

Policy Processes Untangled

Testing the influence of advocacy coalitions in regional
climate policy

Abstract

Policy making processes is under constant study and scrutiny. Different theories bring different dimensions to the table. The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is especially developed studying "wicked" problems, which the climate issue without controversy can be called. The ACF studies belief systems among actors, forming advocacy coalitions which act to achieve desired policy outcome. In this study the ACF is applied on climate and energy policy in Blekinge, a least likely case to suit the ACF. Belief systems are operationalized based on the concept of sustainable development and the concept of legalization. The objective is to identify advocacy coalitions within the policy system and further trace the process leading to the policy outcome: the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge 2013-2016.

Unfortunately, because of shortcomings in methods and material, advocacy coalitions could not be identified, nor does the ACF gain support. The ACF is perceived as a comprehensive, somewhat self-immunizing, with a substantial amount of factors that need research to follow the causal chain of mechanisms.

Key words: Policy process, the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Environmental governance, Blekinge

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1 Introduction

Policy making in modern society includes more and more actors. It is not only elected politicians or even government officials who produce policies, all sorts of private actors, interest groups, researchers and experts gain influence over policy making every day (Carter 2011). Classical policy theories examine interdependence, rational and strategic action, but there might be more dimensions which influence policy makers and their objectives than could be measured in terms of power and resources.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) examines the impact of normatively and empirically founded beliefs of actors in policy making. The framework suggests that actors form advocacy coalition based on those beliefs, thereafter coordination internally and strategically use resources to achieve preferred policy outcomes.

The ACF is originally developed to deal with “wicked” problems (Carter 2011; Sabatier & Weible 2007), which is characterized by substantial goal conflicts, important technical disputes and multiple actors from several level of governments. Environmental issues and policy is typically characterized by such factors, being a common policy area studied within the ACF (ibid).

In this paper I strive to test the ACF and apply it on a climate and energy policy in Blekinge, stressing the theory with a case which is not optimal to apply.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to test whether the Advocacy Coalition Framework, a theoretical framework on shared beliefs forming coalitions advocating certain policy outcomes within a policy subsystem, is applicable to a regional climate policy process. The ACF is developed with environmental and climate issues in mind (Sabatier & Weible 2007; Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weblie and Sabatier 2014; Carter 2011) and is therefore well fitted for studying climate policy processes.

Hence this study seeks to achieve theoretical generalizability, aiming towards testing and perhaps developing the ACF in the setting of which the study is conducted. The case chosen for this study is the climate policy of Blekinge County, exemplified in the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge 2013-2016 (CES 2013). The case selection is further motivated in chapter 1.3 Case selection.

The ACF is mainly used to study policy change (Sabatier & Weible 2007; Jenkins-Smith et.al. 2014; Carter 2011), but studies on static policy settings have been made as well (Weible 2004; Sabatier & Leach 2003). Adding to this I find a

need for developing theoretical explanations based on beliefs that do not demand decade long observations. As in the case of my choice, the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge, there is no antecedent equivalent, and therefore there is reason in both studying the single process as well as creating basis for future studies of (if any) change.

1.1.1 Research goal and questions

The ambition with this paper is to map the Blekinge climate policy landscape of actors and beliefs in order to identify coalitions and causal mechanisms on policy processes and coalition behavior of the ACF is applicable. The main research question is:

- Did advocacy coalitions occur and influence the outcome of the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge?

The following sub-questions are meant to divide the study into comprehensible parts:

- Did belief systems antedate advocacy coalitions in the policy subsystem¹ of the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge?
- If so, in what way did these coalitions act and utilize their resources in order to affect policy outcome?

1.2 Disposition

This paper seeks to answer the questions stated above. In doing so, there are many steps along the collection, analysis and learning processes to be presented and discussed.

First, in the next section the limitations of this paper are stated regarding the case and analysis units. Thereafter, in chapter 2, the theoretical approaches of the study are presented. For analyzing the policy process this study uses the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) complemented by the concept of sustainable development and the concept of legalization. In chapter 3 follows a presentation of the policy subsystem of Blekinge and a description of the government mission asking for a climate and energy strategy, and also the Blekinge strategy itself. In chapter 4 I present the methodology concerning case selection, operationalization of theory and selection, use and analysis of material.

¹ A policy subsystem is the analysis unit of the ACF, a substantially and geographically defined arena of policy making

In chapter 5 the results from the interviews and the content analysis are presented followed by the analysis based on the theoretical perspectives. Lastly chapter 7 presents the conclusions of the thesis.

1.3 Case selection and limitations

As the aim of this thesis is to test whether the advocacy coalition framework provides a plausible map for analyzing the policy process, the case selected for the study should in some way make the final conclusions achieve a theoretical generalizability (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.44f) building upon and contributing to the theoretical discourse of policy research and the ACF. Being a singular case study there can be no true empiric generalizability as in quantitative case studies, and it is hardly possible to guarantee contra-factual difference (ibid, p.241). This problem is helped by conducting process tracing (which the ACF enables), which I will elaborate on in chapter 3 Methodology.

Yet choosing the best possible case is vital for the study's legitimacy, and for theory testing studies the "least likely" method is considered suitable (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.154). The least likely method is based on finding a case which is least likely to fulfill the theory's predictions. The reasoning goes that if the theory can explain this case, then it should be able to explain all other, more likely, cases. On this motivation Blekinge, Sweden's third smallest county, makes a good case. The ACF rests on pluralist assumptions, including every possible stakeholder in policy making (such as journalists, researchers, judicials, government and more) (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.192). On that note, Blekinge should have a rather small number of actors involved. The unit of analysis in the ACF is the policy subsystem, which consists of substantive elements and geographical boundaries. In line with the ACF being developed with environmental/climate issues in mind and the issue's problem characteristics, a climate policy would be suitable for testing the theory. Narrowing it down, the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge 2013-2016, "owned" by the Blekinge County Administrative Board² but produced with many actors involved (CES 2013; Region of Blekinge 1) makes a proper case. The Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge was developed during the years 2011-2012 which also makes an appropriate limitation for this study, giving dates on what information and personnel to seek. Given time and space I have chosen to focus on actors involved with specifically the renewable energy issue within the strategy. The actors involved and how to gather information about them is presented in chapter 3 Methodology.

The policy subsystem of the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge also fulfills the three characteristics of a policy subsystem used by the ACF's origin

² Länsstyrelsen Blekinge

author, Paul A. Sabatier, in his study on US watershed partnerships: 1) at least one state representative; 2) at least one local government representative; and 3) at least two opposing interests (exemplified by resource users, interest groups or regulating agencies) (Sabatier & Leach, 2003 p.8). The Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge was, as said, 'owned' by the County Administrative Board (state representative), but also the County Council (regionally elected), all municipalities (local government) and energy producers, suppliers and users (assumed opposing interests).

Notably, choosing a least likely-case gives that if the theory cannot explain the case at hand, one cannot draw conclusions regarding its applicability on other cases. Though the theory has gotten a setback not being generalization-able enough. When found in this situation, rather if I find myself in this situation, I can either try to develop the theory to better suit more cases, or dismiss the case and go for the next least likely case (in another study, though).

2 Theoretical Perspectives

In this study the theory is in focus, tested by a least likely case. The advocacy coalition framework brings another dimension than the traditional policy paradigm (Carter 2011, p.181) giving all the reason to test it in as many cultures and contexts as possible.

This chapter begins with a presentation of the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), its main characteristics and assumptions on actor beliefs and coalition behavior. To complement the ACF, frames on climate politics are brought in to the study, providing a map for identifying beliefs. Further elaboration on the use of the theories will be presented along the way.

2.1 The Advocacy Coalition Framework

The ACF assumes that actors bring basic empirical and normative beliefs into any policy subsystem, and based on those form advocacy coalitions with like-minded and apart from those who disagree (Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible and Sabatier 2014; Sabatier & Weible 2007). Differences in ontological and normative beliefs are found throughout the society and in all policy areas, most easily referred to in a right-left scale.

The upcoming sections present the background of the ACF, its development and use, followed by a presentation of the main content of the theory relevant to this study. Finally five hypotheses of the ACF are explained, with the purpose to bring additional causal mechanisms and development factors to the table.

2.1.1 Background

The advocacy coalition framework (henceforth referred to as the ACF) was created in the 1980s by the late Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith, who saw a need to develop theoretical frameworks addressing “wicked” problems. “Wicked” problems denote policy issues with substantial goal conflicts, important technical disputes and multiple actors from several level of governments (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.189), which could easily be said about the case of this study, climate and energy strategies. Especially Sabatier had a history of studying energy and environmental policy, which is characterized by features such as those of a “wicked” problem, hence the ACF became a common framework in environmental policy studies. Traditional policy theories, such as policy network theory and the stages heuristic, cover aspects of the policy process based on power

and interest, but have been criticized for being static and one-dimensional (Carter 2007, p.195; Sabatier 2007, p.4). Here the ACF adds another layer on studying policy processes, introducing advocacy coalitions based on agreement or disagreement on basic beliefs and preferences within subsystems (ibid). Subsystems are common units of analysis in policy theory, as in the ACF, and consist of all actors concerned in a policy area, such as politicians, bureaucrats, researchers, different levels of government, interest groups and journalists (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.192). The ACF is based on pluralist assumptions, meaning an inclusive setting in policy making, stemming from the scholars' origin in the United States (Carter 2007, p.196). The ACF builds upon a lot of actors being involved in policy making which then allows for different world views to exist and create coalitions. The belief system and policy subsystem of the ACF will be thoroughly introduced later on.

The ACF also examines policy change over time, addressing external shocks and policy-oriented learning as factors affecting change of beliefs, coalitions and ultimately policy outcome (Jenkins-Smith et.al. 2014, p.183ff). Policy change over decades is an important research area, but in this paper I am interested in the development within the policy process. Because from a political science perspective the internal policy process determines larger values such as democracy and legitimacy of the policy, I argue that this is an adequate research ambition. There might be an element of change within the process as well: actors changing beliefs and positions during the policy making process. Also, the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge is the first of its kind (and the government mission also is the first of its kind and common to all counties), hence there is no former policy to compare with.

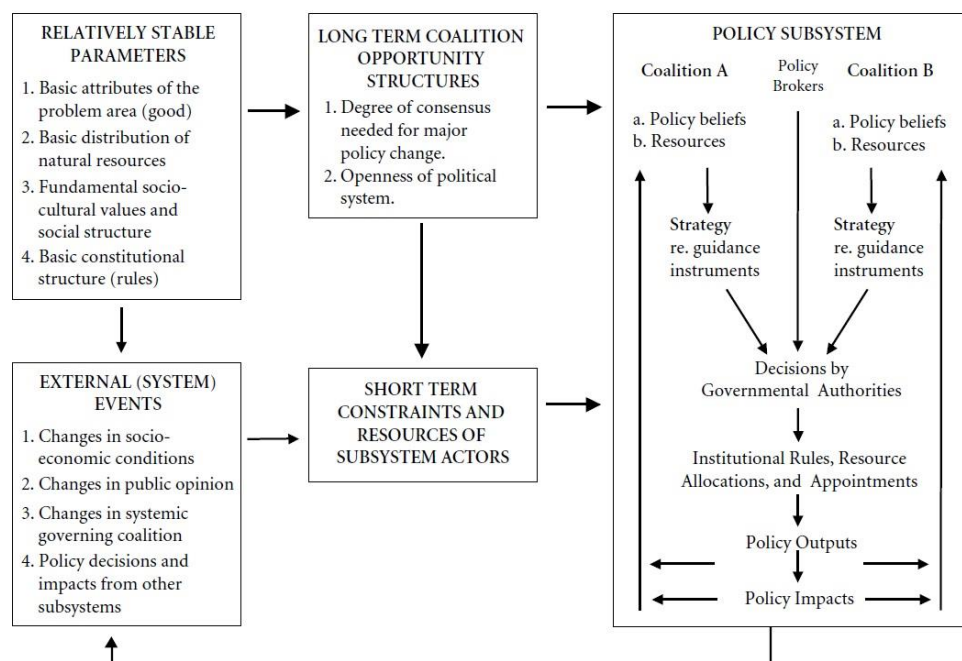
The ACF is being revised and updated frequently. To map the framework and present the parts relevant and useful to my study, I am looking at both the 2007 (2nd) edition and the 2014 (3rd) edition of the book *Theories of the Policy Process*, in which the origin author Paul A. Sabatier mainly presents the current ACF³. Though the two editions do not elaborate on all the same parts of the ACF, which is why in the following presentation of the content of the ACF I refer to both editions.

³ See reference list for the 2007 and 2014 chapters respectively

2.1.2 Content of the ACF

The ACF consists of a model of the policy subsystem and the actions within it together with events and circumstances outside the system, which affect how the actors within the system act. The latest model is from 2007 by Sabatier and Weible (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.202; Jenkins-Smith et.al. 2014, p.194) as presented below. The unit of analysis is, as previously mentioned, the policy subsystem, exemplified in this study by the climate and energy issue in Blekinge, specifically the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge.

The boxes on the left, Relatively stable parameters, External (system) events and Long term coalition opportunity structures will not be considered in this paper for reasons previously stated, since I am not studying policy change. Short term constraints and resources of subsystem actors will be given a place in the study, mapping the ingoing parameters in the policy process. The focus of this study is to examine the process within the policy subsystem, from the input – policy beliefs and resources of involved actors – to the policy output, which in this case is the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge.



In the upcoming sections policy subsystems and its characteristics will be presented, followed by a description of the three levels of policy beliefs and the different kinds of resources the ACF takes into account. These parts of the framework are later used to identify the advocacy coalitions involved in the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge. Thereafter the features of advocacy coalitions and how they function within and interact in-between are presented.

Policy subsystems

In the ACF policy subsystems is the primary unit of analysis. A policy subsystem is characterized by substantive/functional, participative and territorial features (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.192; Jenkins-Smith et.al. 2014, p.189). The substantive/functional ones concern the policy issue, such as forestry or water policy, the participative and territorial decides on geographical and mandate inclusiveness and exclusiveness respectively. A main rule for identifying policy subsystems is focusing on “the substantive and geographic scope of the institutions that structure interaction” (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.193). Suitable policy subsystem are based on three conditions: 1) at least one state representative; 2) at least one local government representative; and 3) at least two opposing interests (exemplified by resource users, interest groups or regulating agencies) (Sabatier & Leach, 2003 p.8).

Beliefs

Central for the ACF are the beliefs of actors involved in policy processes. On this point the ACF differs from rational choice theory, which is commonly used to analyze and explain actor behavior (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.194). It is based on those beliefs advocacy coalitions form and allocate resources for specific policy goals and agendas.

The ACF orders these beliefs at three hierarchical levels: deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs and secondary beliefs (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.194f).

Deep core beliefs are normatively and ontologically anchored, usually described along a left-right scale, and defines the actor’s basic understanding of human nature and relative importance of values such as liberty and solidarity as well as the preferred role of government and participation in decision-making (ibid). Deep core beliefs are common for the same actor through policy issues and subsystems and do not change over long periods of time or without large outside impact.

The next, less abstract and more issue specific level of beliefs is *policy core beliefs*. As policy subsystem specific, the policy core beliefs have territorial limits and state conditions under which policy should be made: the proper role of actors involved such as different levels of government, interest groups, experts, civil servants, whose welfare is of outmost concern within the policy area, the relative seriousness of the problem, causes of the problem and preferred solutions (specifically called policy core policy preferences) (ibid, p.195; Jenkins-Smith et.al. 2014, p.191). Since policy core beliefs are based on the normative deep core beliefs those are also hard to change, though there may be differences between actors’ translation of the deep core beliefs into policy core beliefs and that more than one policy core belief is derived from the same deep core belief (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.195).

Sabatier and Weible hold that to identify at least two advocacy coalitions within a policy subsystem it is sufficient to operationalize two or three policy core beliefs (2007, p.195). However, one should operationalize as many as possible in order to identify any additional coalitions.

Finally the third level of beliefs, named *secondary beliefs*, includes the suggested instrumental means to deal with the desired policy outcome founded in policy core beliefs, such as application of rules, budget and specific participatory guidelines (Jenkins-Smith et.al. 2014, p.191; Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.196). Secondary beliefs are based on current knowledge and priorities and are therefore subject to change to a larger extent than the other types of beliefs (ibid).

Hence measuring these beliefs is key to identifying advocacy coalitions in the ACF. Remarkably so, there is no guidance within the framework on which or how beliefs should be composed into advocacy coalitions, which beliefs represents what. In order to map actors based on beliefs one must ask the right questions, meaning that the answers from the different actors should be comparable and along the same concepts. I am therefore bound to bring in another set of theoretical frame to deal with the beliefs, which is presented in chapter 2.2 Frames on climate politics. Note that there will not be a proper frame analysis conducted in this study, but use of the frames to guide the questions and categories of analyzing the beliefs.

Advocacy coalitions

The contribution the ACF makes to policy theory is simplifying the mapping and analyzing of policy processes among multiple actors within policy subsystems. The ACF suggests that policy making depends on normative beliefs and interpersonal relations – different from rational choice theories – forming advocacy coalitions over shared beliefs and preferences. The forming of advocacy coalitions lies in actors' quests to implement their beliefs and achieve a favorable policy and therefore seek like-minded to share resources and develop strategies with (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.196). Advocacy coalitions form within policy subsystems and will have some degree of internal coordination. A coalition strategically coordinates and allocates resources (presented in the next section), following the logic trail of either appropriateness or consequences (ibid, p.194-196).

In an upcoming section, five hypotheses are presented, stating actor and coalition behavior according to the ACF. Those hypotheses have been important development of the ACF during the later years, attempting to develop and detail the causal chain of mechanisms within a policy subsystem. This development tells me that the ACF is developing beyond the study of policy change, into more within-process focus, which gives me confidence about my use of the framework in this study.

Resources

This section presents the six main resources available for advocacy coalitions to use in policy making according to the ACF (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.201f): 1) legal authority; 2) public opinion; 3) information; 4) mobilizable troops; 5) financial resources; and 6) skillful leadership.

- 1) Legal authority. Actors with formal legal authority to make policy decisions also pose as possible advocacy coalition members according to the ACF. Legal authority is a major resource to a coalition. Election campaigns and lobbying are possible strategies for coalitions to gain legal authority.
- 2) Public opinion. Public support matters to coalitions in order to gain support for the coalition's beliefs and suggested policy and also for elected actors within coalitions in order to maintain support and be re-elected.
- 3) Information. The ACF attaches great importance to information in policy making and suggests that coalitions utilize information favorably to its own cause (which may even include distortion). Information is used within the policy making process as well as outside, in order to influence e.g. public opinion. It also gives experts and researchers a significant role in policy making.
- 4) Mobilizable troops. In order to market its beliefs and gain support, coalitions may use "troops" from the public to attend to political activities such as demonstrations, conferences and other campaigns.
- 5) Financial resources. A coalition's financial resources may affect the amount of other resources the coalition has: the ability to produce information, attain public support and attract mobilizable troops, and of course the time and people put into work in the process itself.
- 6) Skillful leadership. The ACF mostly emphasizes the need of skillful leadership concerning changes in policy, but within a policy process skillful leadership may strengthen the coalition's cause and ability to persuade.

These resources are used to various extents across subsystems, regions and nations, depending on actor composition and issue characteristics as well as cultural differences (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.201f). Operationalizing these resources has proven problematic because of such variation (ibid). In the upcoming methods chapter I will discuss the operationalization in my study.

These six types of resources can of course not claim to cover all kinds of action carried out within policy subsystems to affect policy outcome. But as Sabatier puts it: "One simply cannot look for, and see, everything" (2007, p.4). Choosing a theory or a framework for a study means excluding factors (factors which the chosen framework consequently depreciates).

Conclusively on the ACF, as a framework I find it broad and inclusive, meaning that it has many factors to consider to the extent that they may be too many. I find its pluralist background obvious since the ACF gives equal room to state representatives and experts alike, which might be hard to apply in Sweden, where the official offices often have much expertise internally and also considering the Swedish model with much autonomy given to municipalities.

Hypotheses of the ACF

The last thing worth mentioning on the ACF is that there are a few hypotheses to help identifying advocacy coalitions, predicting their actions and trace the causal mechanisms leading up to a policy outcome (Jenkins-Smith et.al. 2014, p.195: Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.220):

“Coalition Hypothesis 1: On major controversies within a policy subsystem when policy core beliefs are in dispute, the lineup of allies and opponents tend to be rather stable over periods of a decade or so.

Coalition Hypothesis 2: Actors within an advocacy coalition will show substantial consensus on issues pertaining to the policy core, although less so on secondary aspects.

Coalition Hypothesis 3: An actor (or coalition) will give up secondary aspects of her (its) belief systems before acknowledging weaknesses in the policy core.

Coalition Hypothesis 4: Within a coalition, administrative agencies will usually advocate more moderate positions than their interest group allies.

Coalition Hypothesis 5: Actors within purposive groups are more constrained in their expression of beliefs and policy positions than actors from material groups.”

These hypotheses have been subject to testing over the last decades with mixed results (Jenkins-Smith et.al. 2014, p.195f): Hypothesis 1 has found much support through both quantitative and qualitative studies, though with the note that coalitions may be stable but the membership composition may not always be. Hypotheses 2 and 3 have been more falsified than supported, supposedly because of difficulties and differences in identifying and operationalizing policy core and secondary beliefs, or simply because the hypotheses are wrong. Hypotheses 4 and 5 are inadequately tested and have been both supported and rejected. Jenkins-Smith et.al. conclude that each hypothesis (except for maybe the first) is in need of development and much further testing in order to stay in and contribute to the framework (2014, p.196).

For this study hypothesis 1 is not relevant, since it is conducted on a narrow window in time and doesn't focus on change over decades. The qualitative analysis of official statements and expert interviews might provide support or disagreement with hypotheses 2-5, hence they will be kept in mind during the analysis, since those hypotheses also provide causal mechanisms for coalition behavior (what could be expected to happen?). I do find the hypotheses important to mention and have in mind since they should be more developed in order to advance the ACF as a causal chain.

2.2 Sustainable development and Legalization

To answer the research question of this study – whether advocacy coalitions were present and influential in the policy process surrounding the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge – the ACF is an exciting and innovative framework to use. But in order to analyze such coalitions there is need to operationalize the beliefs, deep core, policy core and secondary, on which these coalitions build. The ACF stipulates belief characteristics (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p.194f):

- on a deep core level - understanding of human nature and relative importance of values;
- on a policy core level - the proper role of actors, whose welfare is of utmost concern, the relative seriousness of the problem, causes of the problem and preferred solutions;
- on a secondary beliefs level - application of rules, budget and specific participatory guidelines.

As previously mentioned, Sabatier and Weible suggests that two to three of deep core and policy core beliefs being operationalized is enough to identify advocacy coalitions (2007, p.195). And the ACF does not provide operationalization of beliefs, which opens a need for another theory or concept on beliefs.

For that purpose I have chosen to add the concept of sustainable development (Jagers 2005) and the concept of legalization (Abbott et.al. 2000) in order to operationalize beliefs. Important to notice is that there will not be a frame analysis conducted: the concept elements will be used in a qualitative content analysis. More on the operationalization follows in the methods chapter 3.3. I do not value the concepts in this chapter but use them as established frames applicable on policy generally and climate policy specifically.

The concept of Sustainable development

The Bruntland commission defined the concept of sustainable development in 1987, truly putting it on the world agenda. According to the commission, sustainable development is global development which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs” (Jagers 2005, p.11).

The concept of sustainable development relies on three pillars: social, economic and ecologic development (ibid, p.12ff). Social development is measured on two levels: securing basic human needs and fulfilling human wishes for a good and decent life. Economic development includes economic growth in developed as well as developing countries, assuring a certain economic standard in life. Lastly, ecological sustainable development comprehends the idea of planetary boundaries, where ecological consequences of actions must be taken into consideration.

The concept of Legalization

The concept of legalization measures the obligation, precision and delegation of institutions, such as rules or programs (Abbott et.al. 2000, p.401). All three matter along a scale on high to low, which makes the concept applicable on various philosophies, combining the three for one's own idea type (ibid, p.401f).

Obligation states the legal authority of the institution, to what extent actors are bound to obey (ibid). Precision constitute the level of detailing of the institution concerning as well content as authorization. Finally delegation defines to what extent other actors have been given right and power to interpret, implement and apply the institution.

These short descriptions of the concept of sustainable development and legalization will be operationalized into beliefs in chapter 4.2.1 Beliefs.

3 Empirical Background

This chapter is meant to provide an empirical background to the policy subsystem of Blekinge climate policy. The interviews and documents on which the process tracing – mapping beliefs and resource use – is based will be presented when relevant to the analysis.

3.1 Blekinge County

Blekinge is the third smallest county in Sweden with about 154 000 inhabitants, placed in the southeast corner bordering the Baltic Sea (SCB 2015; County Administrative Board 1). There are five municipalities, in order of population size: Karlskrona, Karlshamn, Ronneby, Sölvesborg and Olofström. As in all Swedish counties the official administration mandates and responsibilities are divided between the County Administrative Board, the County Council and the municipalities.

The County Administrative Board of Blekinge is the state representative whose mandate, and responsibility, is the same as the county's geographical borders. The County Administrative Board handles regional development, which includes sustainable development and planning, agriculture, fishing, animal and food protection and crisis management among others (County Administrative Board 2; SFS 2007:825⁴). The Administrative Board also cares for government decisions being implemented in the county. The head of the Administrative Board is appointed by the government and there are no electoral elements in the organization.

The County Council of Blekinge is led by an elected County Council Assembly and its executive committee (a relationship similar to the one between parliament and the government) (County Council 2015). The County Council's main task is the health and elderly care in Blekinge.

Swedish municipalities' autonomy is written in the constitution and gives municipalities the right to – within the frames of national law – decide on most matters within its geographical borders.

In addition to these three types of actors, there is a regional federation in Blekinge, called The Region of Blekinge. The Region of Blekinge is owned and

⁴ The Swedish statute (SFS 2007:825) with instruction for the County Administrative Boards

financed by the County Council and the municipalities and hence liaises and advocates for their cause.

3.2 Climate policy in Blekinge

In the appropriation direction⁵ of 2009 the government tasked the County Administrative Boards to develop climate and energy strategies (ESV 2015). The strategy should be founded upon regional coordination, and use of experiences and expertise at other regional and local actors was encouraged.

3.2.1 The Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge

The process around the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge 2013-2016 makes the policy subsystem of this analysis. The strategy itself represents the policy outcome, the dependent variable of the study. In this section follows a short presentation of the process around and the content of the strategy, focusing on the overall objectives and the action program.

For the policy process of the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge 2013-2016 (hereby referred to as CES), a number of actors were involved. Some have already been mentioned previously in this paper: the County Administrative Board, the five municipalities of Blekinge and energy producers, specifically E.ON and Affärsverken AB, the municipal energy company in Karlskrona (Region of Blekinge 1). In addition the regional federation The Region of Blekinge, the County Council, the Energy Agency for Southeast Sweden⁶ (ESS) and municipal politicians among others participated (ibid).

By reason of the CES process a forum was created, Climate Cooperation Blekinge⁷ (Region of Blekinge 2). The operative members of this forum are the Administrative Board, The Region of Blekinge and the ESS. These representatives were also the ones deciding on whom to invite to the forum and the CES process (AB interview 2015). The forum worked as an arena for the policy process of the CES, and is still active as a collaboration forum in Blekinge.

The strategy aims towards the national goal “no net emissions of greenhouse gas in 2050”, with milestones set on 2020 (CES 2013 p.15). The strategy contains a status report of the time when the policy process started (2011), describing the present state of greenhouse gas emissions, the energy use in Blekinge, renewable energy and transports. It also contains a united goal for Blekinge, a description of climate and energy objectives on EU, Swedish and regional (Blekinge) levels, and

⁵ Regleringsbrev

⁶ Energikontor Sydost

⁷ Klimatsamverkan Blekinge

an action program of about 100 measures to be implemented during 2013-2016. The strategy also contains a process plan on implementation and follow-up.

The measures are divided into four areas: Reduced energy use, Renewable Energy, Transports and Engage more (CES 2013, p.3). Of these four I have chosen to narrow it down to actors and measures within the Renewable energy issue. The measures within the Renewable energy issue are divided into sub-areas according to types of energy sources: such as solar energy, biomass fuel, wind power and district heating (CES 2013, p.22-24). Every measure has a responsible actor (plus involved actors) and a time plan on when to be implemented. An example from the CES (2013, p.23):

Sub-area: Biomass fuel	Objective: biomass fuel should be 50 % of total energy use in 2020 (compared to 43 % 2010)	Measure: Activities to influence users to choose biomass fuel (especially in transport)	Actor: Climate cooperation Blekinge/Energy companies	Time plan: 2013/2014
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Those measures is what inspired the operationalization of secondary beliefs in the table in chapter 3.2.1 Beliefs. Both the characteristics of the measure, such as type of action and towards whom, and appointed actor(-s) indicates under which deep core and policy core beliefs the measure belongs.

4 Methodology

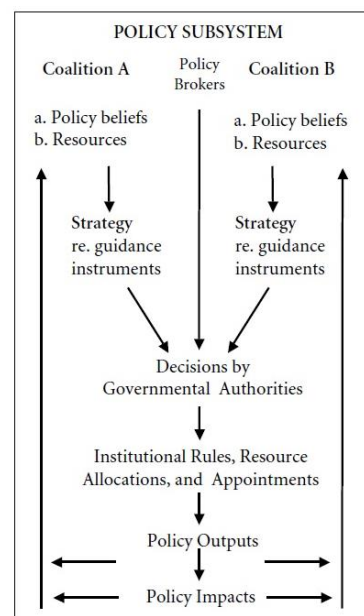
In this chapter I present the methodology used in conducting this study, starting with the research design of the study, continuing with the operationalization of beliefs and resources and ending with a discussion around the necessary material and its qualities.

4.1 Study design

As a single case study with a case chosen on the motivation of least likely, to test the theory I will do an in-case-study using process tracing (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.247). This research design asks: “if the theory is correct, what could be expected of the sequence of events, the process?” (ibid⁸), which I would say fits perfectly with the purpose of this study: testing the ACF’s applicability.

As discussed in chapter 1.3 Case selection and limitations, there can be no full empirical generalizability in single or few case studies. The generalizability of this study could be beneficial of a comparison, for instance between most and least likely cases, but the significant work demanded in mapping beliefs and resources put the limit to a single case study for this thesis. Instead, the mentioned process-tracing provides better support for the result and conclusions in a single case, tracing the causal mechanisms given by theory and reality. It also gives the opportunity to study a deeper abstraction level of the case (ibid) which brings another dimension to the study.

Thus I can answer my research question following the trail of mechanisms the ACF provides. My use of the ACF model considers the deep core and policy core beliefs and policy core policy preferences as independent variables, together with the resources of the actors. Between this and the dependent variable – the policy outcome – the ACF provides multiple causal mechanisms (as shown in the figure).



⁸ Translation from the Swedish text

What I have noted about the ACF, is that it provides various detailing regarding those causal mechanisms. For instance, the part on the joint strategy does not go into more detail than that the strategy would state use of resources. The decisions by governmental authorities do not get more elaborated and neither do the institutional rules, resource allocations (again) and appointments. My strategy will hence be to elaborate my interview questions and rely on that the answers from my material will tell which and how mechanisms occurred (since I have an idea on what to ask/look for I could ask qualified questions, more on that in section 4.3 Material).

Tracing the causal mechanisms of the policy process of the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge will bring either support for the hypothesis (advocacy coalitions can explain the policy outcome) or not. If there is no co-variation the hypothesis may be falsified and the theory either not applicable or in need of development (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.240-241).

4.2 Operationalization

The need for operationalizing beliefs and resources to apply the ACF has been determined key and above all comprehensive. In the following sections the operationalization of beliefs and resources in this study is presented.

4.2.1 Beliefs

As stated, since the ACF does not provide sufficient frames for identifying beliefs (more than the difference between deep core, policy core and secondary beliefs). Characteristics to be derived from the ACF are (Sabatier & Weible 2007; Jenkins-Smith et.al. 2014):

- on a deep core level - understanding of human nature and relative importance of values;
- on a policy core level - the proper role of actors, whose welfare is of outmost concern, the relative seriousness of the problem, causes of the problem and preferred solutions;
- on a secondary beliefs level - application of rules, budget and specific participatory guidelines.

To translate those given characteristics I have chosen to use the concept of sustainable development and the concept of legalization. I have declared that this will not be a frame analysis but a rather modest content analysis based on key terms drawn from concepts. Below the concepts are presented as indicators of policy core beliefs and fundamental philosophical perspectives are presented as deep core beliefs. The deep core beliefs are drawn from established political philosophy and will not be further introduced. I make the assumption that policy

core beliefs reflect the deep core beliefs of the actors, if not specifically expressed. Secondary beliefs will be collected from the empirics, looking at specific preferences in the Climate and Energy Strategy (CES 2013).

	Liberalism	Pragmatism	Socialism/Marxism	Totalitarianism
Deep core beliefs	<i>Freedom, competition</i>	<i>Institutions, government</i>	<i>Justice, class</i>	<i>Interventionist, state</i>
Policy core beliefs	Economic development, low obligation, low precision,	Economic and social development, high obligation, high precision, medium delegation	Social and ecological development, high obligation, high delegation	Ecological development, planetary boundaries, high obligation, high precision, no delegation
Secondary beliefs	Measures which endorse market mechanisms	Measures which suggests some public intervention	Measures which promote rights of people and nature	Measures which puts all control in the hands of the state

This operationalization covers a good number of indicators and combination of indicators, which reaches to the suggestion by Sabatier & Weible on operationalizing at least two or three beliefs (2007, p.195).

4.2.2 Resources

The six resource types according to the ACF are: 1) legal authority; 2) public opinion; 3) information; 4) mobilizable troops; 5) financial resources; and 6) skillful leadership. In this section indicators of use of each resource type are presented. The indicators are based on my understanding of the ACF's purpose with each resource.

- 1) Legal authority. Formal authority on decisions and mandates within Blekinge.
- 2) Public opinion. If available opinion polls and also analysis of the political composition in the elected assemblies of Blekinge, but most importantly, statements on whether these circumstances are used in order to affect the debate.
- 3) Information. Which sources of information have the actors used to gather facts about renewable energy? Internal/external, public/private?
- 4) Mobilizable troops. Any groups of civilians connected to the actors that have been making statements about renewable energy in Blekinge.

- 5) Financial resources. Financial resources put into the process: time, money, personnel, marketing and information gathering.
- 6) Skillful leadership. Notable leadership from the actors representative, chairmanships, conflict solving skills.

When the analysis of belief systems (hopefully) have led to identifying advocacy coalition, the resource use is the next mechanism in the causal chain.

The operationalization of both beliefs and resources are crucial to the study's validity as well as reliability. The ACF's lack of common belief indicators is a problem concerning validity, since the conception of belief systems, both deep core and policy core, may vary between studies of the ACF. Constant over- or underestimating of operationalization results in systematic errors concerning how one conducts a study (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.55). Because of the divergent interpretation of appropriate belief frames there may be a systematic deviation between different ACF studies, resulting in difficulties in theoretical generalizability. The validity of this study is strengthened by the use of established climate politics frames by well-known scholars to assure an accurate operationalization of beliefs.

Reliability, the absence of un-systematic errors (ibid, p.56), is ascertained within the study itself, making sure that the same indicators are measured in the same way every time. In the case of this study, a large concern is the access to material and information. Measuring the indicators of beliefs and resources presented a necessary condition for reliability is the presence of equal material for all actors. Also the use of key words from the climate politics frames poses a threat to misinterpreting a statement due to different views on the key words (inconsistent over- or underestimating). The problem will be further examined in chapter 3.3 Material.

4.3 Material

In order to provide basis to conduct the process tracing analysis there is a substantial amount of material to be collected. In other studies using the ACF (Sabatier & Leach 2003; Weible 2005) both interviews, mail-outs and quantitative data have been used in order to map beliefs and resource use by every actor – and subsequently coalition – involved in the policy network. Since there is limited time and work force at hand for this paper I chose to conduct qualitative interviews with a strategic amount of actors involved in my defined policy issue – renewable energy. The people I contacted requesting interviews would preferably be the one representing each actor respectively in the process. Which actors that were involved were collected from a sheet on the policy process of the Climate and Energy Strategy, CES (Region of Blekinge 1).

It is crucial for the study that the interviewee was involved in the process him or herself, in order to provide support to the source criteria of both proximity (in time) and centrality (in space) (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.104). The

combination of the two provides authenticity concerning the interviewee's ability to answer, which on the other hand is weakened by the time of events being so far behind (in 2011) and the memory of the interviewee. To encourage truthful and authentic answers I gave the interviewees the possibility to be anonymous (which was only requested by one).

The interviews were semi-structured, a middle-way to allow follow-up questions and discussion (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.89f), where the questions are derived from the theoretical definitions of beliefs and resources. There is a fine line between being able to compare answers in the terms of the theories, and giving the interviewee the possibility to lead the conversation into essentials (ibid) (also as previously discussed, asking questions to find causal action which the ACF does not provide, see discussion in 3.1 Study design). The interview questionnaires are provided in Appendix A.

It so happened that not all requested interviewees were available or even answered the request. Therefore, to provide basis on beliefs of non-interviewed actors I will also study official documents, such as visions, policies (depending on availability). Those documents, if available, uphold the criteria of proximity in time, since I can only look at documents from that time to give an accurate view of actor beliefs going into the CES process.

Conclusively, I conducted six interviews out of ten requested: with the County Administrative Board, The Region of Blekinge, the municipality of Karlskrona, the Energy Agency of Southeast Sweden, EON and Affärsverken AB. These six do represent the three types of actors Sabatier stated characteristic for a policy subsystem (state, local government and opposing interests – e.g. users and producers). Further elaboration and results from the interviews are presented in chapter 5 Analysis.

Though the actors stated in the sheet from the CES does not cover the actors ACF includes in a policy subsystem. For instance journalists and interest groups are given significance according to the ACF. Therefore I will also search archives of Blekinge newspapers and investigate the occurrence of interest groups regarding renewable energy in Blekinge.

5 Results and Analysis

This paper has so far presented two complementary theories, the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) and frames on climate politics, methods for tracing causal mechanisms and for gathering and analyzing material, and finally an empirical setting for the policy process in focus.

In this chapter I will conduct the process tracing along the causal mechanisms identified within the ACF (see chapter 3.1 Study design): starting with the mapping of beliefs using the concepts of sustainable development and legalization. When the actors' deep core and policy core beliefs are identified there should be at least two distinguishable advocacy coalitions formed over shared beliefs (Sabatier & Weible 2007, p. 196). Thereafter the ACF predicts internal coordination within the advocacy coalitions and a strategic use of resources. The strategic manner in which resources are used should follow either the logic of appropriateness – following rules is the right way – or logic of consequences – the right way is maximizing good consequences (ibid, p. 194). Finally I will study the occurrence of further action, such as government decisions and institutional rules.

The ambition with the steps above is to answer the research question: whether advocacy coalitions occurred and influenced the policy process and outcome of the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge 2013-2016.

5.1 Identifying beliefs and coalitions

The main source of information on actors' beliefs and preferences is the interviews conducted with key people representative for each actor. As declared in chapter 3.3 Material, I could not reach nor interview all ideal actors within the CES process, but there is nonetheless representation from all "levels" of the subsystem: state, local government and opposing interests. Regarding actors which could not be interviewed, relevant official documents regarding policy objectives in general and climate policy specifically will be studied in order to draw conclusions on actors' beliefs at the time of the CES process.

The following sections present the results from the interviews and the content analysis on official documents in accordance with the operationalization of beliefs, with help from the four frames on climate politics. The results from the material gathering, starting with the interviews, will be presented actor-wise.

The County Administrative Board shows a counter-intuitive view on its own role. Being the state representative one would think it advocates government intervention in order to achieve its goals and objectives. But the Board interviewee emphasizes the Board's role as mainly coordinative, gathering public and private actors to achieve common strategies (AB interview). When asked about the preferred obligation of the strategy, the interviewee mentioned the municipal autonomy in Sweden and the fact that the Administrative Boards cannot impose anything on municipalities. Though the interviewee thought that if there only would have been public actors involved, the strategy might have had higher set goals (still voluntary, but more ambitious). As for the view on the climate issue and sustainable development, the Board interviewee stated that people are dependent on the global eco-system and for that sake should save it (ibid).

Karlskrona municipality accentuates collaboration as well, but emphasizes on its autonomy and the fact that no regional actor can impose obligation on them (KM interview). Though it is thought to be the entire community's responsibility to change consumption behavior and allocate resources.

The reason for saving the planet (regarding the climate issue) is for the people (ibid). The economy is the means and the ecology the boundaries for social sustainable development. During the interview the Karlskrona representative could not state the municipality's policy objectives regarding the CES. Karlskrona municipality does have its own climate and energy strategy from 2011, which is similar in form and content to the CES. But the interviewee stated that the municipality was open to the policy making within the CES process.

During interviews it became clear that two of the interviewed actors do not develop a policy agenda of their own at all: the Energy Agency of Southeast Sweden (ESS) and the Region of Blekinge act on behalf of its owners (the ESS) and members (the Region of Blekinge) respectively. Which in the case of these two actors are basically the same, the County Council and the municipalities (RB interview; ES interview). The ESS could not state any deep core or policy core beliefs, since they see themselves working for someone else's mission (ESS interview). The Region of Blekinge interviewee stated the same reasons behind climate policy as Karlskrona municipality: social sustainable development with economic means within the planetary boundaries (RB interview). Though the Region of Blekinge interviewee would want a larger commitment of the strategy, for instance being decided on at the municipal executive committees. The interviewee, in her position at a regional federation, could see the benefits of common obligation across municipalities (ibid).

These circumstances could be interpreted as ESS and RB not contributing to any coalition, or rather, joining whichever coalition their members or owners join. Though, the problem with such assumptions would be that the members or owners might not be in the same coalition with each other. Before looking further into the other municipalities the private actor interviews will be presented.

The two private actors interviewed, EON and Affärsverken, did provide unanimous perceptions of the market liberal approach, advocating market mechanisms almost exclusively (EON interview; AV interview). Though, being true to my research design, the interview with Affärsverken did not live up to the standard requested: namely that the interviewee had been personally involved during the process. The interviewee is rather new to the company (though in a central position, as CEO) and unfortunately there were no documentation from around 2011 concerning the CES process.

The EON interviewee on the other hand did participate through the CES process, and held that the reason EON wanted to participate was to “control” the outcome of the process. Meaning: averting too ambitious objectives, interventions and measures by the public actors (EON interview). Though when responding to the question about sustainable development, the EON interviewee spoke positively about social sustainability and that private actors, such as EON, could be drivers of the sustainable development (ibid). At the same time, EON fully advocates market mechanisms and competition among energy producers. But, EON has a monopoly on energy delivery in certain areas, because of the energy institutions in Sweden (ibid). I would say, it's easy to be pro-competition when you have a monopoly.

These were the interviews conducted, based on the operationalization of beliefs. The aim is to map the beliefs (of 2011) of as many actors as possible. The main actors not being interviewed here are the other four municipalities, Ronneby, Sölvesborg, Karlshamn and Olofström. Out of these four, there is only one climate strategist who was involved in the CES process, which is the strategist at Olofström municipality (RB interview), but which was one of the non-respondents to the interview request. Out of these four municipalities there is only one, Sölvesborg, who has climate and energy policy documents dated to around 2011 (Sölvesborg 1) which makes the mapping of beliefs at that time non-sufficient.

Regarding actors not invited to the policy forum, such as journalists and interest groups, neither express policy beliefs nor preferences regarding climate and/or energy policy. A search in the archives of Blekinge Läns Tidning and Sydöstran, both regional newspapers, there was only one article about the strategy. And that had got the main objective (no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050) wrong, posting it was a zero emission objective (BLT 2012-08-29). Also, I was not able to locate any interest group involved in the climate and/or renewable energy policy in Blekinge.

Looking at the information at hand, there are four actors with map-able beliefs: the County Administrative Board, Karlskrona municipality, the Region of Blekinge and EON. Regarding the operationalization of beliefs, the concept of sustainable development and the concept of legalization, all actors seem to agree

on that social sustainability is of outmost concern. Though there are wide-spread perceptions of the concept of legalization, where both more obligation is requested (the Region of Blekinge and the County Administrative Board), as well as less (EON) and present contentment (Karlskrona). Common among the public actors, who have been delegated implementation and/or follow-up responsibilities in the CES, is that the measures of the program is sufficiently precisioned but too many, which complicates the ability to handle the delegated measures (RB interview; KM interview; AB interview).

5.2 When it doesn't fit

The next step along the process tracing of the policy process of the Climate and Energy Strategy of Blekinge would be studying coordination and resource within the advocacy coalitions. But as I find it, there has not been conclusive support to any advocacy coalitions in the policy subsystem of the climate and energy issue in Blekinge. The actors which I have been able to map are too few and the belief pattern is too inconsistent.

6 Conclusions

The case of Blekinge and the Climate and Energy Strategy were chosen on the premise of being least likely to fit in to the advocacy coalition framework of actors and actions. Though I cannot say that that is the reason behind not being able to continue with the study, that the ACF failed to provide an applicable description and explanation on the policy process. I would say, that it is my methods that have failed to test the ACF properly.

The foremost reason to failing to test the ACF is because flaws in methodology. The method for gathering material – strategically choosing and contacting key individuals based on primarily the participation sheet from the Region of Blekinge – were too narrow. And the “backup-plan”, studying relevant documents, would have needed pre-research to examine whether the documents existed. The best way would of course have been to interview every individual involved in the policy subsystem of climate and energy policy in Blekinge. Finding these individuals could have been done using the snowball-effect (Esaiasson et.al. 2012, p.189f). I would still have started in accordance the participation sheet, but could have utilized the interviewees’ experience and connections better by asking them in turn which actors were involved, inside and outside the formal forum, and then ask the next set of actors, until I could map the entire structure of involved actors.

Though, considering the amount of work put in to operationalizing and mapping beliefs in order to classify the actors, the research effort put in to using the snowball-effect on top of that would have been much more than within the limits of a B.A. thesis. Also conducting and analyzing the large amount of interviews would have been overwhelming. In hindsight, I probably was too optimistic regarding what would be able to achieve in this thesis.

There are however constructive conclusions here too. The application of the ACF on a smaller period in time, and not only on decades, seems to be feasible. Especially if the hypotheses (see 2.1.2 Content of the ACF) are further tested and developed, providing empirically ascertained causal mechanisms. That might be a better suited approach for a B.A. thesis, focusing on only one hypothesis in order to contribute to the ACF. But again, all of the hypotheses require beliefs and advocacy coalitions to be already identified, which is found to be substantial work.

Conclusively, I have not achieved the purpose of this study, testing the ACF and achieving theoretical generalizability. Though I have learned the hard way the consequences of inadequate methods.

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- EON = Håkan Gunnarsson, Regional Manager Kalmar, E.ON. Interview May 5th 2015
- ESS = Lisa Wälitalo, Project Leader, The Energy Agency of Southeast Sweden (at that time). Interview May 4th 2015
- KM = Aida Zubic, Climate Strategist and Energy Counselor, Karlskrona Municipality. Interview May 6th 2015
- RB = Environmental Strategist, The Region of Blekinge. Interview May 6th 2015

Appendix A – Interview questions

The interview questions are formed to answer three issues: mapping the beliefs and preferences of the actor; mapping the actor's action in the process; and mapping the actor's view of the outcome, the final document. All interviews but one (with E.ON) is available on tape. Where [actor] is stated the name of the actor was inserted in each interview.

Beliefs

- Governing in general – state/institutional measures or market mechanisms?
- The climate issue – state/institutional measures or market mechanisms?
- Sustainable development – economic, social or ecological?
- Who is of most concern in the climate issue (for whom/what do we need to save the planet?)
- Seriousness of the problem – how important is the solution to climate issues globally, nationally and regionally (Blekinge)?
- At [actor], what is the relative weight of the climate issue compared to other policy issues?

Input in the CES process

- The climate issue in Blekinge, whose responsibility?
- Why did [actor] participate in the CES process? (Invited/asked to be a part/motive)
- Which were [actor]'s most important goal(s)/issue coming in to the process?
- What were these goals based on?
 - Information/resources/governance
- When using information, where is it collected from?
- How binding did [actors] want the CES to be?
- Should higher demands be made (on obligation)?
- Did [actor] change goals/position during the process? If yes, why?
- Which resources did [actor] put in to the CES process?

Outcome – the CES

- How happy is [actor] with the finished strategy? Based on goals and preferences?
- Is it a “big deal” that the strategy could be made? Based on participants, politics, regional objectives, history.
- Is the precision and obligation of CES enough?
- Next process – does [actor] want to participate again? What same resources/strategy?
- Other comments/experiences?