantage is its fast development, the concept has been quickly acknowledged by different political actors in Northern Europe. It has not been criticised, but instead of that every actor has tried to take a maximum profit on the new definition of a political space. The novelty and attractiveness are the clear advantages of the Northern Dimension concept. Due to the multitude of interpretations, the perception that the Northern Dimension involves more than the Baltic Sea Region has emerged, i.e. that it has some value to add to the existing regional integration. The fact that it is approved as the policy of the European Union has given it a high prestige and a promising nature from the start. Although the Baltic Sea Region was launched only ten years ago, during this period Europe has changed in a great deal, and it can be perceived as a bit old-fashioned concept already. The inclusion of Russia is becoming gradually more important in the regional co-operation of Europe. The role attached to Russia in the Baltic Sea Region concept is marginal compared to the Northern Dimension concept. While the former was formed in the period where it was important to cross the confrontation line in Europe, the latter has emerged in the era when it is essential to define the future of the European Union and its co-operation possibilities with Russia. The European Union plays an important part in the construction process of the Northern Dimension and vice versa. The Northern Dimension is referred to as the European test case, the decisive project for the success
of the larger project of the European Union. It is created as the model to follow in constructing a new, regional Europe. Taking into consideration these aspects we can suppose that after the next enlargement of the European Union (many states around the Baltic Sea joining the Union) the Northern Dimension discourse may start gradually prevailing over the Baltic Sea Region discourse. In case the Northern Dimension will be advanced in the quick tempo which has been visible up to now, it can easily replace the present domination of the Baltic Sea Region in North European political discourse.

Still, it is impossible yet to predict the precise future developments, as several factors may influence the outcome of regional processes. It is important to see the political space in Northern Europe not in static terms, but instead as flexible and changeable formation. One day totally new region-building project may emerge aiming to define Northern part of Europe and having more successful idea how to raise its image and status in Europe, converting it into European growth centre. To end up with, the region-building projects precede and form the basis for the real economic and political processes emerging afterwards in a given territory. Therefore political discourse on regions has the power to re-structure the world. Resulting from the constant regional transformations of Europe the topic analysed in this thesis has huge future potential.
Abbreviations

BSR - Baltic Sea Region
HL - Hanseatic League
ND - Northern Dimension
NEI - Northern European Initiative
SD - Southern Dimension
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Läänemere regioon ja Põhjadamensioon - kas konkureerivad kontseptsioonid?

Resümee