



## Towards sustainability of marine governance: Challenges and enablers for stakeholder integration in transboundary marine spatial planning in the Baltic Sea



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### ABSTRACT

Integrating stakeholder knowledge, views and needs in marine or maritime spatial planning (MSP) processes is important from a governance and social sustainability perspective both for MSP practitioners and for the evolving field of MSP research. Transboundary MSP appears particularly challenging for participation, which is why it is important to identify opportunities and address obstacles for stakeholder integration in this specific context. This article examines how stakeholder integration is currently practiced in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), an enclosed sea where policy coherence and addressing conflicting interests across borders are especially relevant. It synthesises a range of challenges and enablers for stakeholder participation and mobilisation that have emerged from two transboundary MSP research and development projects, BaltSpace and Baltic SCOPE. The article finds that with the exception of statutory authorities, stakeholder engagement in the BSR is mostly limited to self-motivated stakeholders and consultation rather than more inclusive forms of participation. This can reduce the quality and legitimacy of MSP processes and risks to concentrate power in the hands of a small group of actors. For transboundary stakeholder integration to become more interactive and effective, five types of challenges need attention, regarding a) timing, b) governance systems, c) capacity and processes, d) stakeholder characteristics and e) knowledge and language. These obstacles can be addressed by (1) a dedicated research and development agenda that critically reflects on integrative tools and processes, and (2) by encouraging transnational institutions in the BSR to devote more resources to transboundary stakeholder integration and adopt flexible and adaptive strategies and tools that can facilitate stakeholder involvement throughout the MSP policy cycle.

### 1. Introduction: exploring stakeholder integration in transboundary marine spatial planning in a pioneering region

Marine or maritime spatial planning (MSP) is emerging as an essential approach to address maritime issues in a cross-cutting, multi-sectoral manner. With the seas as open, changing socio-ecological systems and – if the aim of MSP is to contribute to long-term sustainable marine governance – integration across geographical and political boundaries, sectors, and knowledge types is key. Transboundary

thinking has become important in the management of shared seas and implies various types of cross-border collaboration (e.g. for MSP in Europe Kidd and Mc Gowan, 2013; Jay et al., 2016; Kull et al., 2017). There is also scientific evidence that integrative, participatory and adaptive approaches can help address the sometimes “wicked problems” that MSP has to address, characterized by knowledge gaps and other uncertainties, value and goal conflicts, and an unequal distribution of gains and costs (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Jentoft and Chuenpagdee, 2009; Hurlbert and Gupta, 2015). Against this

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background, policy makers have embraced stakeholder integration (SI) as an essential element in transboundary MSP processes (e.g. European Commission, 2014; UN CBD, 1992). SI in transboundary MSP is no easy task and requires political will, resources, capacity and time. To be meaningful and effective, it is important to clarify its purposes (the *why*) in order to establish *who* should be engaged, *how and when* (Morf et al., 2019a). Participation can have both instrumental and transformative purposes, including sharing and developing necessary knowledge, improving legitimacy, addressing value conflicts or empowerment (Jansen et al., 1998; Stirling, 2008). Stakeholders can make valuable contributions, but participatory processes also imply risks of tokenism or conflict escalation, of further strengthening power asymmetries across sectors or marginalising certain groups (NRC, 2008; Flannery et al., 2019). This has led scholars to assess different dimensions associated with communication and collaboration in MSP at the transnational level (Kidd and Mc Gowan, 2013; Twomey & O'Mahony, 2019; Morf et al., 2019a).

This article aims to examine the nature of stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), a forerunner in terms of cross-border collaboration around a shared sea. The empirical material stems from the BONUS-financed BaltSpace project and the DG MARE-funded Baltic SCOPE project, both of which have investigated stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP processes. The sources and methods used include document analysis, semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation, plus a survey and a focus group interview with Baltic SCOPE project participants. The paper synthesises the state-of-the-art of stakeholder integration and distils important challenges and enablers to stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP, emerging from both projects. The findings are discussed in relation to participation literature and whether the challenges and enablers identified have a broader relevance for transboundary MSP.

We first provide an overview of how policymakers and academia define stakeholder integration in MSP with a transboundary focus, including a participation ladder as analytical tool. This is followed by a brief review of transboundary MSP activities in the BSR, the cases and an outline of the research methodology. The findings and discussion section provides an overview on the status of stakeholder integration in the cases, followed by a typology of the main challenges and enablers to stakeholder integration emerging from BaltSpace and Baltic SCOPE research. The concluding section tries to link this to a broader context, including the land-based discourse on participation, taking up both practical implications for the BSR and a continued research agenda and how to connect the two.

## 2. Theory: stakeholder integration in MSP – policy and research views

### 2.1. Sustainable marine governance through participatory approaches – a policy view

Various key international policy documents have proposed inclusive approaches to promote a more sustainable management of shared seas and coasts. The United Nations' action programme Agenda 21 UN (1992) emphasises commitment and genuine involvement of all social groups and broad public participation in decision making as a fundamental prerequisite to achieve sustainable development. Public and user participation is also part of global and regional conventions and principles for natural resource management, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (UN CBD, 1992), including the ecosystem approach (COP 5, decision V/6), the latest strategic plan (COP 10 decision X/2) and the Aichi biodiversity targets (Strategic goal D, 2010). Additionally, public participation is an important feature in transnational procedures (Espoo, 1991; Directive 2011/92/EU) and is included in the UNECE Aarhus Convention (1998). The involvement of the public, specific user groups and other stakeholders has been a central theme of transnational MSP projects such as TPEA (Jay et al., 2016) and PartISEA (Schultz-

Zehden and Gee, 2015). Public participation has also been included in MSP-related principles and regulations, including the HELCOM-VASAB MSP principles (2010) and more recently, the 2014 EU MSP Directive. The latter calls upon Member States to “establish means of public participation by *informing all interested parties and by consulting the relevant stakeholders and authorities, and the public concerned, at an early stage* in the development of maritime spatial plans, in accordance with relevant provisions established in Union legislation.” (Article 9, Directive 2014/89/EU, *our emphasis*).

While stakeholder integration has been broadly adopted as a policy principle at an international scale (Pomeroy and Douvère, 2008), its practice still seems poorly defined (Saunders et al., 2016). The above policy documents and the related expert discourse have been criticised for their limited view of the purposes of participation (e.g. Ritchie and Ellis, 2010; Flannery et al., 2018; Tafon, 2018). Many documents are not clear as to which types of participation they favour and why, remaining vague in what stakeholder integration implies in practice. Stakeholder integration also varies considerably between countries; they employ various means ranging from information to consultation and beyond, based on more or less well-defined criteria. At the transnational level, the formally defined purposes and means of SI might be clear but can be very narrowly defined (e.g. Espoo convention). The underlying question is how marine stakeholders can meaningfully contribute to MSP at multiple levels, and how MSP processes can be designed to include them in an efficient, equal, legitimate, and transparent way, meeting both instrumental and more normative requirements related to participation and sustainable development.

### 2.2. Sustainable governance and stakeholder integration in MSP – a research perspective

As instrument or process to promote sustainable marine use, MSP becomes particularly challenging for *transboundary* stakeholder integration, both conceptually and practically. MSP can be seen as an attempt to address complex social-ecological problems and an initiative to promote specific aspects of social and governance sustainability (Saunders et al., 2019). It does so by building institutional links and providing deliberation forums for affected parts, ideally creating a platform for broad participation. In the context of integration in MSP, stakeholder involvement has the potential to promote further types of integration such as cross-border, cross level, and knowledge integration and even help fulfilling democratic norms of legitimisation. *Stakeholder integration*<sup>1</sup> in relation to MSP is here understood as the formal and informal involvement of individuals, groups and organisations with a stake in marine and coastal issues in processes leading to marine spatial plans (adapted from Saunders et al., 2016). *Transboundary integration* in MSP can be defined as collaboration and coordination between governmental levels across multiple scales and different types of borders. Here, it is important to consider how different layers of regulations, norms and practices are vertically interrelated within a country (local-regional-national; Saunders et al., 2016; Schmitt and van Well, 2016; Lidström, 2007; Gualini, 2006; Davoudi et al., 2008). Using a broad definition of stakeholders (authority and other stakeholders), the two dimensions may overlap.

Analytically and practically, stakeholder integration can serve both instrumental and transformative purposes. Instrumental participation aims to enhance the efficiency of the planning processes and their outcomes and to mitigate existing or foreseen conflicts (Stirling, 2008). Transformative participation focuses on the process of public communication and reasoning; the outcomes of the process may be less important than the learning process and giving a voice to society (Jansen et al., 1998). Transformative participation aims to involve all interested

<sup>1</sup> To reduce repetitiveness in the text, we use stakeholder involvement and participation synonymously.

and affected groups and individuals and attempts to challenge existing power relations (Stirling, 2008). Both types of participation can help to fulfil three basic functions of participation, as distinguished by NRC (2008): (i) improving the quality of decisions and plans, (ii) enhancing legitimacy, and (iii) capacity building. Evidently, instrumental participation promotes (i), while (ii) and (iii) are the primary focus of transformative participation. In a MSP context, besides the usual statutory form of commenting on plan drafts, participant activities could include a) contributing to problem definition and conflict mapping, b) providing knowledge to develop planning evidence, c) informing and evaluating scenarios and visions, d) providing views on how and when to use specific areas and what needs protection, and e) proposals on how their own user group could contribute to the implementation of a plan, f) contributions to monitoring and evaluation, g) criticising and giving input on the process and actively contributing to making it inclusive and transparent. Crucially, for each of these proposed activities, early engagement and appropriate timing in the process are important for meaningful participation (e.g. Gopnik et al., 2012).

Participation has its pitfalls too, including political manipulation by authorities and participants, escalating conflicts, low quality of decisions and reasoning, challenges of achieving fairness and representation, and trivial or undesirable results for both authorities or participants (NRC, 2008). Moreover, stakeholder involvement does not take place in a power vacuum (Kothari, 2001) and can unwittingly reinforce existing power structures or further marginalise specific groups (Jentoft and Knol, 2014; Flannery et al., 2018 & 2019).

Various ladders, stairways and other metaphors have been used by scholars and practitioners to analyse stakeholder participation, including transboundary dimensions of MSP (Morf et al., 2019a). This includes Kidd & McGowan's *Ladder of transnational partnership working to support MSP* focusing on cross border collaboration (2013) and Twomey & O'Mahony's *Continuum of Stakeholder Participation in European MSP* focusing on interaction and learning between different main societal groups (2019). Challenges of transboundary stakeholder involvement have also been explored in practice in the Atlantic and the Baltic Sea (Jay et al., 2016; Kull et al., 2017). The functional and role based ladder by Morf et al. (2019a) takes these insights further, presenting a framework to analyse participation in MSP (Fig. 1). It draws on the classical ladder by Arnstein (1969), a refined version by Hurlbert and Gupta (2015), the co-management debate (Pomeroy and Berkes, 1997), development research (Pretty, 1995) and climate change adaptation (Collins and Ison, 2009). It focuses on (1) the degree of power sharing (visible e.g. in the distribution of roles), (2) the intensity of communication and learning (one-way, two-way and recurrent,

listening and acknowledging, including the potential for learning), and (3) responsibilities for specific tasks (functions). These frameworks help to think systematically about participation, including the purposes (why), the depth and breadth of involvement (who), the intensity and resulting influence in relation to roles (how much), and the methods, timing and frequency of involvement (how, when, how often). We will use such a systematisation to structure our evidence on stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP in the Baltic Sea area.

### 3. Cases and methodology

#### 3.1. The Baltic Sea Region – a stage for developing transboundary SI

The Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is pioneering in promoting transboundary collaboration and stakeholder integration (Kidd and McGowan, 2013; Zaucha, 2014; Janßen et al., 2018). The enclosed Baltic Sea makes a paradigmatic transboundary context, where coherence of policy and addressing conflicts of interest across borders, facilitated by transboundary SI, become particularly relevant. Its marine ecosystem is sensitive and under increasing pressure a broad range of intensifying human uses, exacerbated by climate change. The watershed and coastline are shared by nine nations with differing languages, institutional structures and use priorities. To promote effective governance, cross-border coordination and collaboration are essential, encompassing all governmental levels and sectors, but also societal organisations and citizens with a stake in the sea. Mostly, in line with the EU MSP Directive (2014), MSP is run at national or subnational level and full transboundary coherence of planning at sea basin level is desired but not compulsory. The BSR has been a forerunner with national and transnational MSP initiatives aiming to promote learning through stakeholder integration.

Principle 5 established by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group (2010) sets out that *relevant authorities and stakeholders*, including coastal municipalities, national and regional bodies, should be involved in MSP *as early as possible*. Principle 7 calls for *pan-Baltic dialogue* in developing maritime spatial plans and for *consultation between the Baltic Sea Region countries and the EU* (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, 2010, *our emphasis*). The PartiSEApate project has proposed a mechanism to implement Principle 7 (Schultz-Zehden and Gee, 2014, 2015) with the HELCOM-VASAB Guidelines on transboundary consultations, public participation and cooperation (2016) picking up on this.

An intensive learning process on the individual, group and institutional level is under way. Most BSR countries are presently developing or revising marine and coastal plans and learning by doing, in line with

Steps included	Dimensions included
6 Levels of participation describing interaction and related rights and roles of authorities and participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complementary steps with increasing degree of power sharing and delegation of functions.</li> <li>Focus dimensions: a) influence (power sharing), b) responsibilities, rights and roles, and c) intensity of interaction, d) functions (related to purposes of stakeholder involvement in MSP).</li> <li>Emphasises why (functions) of participation, as this affects the who, when and how.</li> <li>Ladder does not reflect the “dark” manipulative and technocratic sides of participation (suggestion to use Hurlbert &amp; Gupta (2015)).</li> <li>Emphasise differences between mandated and less mandated participants.</li> <li>Cross-border not explicitly included; suggestion to introduce parallel columns for various types of participants (authority, non-authority, transboundary).</li> </ul>
A. Process responsibility (formal and informal, legally based, recurrent)	
B. Decision making (formal, legally based or as complement, recurrent or pre-defined)	
C. Collaboration (on process and tasks, recurrent)	
D. Deliberation (dialogue and learning, can be informal, recurrent interaction)	
E. Consultation (legally based, two way)	
F. Information (legally based, one way)	

Fig. 1. A ladder to analyse MSP participation in important dimensions (Morf et al., 2019a). Source: author figure using ladder by Morf et al. (2019a), lettering ours.

their specific institutional and policy setting. Related collaboration also implies integration challenges at a transboundary level, particularly regarding stakeholders. The Baltic SCOPE project revealed that concepts such as ‘stakeholder’, ‘participation’ and ‘MSP’ may not have the same meaning each country (Kull et al., 2017). The initial phase of institutionalisation is especially challenging, and awareness of related problems varies between countries, sectors and levels (Kull et al., 2017; Morf et al. 2019b). Despite an encouraging transboundary framework and years of project experience, there is a need to better understand stakeholder integration in terms of its objectives, mechanisms and practice status, along with the challenges and enablers to achieve it across institutional boundaries, sectors and knowledge types. The BaltSpace and Baltic SCOPE projects have both examined stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP processes. Notably, it has important cross-links with further dimensions analysed by both projects, as MSP is a transboundary (cross-border, multi-level, sea-land) and multi-sector exercise involving marine stakeholders and their knowledge. Especially interesting are the transboundary and vertical dimensions, illustrated by the Latvian-Lithuanian, the German, the Sound and the Pan-Baltic BaltSpace cases, and by Baltic SCOPE, where including various types of stakeholders across institutional levels showed to be important. Short case descriptions are provided below.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.2. The BaltSpace and Baltic SCOPE projects and cases

The Pan Baltic BaltSpace case (Luttmann and Janßen, 2016) focused on existing transboundary initiatives: the *ESPOO convention*, the *EU MSP expert group*, and the *HELCOM-VASAB collaboration*. Cross-border SI at the Pan Baltic level is not institutionalised but has several institutional features. The *Espoo Convention* regulates SEA/EIA for projects, sector planning and MSP. It stipulates consultations with potentially affected parties in neighbouring countries, which can include the public. The *EU MSP Directive* requires, without specifying details, a minimum of consultative participation of stakeholders and the public, even across borders. The HELCOM-VASAB principles (2010) state that MSP should be developed in dialogue and conducted “... in a cross-sectoral context between all coastal countries, interested and competent organisations and stakeholders”. The case shows top-down and expert interaction and some experimentation with MSP and SI by projects and more permanent expert forums reflecting on SI and practice development.

The German BaltSpace case (Gee and Kannen, 2016) covered a transboundary situation within a pioneering MSP country, where a national/federal plan covers the EEZ (dated 2009, to be revised) and two federal state plans (sub-national level) cover adjacent territorial waters of Schleswig-Holstein (2010, under way) and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2016). This implies three separate processes with distinct timelines and a need for formal and informal consultation between planning authorities. National MSP cannot steer federal state MSP, making informal agreements on principles, zoning and map legends important. Integration between plans appears to be good, both spatially and institutionally. Formal and informal means of consultation between planning authorities are well established. A similar legal base enables similar processes and tool sets (e.g. zoning). Federal state planning in territorial waters, has been considerably more interactive with non-authority stakeholders, while the first round of national EEZ MSP included a limited number of key stakeholders.

The Latvian-Lithuanian BaltSpace case (Stalmokaite, 2016) analysed cross-border MSP with varying timing of processes. It showed

<sup>2</sup>The countries covered (Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden) encompass the central and South-Western Baltic Sea. Baltic SCOPE was based on countries' interest to participate as partners and their status of MSP (on-going). Finland, Åland and Russia did at that time have neither. Case selection in BaltSpace based on relevance for study, i.e. on-going or concluded MSP and transboundary MSP contexts.

experiences and learning when different planning systems and many types of stakeholders meet across national borders. Lithuanian MSP (2015) was a more technical, expert-led exercise with an instrumental purpose and a limited degree of participation. Latvian MSP started later, with a broader and cross-level perspective (2018). Transboundary SI and problem solving, especially among authority actors, has not been satisfactory for lower level authorities on both sides. EU-collaboration projects (BaltSeaPlan, PartISEApate) provided complementary resources and a base for informal interaction and capacity building.

The Polish BaltSpace case (Piwowarczyk et al., 2016) focused on fishers, an important, highly diverse stakeholder group active across borders and difficult to involve in the early stages of Polish MSP. Poor experiences with earlier managerial processes (e.g. Natura2000 management plans) affected fishers' perceptions and feeling of agency (Ciołek et al., 2018). Fishers claimed that while larger and better organised stakeholders have had more weight, their input was limited. Understanding fishers' diversity and needs was a key purpose of the study, informing Polish MSP on how to include fishers.

The BaltSpace case in the Danish-Swedish Sound (Morf and Strand, 2017) studied transboundary MSP in an intensively used marine strait with a history of local sectoral cross-border collaboration and shared interests. Sweden is ahead of Denmark in MSP. Swedish national MSP overlaps 11 NM with municipal planning. Municipalities have experience in participation, but less so for cross-border MSP. Danish MSP and SI is nationally driven and presently developed from scratch. In both countries, the regional level, responsible for blue growth, has no planning mandate. The case illustrates numerous challenges of initial SI and the need for linking across levels and borders. In relation to operational sector planning, thematic and procedural limitations of the Espoo process became apparent.

The Baltic SCOPE project, a two-year cross-border collaboration of MSP authorities, makes an *overall case* with *two subcases* observed by Kull et al. (2017). Stakeholder integration should occur both at pan-Baltic and case level. A key activity was to engage relevant stakeholders in a dialogue on transboundary MSP issues. SI was largely conducted independently by each partner country and mostly implied sector authorities. Besides this, two larger transboundary events were organised, a ‘MSP Stakeholder Conference’ for each case and the 2nd Baltic MSP Forum. SI became mostly pragmatic and instrumental, based on authorities' need for information from stakeholders to identify transboundary MSP issues, conflicts and possible solutions. As countries were at different planning stages, stakeholders were unevenly mobilised. Besides overall project activities leading to policy recommendations and an overall synthesis of insights in a Lessons Learned report (Kull et al., 2017, Baltic SCOPE, 2017), the most intensive cross-border interaction occurred through in-depth planning studies in two areas:

- 1) *The Baltic SCOPE Central Baltic Case* (Estonia, Latvia, Sweden; Urtāne et al., 2017), implied cross-border collaboration for MSP starting from zero and integrating existing knowledge to identify planning issues. Even if mobilisation was uneven across countries and sectors, SI helped to assess sector status and trends, cross-sector interactions and potential conflicts and synergies.
- 2) *The Baltic SCOPE South West Baltic Case* (Denmark, Germany, Poland, Sweden; Giacometti et al., 2017) worked on marine areas with more available data and already identified hotspot areas, based on earlier cross-border projects. SI promoted understanding across sectors and advised planners on technical decisions. Beyond these, Ministries of Foreign Affairs became key actors for viable solutions in areas with disputed jurisdiction.

### 3.3. Methodology: cross case synthesis from two Baltic projects

Both the BONUS BaltSpace and the Baltic SCOPE project mapped and examined stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP in the BSR (for a more detailed overview, see Table 3–1 in the supplementaries).

BaltSpace was an exploratory *research* project, driven by an interdisciplinary team of researchers and an independent, but customised research agenda, developed in consultation with MSP practice. Where necessary, sectors were chosen based on relevance and data availability. Baltic SCOPE was an MSP *development* project, driven by MSP authorities and regional sea organisations and accompanied by researchers. Its aim was practical: to improve alignment between national MSP processes and to provide a learning context to explore practical cross-border MSP problems and experiment with methods to address these. It focused on the perspectives of authority representatives from four sectors identified as most important by the planners (environment, energy, fisheries, shipping). Here, the role of research was to observe, document, and facilitate reflection and learning, resulting in co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996).

The theoretical frameworks of both projects have slightly differing points of departure. BaltSpace researchers, using multiple theoretical sources, developed a specific analytical framework based on four dimensions requiring better integration: (i) multiscale and transboundary, (ii) policy and sector, (iii) stakeholder, and (iv) knowledge types (Saunders et al., 2016). For each dimension, a set of research questions was developed. Baltic SCOPE researchers adapted the territorial governance approach, developed in land-based cross-border collaboration in the EU (Schmitt and van Well, 2016). The approach studies how governmental and non-governmental organisations cooperate in policymaking and how this collaboration is shaped by territorial context and place-based knowledge and calls for context and level (or scale) dependent governance processes. The analytical dimensions, adapted for MSP, include: (i) institutional cooperation and collaboration, (ii) sector integration, (iii) stakeholder integration, (iv) marine boundaries and specificities to address, and (v) adaptation to changing context (Kull et al., 2017).

Empirically, BaltSpace first made an in-depth institutional analysis of the preconditions of stakeholder involvement in transnational, national and lower level institutional contexts (Zaucha and Gilek, 2016). It analysed the structural prerequisites for stakeholder integration in MSP, including the rights and roles of stakeholders and how they participate and influence MSP, based on *on-going and concluded planning processes*. Then, related challenges and enablers were identified (Morf et al. 2019b). Baltic SCOPE focused on transboundary interaction of national planners and other key MSP stakeholders (mainly administrative) to develop transboundary MSP. It explored the main obstacles to cross-border collaboration, sector integration and stakeholder participation based on *project activities and informal communication and collaboration*, including links to on-going national planning. In both projects, *tools* to overcome the identified challenges were developed and tested (Gee et al., 2018; Kull et al., 2017).

Primary research methods and sources used in the projects included document analysis, semi-structured interviews, online surveys and participant observation, as well as a focus group interview in Baltic SCOPE. Both projects used case studies for in-depth exploration. The BaltSpace methodology implied comparative case study mapping of the breadth of characteristics and analytical generalisation (Yin, 2003). The additional cases from Baltic SCOPE can be considered complementary, allowing a second-degree synthesis using the respective project results. We have compiled the findings across projects by extracting and clustering relevant results from the respective cross-case synthesis reports (Morf et al., 2019b; Kull et al., 2017).

The results of our cross-case and cross project-synthesis are presented using the following questions:

1. What are the institutional conditions and practice of stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP in the BSR? (section 4.1, main sources Morf et al., 2019b and observation of Baltic SCOPE).
2. What are the main challenges and enablers for stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP? (sections 4.2 and 4.3, compiled from synthesis reports Kull et al., 2017 and Morf et al. 2019b).

#### 4. Findings and discussion: status, challenges and enablers of stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP in the Baltic Sea

An important contribution of the BONUS-BaltSpace and Baltic SCOPE projects together is a comprehensive mapping of challenges and enablers of stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP. After a brief status analysis, and based on experiences so far, we extract the main challenges for stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP and how these can be addressed.

We define *obstacles or challenges* as a process, act or feature inhibiting stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP activities. Accordingly, *enablers* are a process, act or feature facilitating the emergence and development of stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP activities. Enablers are tools and methods developed and used within projects and processes, as well as their direct outcomes and results facilitating stakeholder mobilisation and involvement.

##### 4.1. State of the art of stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP in the BSR

The BaltSpace review of formal *roles and responsibilities* of stakeholders<sup>3</sup> indicates different types of stakeholders, associated with specific rights of participation such as a right to veto a draft plan or other outcomes or merely consultative rights. The clearest distinction can be made between a) stakeholders actively contributing to plan development (mainly authority/institutional stakeholders) with stronger formal rights to be involved, and b) stakeholders who are passive participants or must mobilise themselves – with consultation and information rights, such as user organisations and the public. The formal rights and roles of different groups vary considerably between countries and even across administrative levels. In some countries, the participating stakeholders and their rights in the MSP process are prescribed by law (e.g. specifying which authorities need to agree on a plan and which are only to be consulted). Sometimes even the methods of engagement are specified, e.g. in Latvia, Germany or Poland. In other countries, such as Sweden, open regulations of participation leave large margins for discretion to the responsible authority. In transboundary MSP, with authorities as stakeholders in each other's processes, a key challenge is the lack of definition around these roles and responsibilities.

Using the ladder introduced earlier to structure, six complementary steps or *degrees of stakeholder influence and related rights and duties* can be distinguished (Fig. 2). Legislation provides a formal minimum of rights of (F) information and (E) consultation for marine users and the public, often also across borders. Provided a process allows time and occasions for repeated interaction, between steps E and B, there is room to develop (D) deliberation, (C) collaboration and sharing of tasks, with possibilities for mutual learning and influencing of process and outcomes. Not shown is the right of appeal for affected parties in some types of planning, through appeal or court procedures (mainly for binding implications). Based on the empirically mapped roles and rights and power sharing by BaltSpace (Morf et al., 2019b), at least six main actor groups can be distinguished: (1) *process leaders* (responsible authority/ministry), (2) *decision makers* (adopting plans), (3) *authority* (or institutional) *stakeholders* (with formal responsibilities, e.g. in relation to a sector, participating but not responsible for planning), (4) *non-authority stakeholders* (user interests e.g. enterprises, NGOs), (5) the public, and (6) cross-border stakeholders (usually with a right to be consulted, but this can vary). *Transboundary stakeholder involvement* varies both regarding the roles of process leaders and decision makers

<sup>3</sup> For further details, see Morf et al. (2019b). Most international policy documents analysed distinguish between authorities, stakeholders and public, with slightly varying terminology. National documents and practice have considerably more complicated distinctions.

Role/degree of Influence	Authority (type 3) and other identified key stakeholders	Public, civil society (type 4 & 5)	Cross border (type 6)
A Process responsibility (formal and informal, legally based, recurrent interaction)	Can be part of steering boards for processes.		
B Decision making (formal, legally based or as complement, recurrent interaction or at pre-defined stages)	Adopting (national) plan: Government (DE, EE, LV, SE) Ministry (DK, PL) Parliament (LT) Veto right, e.g. municipalities (LV, PL).		
C Collaboration on concrete planning tasks (formal and informal, recurrent interaction)	LV municipalities *SE natl. planning thematic authority working groups.		*BSR MSP Projects (mostly authorities & key stakeholders).
D Deliberation: dialogue & learning about problems, planning issues, vision etc. (formal and informal, recurrent interaction)	Some countries and lower level authorities have formalised stakeholder councils (e.g. MV in DE).	*Voluntary, possible in most countries, e.g. stakeholder workshops (e.g. LV, LT, PL, SE).	*LV/LT projects *LV, SE cross border meetings (authorities & key stakeholders).
E Consultation (legally based, two-way communication)	All public authorities and key stakeholders in all countries (one or more times).	All civil society stakeholders/ the public in all countries (one or more times).	EU MSP Dir (2014) Espoo procedure for authorities, key stakeh.
F Information (legally based, one-way communication)	All public authorities and key stakeholders in all countries.	All civil society stakeholders/ the public in all countries.	EU MSP Dir (2014) Espoo procedure for authorities, key stakeh.

Fig. 2. Roles and influence for different stakeholder types in EEZ-MSP participation in the BSR. Source: Author compilation based on BaltSpace/Baltic SCOPE, using Fig. 1 and ladder in Morf et al. (2019a). Legend: \* Non-statutory elements.

(groups 1 & 2), but even more for the latter four groups (3–5). Thus, formally, cross-border stakeholders (6) – including authorities – end up low on the ladder, as there rarely is a formal right or mandate, unless stipulated in international conventions. The figure includes the following participants in relation to EEZ MSP: authority stakeholders (3) and other identified key stakeholders (with special rights, e.g. named in legislation), a combined group of civil society (5) and non-authority stakeholders without special rights (4) and cross border stakeholders (6) on different rungs of the ladder in different country contexts.

Lower rungs are generally similar across countries, with higher rungs only occasionally used so far. There are stakeholders figuring relatively high on the ladder, but mostly these are authority stakeholders from sectors or lower levels. Beyond formal planning, both Baltic SCOPE and earlier projects in the BSR (BaltSeaPlan, PartiSEAPate), revealed a strong collaboration dimension (C), mostly in relation to stakeholders invited to border and sector crossing workshops or contributing to project reports. However, these were transitory projects. Project-external stakeholders can be situated on rungs D-F of the ladder: informed and provided with possibilities to respond. Baltic SCOPE also revealed that, in case of cross-border interactions, some decisions cannot even be taken by project partners themselves, as they are part of a larger context where rights to decide (B) are with ministries (e.g. Germany and Poland with high ministerial steering in relation to on-going juridical cross-border conflicts and unclear EEZ borders). With MSP in territorial waters, SI is broader in countries with some experience (e.g. German federal states, Swedish municipalities), but not well developed across borders either (e.g. Sound between Denmark and Sweden).

An MSP process can have *multiple purposes* and related *forms* of stakeholder involvement. An important question is whether the relatively strictly regulated, resource constrained, and formal MSP

processes found can accommodate deliberative participation and foster empowerment and mutual learning. Practical challenges relate to identifying stakeholders and designing a process according to their needs and the intended purposes of SI. Apart from capacity, this requires a more conscious reflection on *why* SI should be done in MSP. Even if important, the BaltSpace analysis indicates that the purposes of involving stakeholders are rarely systematically specified in regulations (Morf et al. 2019b). Purposes of SI are often only indicated in regulation and plans; they may even need to be stage and situation based. Empirically, they partially had to be interpreted based on the forms. Table 1 presents an overview, using the threefold typology introduced earlier to interpret the forms encountered in BaltSpace and Baltic SCOPE. Examples of decision quality-oriented SI include key stakeholder lists, the Lithuanian MSP process or early Swedish national MSP focusing first mainly on authorities and Baltic SCOPE as a project. Legitimacy oriented SI can be found in German subnational processes, Swedish public reviews, or the Latvian process. Mutual learning and responsiveness to stakeholder needs can be interpreted into the early, non-statutory dialogue on plan drafts in Swedish national MSP, parts of the Latvian MSP process and the Polish efforts to understand stakeholders.

Overall, in our cases, unless for MSP authorities and key stakeholders, SI across borders is mostly consultative and instrumental (of type 1 and 2). This is not surprising, as MSP is based on statutory mandates and still under development in many countries. At the same time, there is an expressed interest with authorities and documents to step up the ladder beyond consultation, towards more deliberative and interactive MSP. Here, a number of obstacles and challenges to SI across boundaries require attention, further enhanced by the initial stage of MSP and cross-border collaboration. These may provide reasons for the status quo, but need addressing within countries and across borders, if

**Table 1**

Purposes and practices of MSP participation in the BSR using the NRC (2008) categorisation. Source: Author compilation, using NRC (2008), Morf et al. (2019b), Kull et al. (2017).

Types of purpose	Important features	Practice forms and examples
1. <i>Decision quality-oriented stakeholder integration (SI)</i>	Instrumental or efficiency-oriented aims of participation. Focus on who can provide important information or obstruct adoption and implementation.	Baltic SCOPE as a project Formal consultations taking place only at specific times of an MSP process Key stakeholder lists (e.g. LV, PL, DE) Lithuanian MSP process Swedish national MSP: early focus on authorities.
2. <i>Legitimacy oriented SI</i>	Instrumental and normative aims of participation. Emphasising the interactive process and discussions throughout a process. Well-developed communication. Good documentation of process steps, inputs and reasons for decisions.	German subnational processes Latvian MSP process Swedish local planning Swedish national MSP public reviews.
3. <i>Empowerment and mutual learning-oriented SI.</i>	Normative aims of participation. Repeatedly interactive and responsive to stakeholder needs. Group specific forms of interaction. Efforts of authorities to identify, inform and enable stakeholders to participate throughout the process.	On-going experimentation at an early stage of institutional development, e.g.: Latvian MSP process (parts) Swedish national MSP: open dialogues on draft plans (before consultation) Poland: efforts to understand fisheries stakeholders.

SI is to be stepped up and the above purposes and cross-integration potential more fully realised.

#### 4.2. Challenges for stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP

Below, the clustered findings across projects are discussed and linked to related enablers, extracted from Kull et al. (2017) and Morf et al. (2019b). For an overview, see Table 2.

##### A) *Timing: differing time horizons and planning stages*

Taking a time perspective, the countries around the BSR are at different stages of MSP, both in terms of their MSP policy cycles and in developing institutional frameworks and practices (Fig. 3). “Some are highly advanced, and some do not know exactly what lies ahead, so different countries are on different levels of knowledge, which sometimes makes discussions difficult.” (planner in Kull et al., 2017). Stakeholder involvement (also transboundary) has its own related cycle and activities, such as stakeholder mapping, informing and mobilising, identifying interests and trends, developing and discussing visions alternative planning options, etc. (Morf et al. 2019b). The varying status of MSP across the BSR implies that even the initial information and mobilisation of stakeholders is uneven. In countries initiating an MSP process, stakeholders often lack sufficient knowledge to meaningfully participate in proceedings, compared to stakeholders from countries with a more advanced process. There is a need to develop contacts and capacity to mobilise, communicate and collaborate across borders between authorities and other stakeholders. The initial phase is extra challenging if responsible authorities have little experience in participatory processes (e.g. Sound case, Denmark, Poland, Sweden). Previous projects have shown that mobilisation for cross-border meetings both within and across sectors is difficult (Schultz-Zehden and Gee, 2013, 2014); this is confirmed by Baltic SCOPE (Giacometti et al., 2017; Urtāne et al., 2017). According to a planner, “due to the different stages of MSP developments in case countries, stakeholders were not equally motivated” to participate (Kull et al., 2017).

##### B) *Different governance structures, processes and priorities*

Both projects found that characteristics of the MSP governance systems can complicate SI in transboundary MSP. The overall BSR cross border governance model (Schultz-Zehden and Gee, 2016; Zaucha, 2014) appears to be insufficient in terms of cross-border integration, especially of sub-national stakeholders (Hassler et al., 2018). Official consultation according to the Espoo convention occurs late in the process when important decisions have already been

taken. Minimalist interpretations have in the Sound case led to excluding even authority stakeholders (Morf and Strand, 2017).<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, both projects indicate that *differing overall institutional designs* also affect transboundary stakeholder involvement, such as a) different sector ministries having responsibility for planning, b) MSP processes and decisions varying between more ministry (DK, DE EEZ) and more authority driven (SE) and between more politically (LV, LT) and more expert steered (DE, SE, PL). Furthermore, specific sector responsibilities are located at varying institutional levels in different states (e.g. spatial planning in territorial waters from local to national or even global with the International Maritime Organisation for shipping). This requires vertical integration across borders and involving the relevant authority and other stakeholders across borders.

*Competing priorities at national and sector level across borders* are challenging for stakeholder integration too. Without higher levels of arbitration, cross-border resolution requires consensus. To negotiate these, it is necessary to involve society and political decision makers, which is more challenging across borders (adding language, mandates, mobilisation – see below). Different priorities also make collaboration difficult for projects, as a Baltic SCOPE participant remarked in the focus group interview. National interests still guided discussions when a more pan-Baltic mindset would have made it easier to find solutions. Competing national interests have caused tensions, particularly between countries whose MSP was driven by diverging economic and environmental priorities (Kull et al., 2017).

A last factor concerns *differences in the codification and system design for SI in MSP*, as well as different understandings of what a stakeholder is, what rights and roles specific stakeholders have, and how flexible MSP processes are to include stakeholders evenly across borders. In the Baltic SCOPE project, a planner noted that “national planning systems are very different and sometimes it was difficult to understand” (Kull et al., 2017). Moreover, planners need a mandate to involve stakeholders from across borders. Lastly, there can be strong differences even within countries in how SI is designed (e.g. Germany, Latvia, Sweden).

<sup>4</sup> Consultations between parties are to be held at different stages, public participation should run in parallel. The intensity of communication is up to the national contact point. Danish authorities first skipped cross border consultation; sand extraction was not on the convention's list of topics requiring consultation.

**Table 2**  
 Challenges and enablers for transboundary stakeholder involvement in Baltic MSP. Abbreviations: BSP: BaltSpace; BSC: Baltic SCOPE results. Legend column 3 Enablers: a) normal: general; b) *italic: strategies*; c) shaded: tools & methods.

BSP: BaltSpace; BSC: Baltic SCOPE results

Legend column 3 Enablers: a) normal: general; b) *italic: strategies*; c) shaded: tools & methods

Types	Challenges/obstacles for SI in TB MSP (section 4.2)	Enablers for SI in TB MSP (section 4.3)
<b>A) Timing and time horizons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSP at different stages (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Differing time-horizons (BSP) and sectors' short-term perspective (BSC).</li> <li>• Official stakeholder involvement comes too late (BSP).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing information and mutual learning (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Stakeholder interaction and education (BSC).</li> <li>• Appropriate timing (BSP).</li> <li>• <b>Something concrete to share (BSP, BSC).</b></li> </ul>
<b>B) Governance system-related characteristics (general)</b>  <b>Governance systems characteristics (SI related)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities and decisions located at levels beyond the influence of individual governments (BSC).</li> <li>• Varying/competing national interests (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Planning as a multi-level governance process implies nested and overlapping governance and regulatory systems. (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Insufficient formal hearing procedures or use thereof (BSP).</li> <li>• Lack of formal mandate/right to address stakeholders and for stakeholders to participate across borders (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Knowing and understanding the different MSP governance systems and their interpretations of stakeholder engagement (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Different permit procedures make it difficult to establish uses across borders (BSP).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Transboundary-cross sector integration requires cross level integration and related SI (BSP).</i></li> <li>• <i>Institutional complementarity in areas with intensive cross-border interaction (BSC/BSP).</i></li> <li>• <i>Interaction of stakeholders in the identification of synergies, conflicts and solutions (BSC).</i></li> <li>• <b>Concrete recommendations in national plans on how to coordinate towards higher levels (BSC).</b></li> <li>• High motivation and willingness to learn amongst planners and stakeholders (BSC).</li> <li>• <i>Step beyond minimum requirements of Espoo convention (PartiSEAPate project).</i></li> <li>• <i>The emergence of a pan-Baltic approach to transboundary collaboration in MSP (BSC).</i></li> <li>• <b>Open invitation for TB SI (HELCOM-VASAB Guideline).</b></li> <li>• <b>Projects, availability of information, contacts (BSP).</b></li> </ul>
<b>C) Process and communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of established channels for communication, (BSP).</li> <li>• Unclear understanding on roles (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Limited resources and capacity for SI (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Lack of time and resources to involve and get involved (BSP/BSC), enhanced if experience is still lacking (BSP).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional capacity and resources (personnel, money (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Sufficient time (all cases, BSP, BSC).</li> <li>• Continuous stakeholder contacts beyond MSP process promoting communication and trust (BSP).</li> <li>• <i>Learn from others' experiences with SI (BSP/BSC).</i></li> <li>• <i>Thorough stakeholder mapping (BSC/BSP).</i></li> <li>• <i>Educate about different kinds of planning (BSC).</i></li> <li>• <i>Stepwise widening of circle of invited to address complexity and lack of channels (BSP).</i></li> <li>• <i>Awareness of emerging, unempowered stakeholders (BSP).</i></li> <li>• <b>National stakeholder meetings to reflect on transboundary issues (BSC).</b></li> <li>• <b>Transnational stakeholder conferences to identify conflicts, synergies and discuss results (BSC).</b></li> </ul>
<b>D) Characteristics of stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacking awareness, mobilisation and enabling of stakeholders (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Varying intensity of sector engagement (BSC) and underrepresentation of certain sectors and yet unmobilised groups (BSP/BSC): politicians, regional level actors, citizens/the public, and use sectors: tourism, recreation, heritage, shipping, energy, fishers.</li> <li>• Lacking motivation due to different reasons:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) lacking understanding of role and relevance in MSP and how to contribute (BSP/BSC);</li> <li>b) some sectors of interest, are aware but self-sufficient (BSC);</li> <li>c) lack of trans-Baltic and cross-sector perspective among sectors (BSC).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stakeholder diversity within and across stakeholder groups (BSP).</li> <li>• Differing influence and hierarchy between sectors (BSC).</li> <li>• Dealing with inequalities of power (BSP).</li> <li>• Lacking trust in each other and the planning process (BSP).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-going learning as overall enabler:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) responsible authorities' growing awareness of potentials and challenges with SI and readiness to learn (BSP);</li> <li>b) those mobilised learn through experiences and forums what MSP is and how to participate (BSP).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Overall enabler: process facilitation skills and ability to deal with value pluralism, using conflicts as ways forward (BSP).</li> <li>• <i>Project-internal discussions and reflection on SI (BSC).</i></li> <li>• <i>Mapping and knowing stakeholders in full diversity (BSP) and based on this</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <i>including all relevant stakeholders (BSP/BSC);</i></li> <li>b) <i>differentiated education/mobilisation (BSP).</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Engaging key decision makers essential to reach political agreements for further cooperation (BSC).</i></li> <li>• <i>Awareness raising among stakeholders (BSP/BSC).</i></li> <li>• <i>Incentives for stakeholders to stay involved. (BSP)</i></li> <li>• <i>Increased understanding between sectors (BSC).</i></li> <li>• <i>Building relations and trust, also to overcome previous experiences (BSP).</i></li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder mobilisation tools and innovative methods of engagement (BSC).</b></li> <li>• <b>Platforms, taskforces, forums for specific issues and exchange (BSC).</b></li> </ul>
<b>E) Language and knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language barriers and different interpretations (BSC).</li> <li>• Unequal status of information among participants (BSP).</li> <li>• Knowledge gaps, especially marine (BSP).</li> <li>• Different methods used to collect data (BSC).</li> <li>• Varying quality and availability of planning evidence on sectors and countries (BSC).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-going learning and awareness, also through projects (BSP/BSC).</li> <li>• Availability and sharing of relevant knowledge (BSP).</li> <li>• Using existing forums for collaborative knowledge development (BSP).</li> <li>• <i>Stakeholder involvement for knowledge and verification (BSC).</i></li> <li>• <b>Creation of forum for sector stakeholders to exchange information (BSC).</b></li> </ul>

Sources: author compilation and condensation from final chapters in BaltSpace report (Morf et al. 2019b) and the Baltic SCOPE Lessons Learned report (Kull et al., 2017), complemented by Schultz-Zehden and Gee (2014) for PartiSEAPate project.

C) *Process and communication: lacking contacts, capacity, resources*

A process related challenge is to establish and maintain *channels for communication and interaction* across borders. In a process lasting over months and years it can be difficult to *keep up engagement*. On the planners' side, *time and resources* are often limited to develop frameworks to support transboundary collaboration and establish the necessary contacts between planners and other civil servants. Lack of resources for MSP and SI (e.g. Sound case: Denmark and Swedish local authorities), *time pressure and lack of capacity and experience* make it even more difficult to establish cross-border contacts and interaction with stakeholders. A Baltic SCOPE survey respondent noted that keeping stakeholders informed was “successful nationally, but transnationally it was quite difficult” (Kull et al., 2017). Even existing cross-border collaboration, e.g. in the Sound, is rarely comprehensive but sectoral or at a single institutional level. Lastly, *recurrent re-organisation* of Danish authorities hampered cross-border interaction in both Sound case and Baltic SCOPE (loss of contacts and capacity).

D) *Stakeholder characteristics: awareness, understanding of MSP, group internal and cross border diversity and inequalities*

Both projects reveal that *marine interests do not necessarily follow national boundaries*, but rather physical, ecosystem, technical, economic or societal characteristics (e.g. environment, fishing, energy, transport). Cross-border activity and group-internal diversity (e.g. fishers, recreation) imply additional complexity and need attention when including marine users, especially where territorial waters meet across borders. Many stakeholders are still *unaware of MSP and unsure how to engage*. Unrealistic expectations can lead to disappointment, affecting willingness to participate and therefore the legitimacy of results. Baltic SCOPE Focus group participants thought that stakeholders did not see their role in transboundary MSP and little value in participating (Kull et al., 2017). Other challenges include *limited personnel and funds* to meaningfully engage over long periods. According to Baltic SCOPE findings, some sector stakeholders were *more engaged in transboundary MSP than others*, with environmental stakeholders more active than those from shipping, fisheries, and energy (Kull et al., 2017). Energy was less represented, followed by shipping and fisheries. According to respondents, this might be because the shipping sector is “strong” and “more prone to act independently.” Further groups still hardly present in transboundary MSP but potentially important include regional and local

authorities (experts and politicians), marine use sectors with high internal diversity (e.g. tourism, recreation), sectors with little trust in MSP (often fisheries), and the public, although there are diverging opinions on the desirability and feasibility of a more active role of citizens (Kull et al., 2017). *Political engagement is still low* but important in cases of conflict, where marine use policy needs to be revised and long-term agreements negotiated across borders. Further analysis is required on all sectors and the reasons for differences in engagement: e.g. Polish fishers lacked trust and shipping interest. Few official and continuous capacity building initiatives exist to empower and facilitate stakeholder participation in transboundary MSP. Addressing *inequalities among stakeholders in awareness and possibilities to get engaged and trust issues* are important general challenges for SI but enhanced in transboundary situations.

E) *Language and knowledge related challenges of transboundary SI*

*Language differences* can affect transboundary processes both in terms of understanding, costs and time (translation and interpretation). Misinterpretations did cause tensions in Baltic SCOPE meetings – a planner noted: “some things got lost in translation, literally. Sometimes things were misunderstood ...”. For the experts, language was less a problem in direct communication at meetings, but, according to a planner “the need to use a foreign language to describe national processes” was challenging (Kull et al., 2017). This confirms findings of earlier projects such as BaltSeaPlan (Schultz-Zehden and Gee, 2013), indicating insufficient mechanisms to address this challenge. Lastly, and especially at the outset, participation processes are affected by *inequalities and gaps in knowledge* regarding both planning systems and uses, and their interactions and impacts across borders (see also Saunders et al., 2017).

4.3. *Enablers for stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP*

Diverse enablers addressing the above challenges of stakeholder integration in MSP could be identified by the two projects (right column in Table 2). Many are the reverse side of a challenge and not necessarily specific to transboundary situations (cross-border, vertical, sea-land). The enablers can be clustered into three main types (see legend):

- a) *general, basic requirements and resources* for stakeholder involvement, including time and institutional capacity;

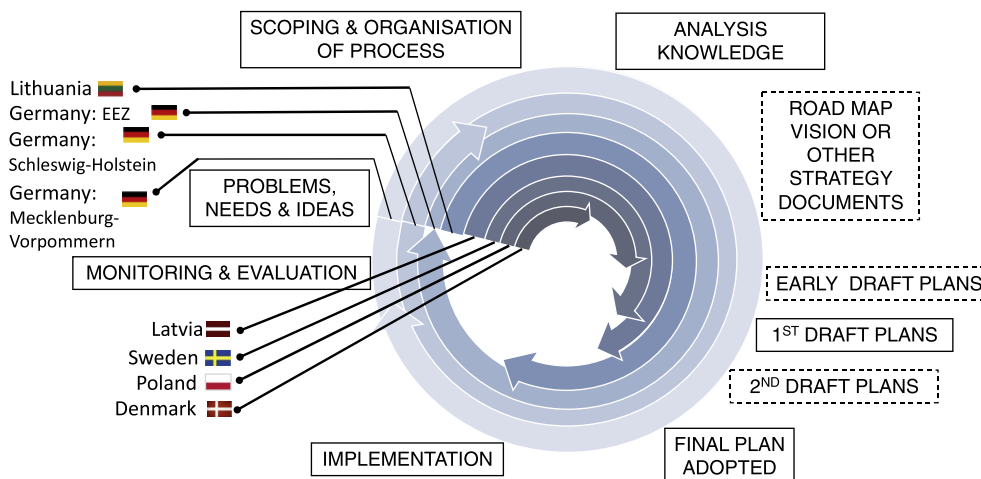


Fig. 3. MSP status of 2018/9 in BaltSpace/Baltic SCOPE case study countries in relation to a policy cycle model. Germany is partially in its 2nd cycle. Evaluation has not been very strong so far. Lithuania still needs to implement the plan. Latvia has an adopted plan. The other countries are more or less advanced in consultation and preparation phases. Dashed lines: features only found in some countries (e.g. Sweden: 3 phases of review). Source: author figure, updated by Holger Janßen.

- b) *enabling principles and strategies* to overcome obstacles and promote transboundary stakeholder integration (e.g. knowledge sharing, early contacts, establishing forums for interaction);
- c) *specific features, techniques, tools and methods* to include and engage stakeholders across borders and overcome identified obstacles (e.g. contact points, stakeholder mapping, project work, workshops for conflict analysis).

Below, for discussion and in accordance with earlier sorting, we sort them into institutional, process and stakeholder related enablers.

#### A) Institutional enablers for stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP

(i) Cross-border collaborations through projects make powerful, multidimensional enablers: Initiatives with stakeholder integration components such as BaltSeaPlan, PartiSEApate, Baltic SCOPE have promoted cross-border interaction and domestic learning on stakeholder integration. For LV and LT, such pan-Baltic projects were crucial enablers for stakeholder involvement, providing extra resources and room for experimentation beyond formal procedures (Stalmokaite, 2016). Besides providing further resources, many projects focused on cross-border interaction and differences could become enablers: “less advanced countries can learn from the experience of the more advanced” (planner; Kull et al., 2017). These projects also contributed to some mobilisation of sector stakeholders, both from authorities and beyond. However, observing projects over the years (Moodie et al. this issue), learning remains with individuals and is unsustainable, unless there are mandated authorities and on-going planning. The projects appear to have increased the awareness of planners and other institutional actors for transboundary stakeholder integration, a process still under way (Baltic SCOPE reports, Morf et al. 2019b). National and transnational processes seem closely linked in terms of learning. A planner noted, it was “good to show maps and tables and discuss together and show our national stakeholders to look at cross-border issues. Overall, it helps the national process”. According to planners in the Baltic SCOPE focus group, meeting regularly informally was a crucial and successful project feature. “Physical meetings” and the “possibility for face-to-face discussions” was paramount, as learning “can only be guaranteed by personal involvement and direct communication, but not by browsing national MSP home pages” (Kull et al., 2017).

(ii) Permanent cross-border collaboration could be harnessed more for stakeholder integration: As the above makes clear, there is value in harnessing existing platforms and processes to promote continuity for informal meetings and collaboration in transboundary MSP. Present MSP processes have apparently provided basic procedures and contact routines for including stakeholders across borders, but these processes could be used in more creative ways still. The existing expert working groups can also have an enabling function for SI, at least indirectly, by providing an international forum for exchange and reflection of MSP experts, to develop and discuss approaches on important issues, including stakeholder involvement, such as the HELCOM-VASAB Guideline (2016).<sup>5</sup> In some areas like the Sound, there are established, thematically focused cross-border forums (e.g. fishing, water quality, regional development), implying some degree of stakeholder mobilisation, which could be used further. The enabling role of transboundary procedures and forums can be strengthened further by cross-border

agreements.

(iii) Vertical stakeholder integration to increase robustness of multilevel governance structures: Especially in territorial waters and areas with overlapping responsibilities, also MSP needs to be based on a robust bottom-up framework of multilevel governance (Jessop, 2003; Piattoni, 2010). State institutions from multiple territorial scales are key in governance coordination (e.g. Jessop, 2011) through regulation, steering, and structuration of tasks (e.g. Bortel and Mullins, 2009; Bovaird, 2005). In MSP, combining different legal regimes in sector and border crossing contexts, involvement of local and regional authorities is both a key challenge and enabler. Regional authorities are key, as they represent a bridge between the national and the local level and often have important complementary responsibilities (planning, regional development). Project learning needs to be extended to this level too, illustrated by Baltic SCOPE, whose results did not much reach regional and municipal actors (Kull et al., 2017).

#### B) Process related enablers - capacity building towards learning organisations

(i) Mutual interaction and learning to address timing and many other challenges: Countries are likely to remain unsynchronised in their institutional development and MSP, implying continued challenges to synchronise cross-border MSP and SI. On-going learning at institutional, group and individual level through transboundary initiatives works as an enabler. However, a more permanent framework for transboundary MSP and SI would be opportune (Baltic Scope, 2017; Morf et al. 2019b). This comes back to regular face-to-face interaction of planners and stakeholders as highlighted above, promoting understanding of different planning systems and interests, developing contacts and breaking down communication barriers (Kull et al., 2017).

(ii) Skilled and informed stakeholder mobilisation and facilitation: Planners need facilitation skills to lead processes and deal with value pluralism and conflicting situations. Especially where deeper problem solving is needed, e.g. in situations of conflict or if deeper value conflicts emerge, time and trustful interaction are needed (Morf, 2006). The common techniques such as public hearings may not be the best way to involve those who dare not speak up or might trigger confrontational discussions. We refer to the tool testing and adapting documented in both Baltic SCOPE case reports (Giacometti et al., 2017; Urtāne et al., 2017) and the BaltSpace tool report (Gee et al., 2018).

#### C) Stakeholder related enablers – awareness, interaction, capacity and resources

To address MSP's often wicked problems, it is essential that all relevant problem owners are involved in the process, to develop an understanding of the situation and realistic strategies to address them. Knowing the full range of stakeholders and building relations within and across countries is key. Besides the basic enablers of sufficient time, resources and capacity, there is a need to understand the stakeholders, their capacity and level of trust in the process. This requires careful mapping (e.g. Latvian stakeholder list, Polish case) using also social sciences focus (e.g. values, power) and qualitative approaches. To promote trust and learning, involvement and communication may need to become more continuous, beyond the scope of the formal MSP process. Based on this, a strategy to raise awareness and mobilise stakeholders needs to be developed, sensitive to the societal and geographical context. Especially in cross-border contexts it is important to have clarity on framing, purpose and resulting roles and possible influence (who, why, how, and when; Kull et al., 2017; Morf et al., 2019a; see also Jay et al., 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Elaborated first in the EU-financed PartiSEApate project and later adopted by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group.

## 5. Conclusions: a practice and research agenda to enable stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP

This paper provides a first overview on the status and related challenges and enablers for stakeholder integration in transboundary MSP in the BSR at the present, fast changing, stage of development. The field of MSP practice is presently designing itself, trying to navigate between the planners' multi-headed Scylla of knowledge issues, stakeholder expectations, over/under-mobilisation and power dimensions and Charybdis – the usual whirlpool of limited time, capacity, and resources. There is an opportunity to do this by reflection in action (Schön, 1983; van Tatenhove, 2017) and mutual evaluation and learning using not the least land-based planning experiences as a compass. Well-designed SI can contribute to sustainable governance by mobilising a broad range of knowledge, providing a forum for deliberation and addressing of value differences, and enhancing ownership and legitimacy of MSP processes and decision, but there are obstacles and risks to consider. Using a ladder of participation as an analytical template (Morf et al., 2019a), patterns emerge that allow some general conclusions.

With regard to purposes and related roles, forms and intensity of SI, the BaltSpace and Baltic SCOPE projects provide a mixed picture. With the exceptions of countries with well-established marine planning at some level (DE, SE) and Latvia as ambitious pioneer, stakeholder involvement in MSP has often been either top-down or ad-hoc and project-driven or sector-based – even more so across borders. The legal codification of stakeholder integration ranges from a minimum requirement (consultation once) to more intensive participation both in terms of who is regarded as a stakeholder and how to include them. Authority stakeholders from different sectors and levels are relatively well integrated in MSP both “de jure” and “de facto”, ending up on steps C or higher on the ladder by Morf et al. (2019a). For non-authority stakeholders, participation is firstly driven by instrumental purposes, although open process features can be observed, hinting at transformative participation aims (Stirling, 2008). Where MSP is part of land-planning, representation of societal groups can be broader (e.g. German federal states). Many marine stakeholders are new to MSP and highly diverse in their activity patterns, ambitions and needs and may already have established sector forums (e.g. IMO for shipping, HELCOM for environmental issues), which further increases complexity in a transnational setting. Especially for transboundary SI, responsibilities remain unclear in all countries investigated.

BaltSpace and Baltic SCOPE results indicate that the most common forms of public participation remain at the level of consultation (e.g. exhibitions, hearing meetings, and sharing reports) and are primarily of quality and legitimacy oriented type (NRC, 2008), enabling a limited degree of power sharing and learning. These forms may be realistic and efficient but make less favourable conditions for including marginalised groups and can be questioned as unaware of power structures (Lukes, 2005; Flannery and Ellis, 2016; Tafon, 2018). Participation in line with formal rules does not facilitate long-term deliberative interaction, which could promote more agonistic conflict management through double or triple loop learning (Mouffe, 2005; Hurlbert & Gupta 2013), and creative solutions, active citizenship and a development of trustful relations (Reed, 2008). From a SI perspective, not the least observation of on-going institutionalisation and related research on processes, outcomes, roles of different stakeholder groups but also on values and drivers of MSP and on institutional interaction needs to be deepened.

With more and more national and sub-national plans completed, MSP is gradually moving away from informal project-based interactions. An increasing institutionalisation and formalisation of MSP in BSR countries may imply clearer mandates and definitions, but also more solidified processes and systems of power with less scope for experimentation and change. Given the tendency of formal MSP procedures to limit opportunities for informal interaction, the ability of countries and cross-border processes to climb the rungs of the

participation ladder may become increasingly limited. Moreover, even advanced and willing countries do not always dispose of sufficient time, resources and capacity as basic enablers. This situation of closing windows of opportunity is exacerbated by the fact that funding and interest in transboundary projects may decrease. With adopted plans, countries drivers to engage will likely decrease, at least until the next round of planning (as observed in Lithuania). Given that obstacles to SI are more often related to formal MSP procedures, while many of the identified enablers to promote cross border and vertical integration are of a “soft” nature, anchored in values, capacity and collaboration, other ways to promote “soft” enablers need to be found. This may require a shift towards other settings for collaborative (social) learning (Collins and Ison, 2009), settings that are capable of creating participation loops up and beyond MSP processes (e.g. regional development).

The five main types of obstacles identified here, a) differing time perspectives, b) differing institutional settings, c) vertical integration gaps, d) identification and mobilisation of stakeholders, e) language and knowledge disparities, are often further enhanced in early MSP institutionalisation. In relation to c), it is likely that MSP is now experiencing issues also encountered in transboundary terrestrial planning, or any setting where different layers of regulations, norms and practices are vertically interacting within a country or meet across borders (local-regional-national; Schmitt and van Well, 2016; Lidström, 2007; Gualini, 2006; Davoudi et al., 2008). The ambiguities and dilemmas identified in land-based planning literature are likely to apply to MSP as well (in relation to b, d, e, see e.g. Allmendinger, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Gunder, 2003).

Practitioners can use our findings to hone their awareness of the purposes and achievements and challenges of SI. Identified enablers could be harnessed more systematically to promote SI in MSP across borders. Here, the institutional setting in the BSR could be adjusted to facilitate stakeholder engagement in MSP beyond a formalist minimum. The current MSP BSR governance model (Schultz-Zehden and Gee, 2016; Zauha, 2014) has three pillars. The first, permanent core of BSR MSP collaboration is the VASAB-HELCOM-working group, encompassing national MSP authorities (ministries), the EU Commission and key pan-Baltic governmental and non-governmental organisations (e.g. VASAB, HELCOM, WWF, Coalition Clean Baltic etc.). A second, transitory pillar are transnational projects providing forums of collaboration for authorities, research, NGOs and marine enterprise. A third, pillar emerges now from cross-border initiatives by national MSP authorities and ministries (e.g. workshops by Latvia and Sweden). This three-pillar model can be strengthened further:

- Firstly, stakeholder involvement and tracking progress could be more prominent on the agenda of the biannual HELCOM-VASAB working group meetings. Important aspects include: i) a clarified terminology, ii) how to achieve a BSR minimum standard for SI, and iii) how to further assess and resolve the tension between soft enablers and hard (legal) obstacles to SI. An interesting track to explore is how to uncouple stakeholder involvement from formal MSP process steps to ensure continuous interaction between stakeholders and MSP agencies after plans are adopted – in line with the adaptation principle of ecosystem based MSP. This could address problems related to disparities in awareness and process stages. To track progress, the EU soft law of “open method of coordination” could be used.<sup>6</sup>
- Secondly, an adjustment would be a downward extension of the model, integrating subnational stakeholders into MSP also in cross-border settings (multi-level governance). This exists already in transnational projects and bi-annual BSR MSP fora organised by VASAB and may suffice at a pre-planning stage. However, with

<sup>6</sup> See: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/open\\_method\\_coordination.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/open_method_coordination.html).

many countries stepping up MSP, this needs to be intensified. We suggest to: i) establish permanent collaboration fora at a subnational cross-border level, ii) develop pro-active tools to enhance SI, iii) find area-specific boundary spanning activities that more permanently fuel cross-level/border collaboration and provide a frame to link related events into a continuous loop of mutual cross-border learning (e.g. preparing common status reports or visions, as done for ecosystem services or lagoons and estuaries; [Zaucha et al., 2016b](#) and [2016a](#)).

- Thirdly, training in various forms should continue, including a stronger focus on SI within MSP curricula ([Calado et al., 2019](#)) and continued teaching transnational collaboration projects such as SEAPLANSPACE.<sup>7</sup>

The ladder of stakeholder integration applied in this paper and the typology of challenges and enablers could be of broader relevance for the MSP research community, with a potential for comparative analysis in other regional seas contexts and further refinement by drawing on – among others – the above mentioned fields of research. One track is the further development and testing of assessment methods ([Kidd and Mc Gowan, 2013](#); [Twomey & O'Mahony, 2019](#); [Morf et al., 2019a](#)), drawing on experiences from other areas of practice (e.g. [Hurlbert and Gupta, 2015](#); [Rowe and Frewer, 2000](#); [Gaventa, 2005](#)). Moreover, the extensive material collected in both projects allows for further, typically focused academic analyses. Interesting aspects include the role of societal and professional norms and values for the practice of SI, how planning processes play out in terms of stakeholder satisfaction, transparency, legitimacy, equality, outcomes, and how planners and participants can develop mutual learning and constructively deal with the power dimension. Evaluation of planning and participation processes with a transboundary component is highly interesting, because it is particularly challenging. Related to challenges b), d) and e) a dive into urban and land planning experiences and related criticism and proposals will help to hone analytical tools to map further development of SI, when dealing with conflicts, plurality and differences of values, knowledge, power, also to develop viable mirrors for self-reflection of planners (see critical literature above, but also e.g. [Innes and Booher, 2008](#)).

Lastly, here it is important to continue working interactively between policy and research to promote self-reflection and learning in MSP practice (reflection in action [Schön, 1983](#); reflexivity [van Tatenhove, 2017](#)), as exemplified by the projects – maintaining academic freedom for analytical distance but developing mutual trust and openness for practitioners' and stakeholders' needs, experiences and collaborative learning.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2019.04.009>.

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<sup>7</sup> Project home page: <https://seaplanspace.ug.edu.pl/>.

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