



SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT – RESEARCH NETWORKS

Registration number, Östersjöstiftelsen: 23-RN-0003

Project manager: Paulina Rytönen

Project title: Mapping key challenges to sustainability on islands in the Baltic Sea and Eastern Europe

1. Purpose of the research network

The main objective of the proposed Research Network Project is to establish a dynamic network dedicated to map key areas where more knowledge about island societies is needed to facilitate promotion of sustainable development. The network will bring together Croatian, Estonian, Finnish and Swedish experiences and knowledge and scholars from five countries to identify challenges and opportunities for island societies in current times.

2. A description of the research network's activities funded by Östersjöstiftelsen

During the project three different research applications have been prepared.

We have conducted 9 online meetings with researchers in: We conducted two research meetings on place, one in Croatia and one in Estonia. Programs have been attached at the end of this report.

3. The output from the research network, for example applications for research funding

The original plan was to a) connect island research at Södertörn and island research with focus on the Baltic Sea Region to international scholars and especially with scholars in the area and countries targeted by the Baltic Sea Foundation. This goal was achieved as collaboration with scholars in Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Poland and Denmark are active and joint activities are being conducted to date even after the project ended. The network project also had the goal of preparing and submitting a research project application to the Baltic Sea Foundation. This was done at the beginning of 2024. In fact, as a result of the network project two applications were sent to the Baltic Sea Foundation on February 1st 2024. One by Paulina Rytönen (with focus on developing sustainability indicators for island studies, nr: 24-PR1-0059) and one by Natallia Pashkevich (with focus on studying the Clean Energy Transitions).

The network was expanded and included additional scholars from other countries with island and in which there is a mass of active scholars working in the research front with various questions. The extended network includes scholars from Turkey, Greece and Portugal. Within this extended network a research application was prepared for and sent to Horizon, The application answered the call: HORIZON-CL2-2024-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-09 The role of social economy in addressing social exclusion, providing quality jobs and greater sustainability

We submitted the application: "Empowering Social Economy Organisations for the Sustainable Growth of European Islands".

The support from the Baltic Sea Foundation was crucial to put together the three applications as it was Rytönen who put together the three consortia under the three applications.



4. The research network's contribution to research and/or doctoral studies at Södertörn University

The internal network of scholars working with island studies at Södertörn University has grown substantially. The scientific area of island studies is relevant for the research profile of Södertörn University and the focus on islands has bifurcated amongst scholars from several disciplines from the social sciences and humanities. The critical mass of knowledge and scholars generated enough power to recruit a PhD candidate with support from the Knowledge Foundation (KK-stiftelsen), which would not have been possible without the work conducted by this network.

Island research at Södertörn university is also highly relevant for society. Södertörn university scholars participating in the network have contributed through knowledge obtained during this project to public decision-makers and especially to an inquiry conducted by OECD in early 2024 which comparisons of challenges and opportunities for Baltic Sea islands and Croatian islands. The report will be published by the OECD in the coming months.

5. The contribution of the research network to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe

Islands are becoming increasingly important as inhabited territories to maintain geopolitical security and fulfil preparedness goals of countries around the Baltic Sea. While the role of islands has been seen as tourism destinations in the recent past, the new role of islands and island communities in the geopolitics of the Baltic sea highlights the importance of contributing with new knowledge to promote sustainability and habitability on islands. In the Swedish context, the lack of island policies creates several unnecessary institutional and accessibility gaps for island societies, while Finnish island communities have seen the importance of modernizing island legislation (dating from 1949). Island issues are highly disregarded in parts of the Baltic Sea (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Sweden), while they are highly discussed to the benefit of society on islands and the mainland in Denmark and Finland. Because of the strategic role played by islands as secure territories and by the potential generation of income that islands provide, Croatia has developed an island policy and island issues are discussed and addressed. Baltic Sea countries have a lot to learn from Croatian experiences.

Network participants discussed conceptual issues during the meetings, which has contributed to conceptual development of island studies in various areas. For applicants from Södertörn university, one such output is the conceptualization of island entrepreneurship with a focus on developing concepts to study entrepreneurship in archipelagic islands, like those located in the Baltic Sea. The contribution is under publication:

Rytkönen, P., Pashkevich, N., Oghazi, P. and Mostaghel, R. (2025) Island entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems. A roadmap for future research. International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research (IJEBr-05-2024-0522.R3 - under review), pp. 1-20.