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Exploring Balticness as (another) spatial concept in North-Eastern Europe

Bakgrund/Frågeställning

Debates about spatial notions in the humanities and social sciences have led to numerous discussions about the contents of Norden, the Baltic (Sea) Region and further subregions of Europe as NB8, 3B and many others. In many cases their main focus has been on identity building, i.e. in the search of a common, homogenous identity of a given spatial unit. Besides attempts of constructing and reaffirming the existence of these spaces, there have been also many scholarly approaches that tried to deconstruct such spatial containers. Even if many of those arguments are well-founded, the reconstruction of spatial frames for research perspectives remains a crucial task, if we do not want to take nations or states as the only possible entities.

This paper attempts to outline the scholarly relevance of a framework based on Baltic space. As it is well known, there are various understandings of Baltic space, partly overlapping, partly contrary or even clashing, and in addition changing over time. These concepts are not only based on physical geography and thus do not create natural or indisputable units, but they also depend on – often transnationally entangled – political, social, and cultural concepts as well as on epochs and perspectives.

Against this background, Balticness will be introduced here as an open concept, whose relevance is not merely limited to the three Baltic states and their immediate geographical vicinity. Instead, Balticness is understood as a broad notion comprising of societies, cultures, and states in the wider Baltic Sea Region, as well as their networks of influence and interdependence that have a global reach. It is interested in the multiplicity of interactions between various groups and actors, which transcend national and political, as well as cultural and social boundaries. It is focusing on multilevel contacts, interactions, tensions, and conflicts, rather than regional homogeneity.

Such an introduction of Balticness implies to discuss firstly the interconnectedness between the European “North” and “East” and the Baltic Sea Region. Secondly, the changing understandings of “Baltic” space will be addressed, suggesting that a “tidal” expansion and contraction constitutes a core element of the concept. This leads thirdly to the general question, what we be the added value of such a notion for the scholarly perception of the region and its societies.

Metod och Resultat

Konklusion