

A door-opener to Europe

-A study of Swedish regional offices in Brussels

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine how Swedish regions and cities are making use of Europe by various forms of lobbying efforts, and describe what role they are playing in EU's multi-level system. The study initially concentrates on the development of the regional offices in general, and the Swedish offices in particular. Additionally, the study intends to discuss the possibilities and implications of the increasingly international role of the sub-national authorities. The multi-level governance approach, complemented with the network governance approach, is used to explain the role as well as the interaction between the sub-national level and other actors on different territorial levels. The empirical material is based on a series of interviews with representatives from Swedish regional offices.

The study shows that the Swedish regional offices have different roles in EU's multi-level system. Sometimes they act as individual players and other times they collaborate with others in networks depending on the issue. The results indicate that all the regional offices conduct down-stream lobbying efforts where they utilise the existing framework, while the more specialised regional offices are more focused on up-stream lobbying activities which means that they are trying to influence EU processes at an early stage.

Key words: regional office, EU, multi-level governance, network, lobbying

Words: 19 794

List of Abbreviations

AER	Assembly of European Regions
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CPMR	Conference of peripheral and maritime regions
DG	Directorate General of the European Commission
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
SALAR	The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SWEREG	Network for the directors of Swedish regional offices and members of the Swedish EU representation responsible for regional affairs.

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1 Introduction

“Europe of the Regions” is a concept most dealing with the political process of the European Union (EU) have encountered in the literature. Regions have become increasingly important through the EU and the EU is trying to achieve the fairest situation possible between different regions using various policies and structural funds. In recent years there has also been a change regarding the influence of major European cities, as their importance has increased both on the national and the global arena.

Regions have for the past 30 years been working to establish themselves in the centre of European power, Brussels, and have in different ways been trying to market themselves and strengthen their position vis-à-vis the state. At the same time a change in the city’s organisation can be noticed, and many cities are today engaged in something known as *entrepreneurial city politics*. It refers to informal networks, governance, and the interaction between the public and the commercial and industrial life. In the past the competition was usually between the different states, but today we can see competition taking place between regions, and perhaps more interestingly, between regions and cities. This development is probably a consequence of the changing role of the cities on the global arena. Regions and cities are now also working with lobbying and participating both in formal and informal networks in order to influence various processes in the EU. Although regions and cities are considered to be part of the nation-state, their development has been accelerated by the possibilities provided by the EU.

Against this background, I find it interesting to study the development and function of regions and cities in the European context, and I started out with several questions. What are the consequences of regions and cities becoming more international? How do they interact with the EU without involving the national government? How can we understand their role in a multi-level governance system? Is there a level of competition between regions and cities in the EU? Will the decisions made by the EU gain legitimacy if the regions and cities are involved in the decision-making process?

Therefore, my research revolves around the function of the regional offices and their attempts to influence the decision-making process of the EU. My aim is to make a contribution to the debate concerning how Swedish regional offices in Brussels can influence the policy-process of the EU in practice. By using the multi-governance approach I will study their function, tasks, and influence efforts. The findings will guide my understanding of the continuing regionalisation process of the EU. Based on this I will present possibilities and challenges concerning the future development of regional offices.

1.1 Study Background

This thesis focuses on how Swedish regions and major cities work toward influencing the policy-making process of the EU. Therefore, it will depart from the claim that the nation state should no longer be seen as the only actor when studying political power. Other political entities such as cities and regions are gaining in importance due to the process related to globalisation and state restructuring.

The process of regionalisation has been part of the European integration debate since the 1950s (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:53ff) and there was even a discussion on the possibility of a “Europe of the Regions” (e.g. Keating, 2003; Herrschel and Newman, 2002; Gidlund and Sörlin, 1993). Although this particular debate no longer seems to be of any academic interest, the level of regional engagement in Europe continues to grow. Therefore, the question of regional interest representation in the EU remains interesting to many scholars regarding the evolution of the European polity.

Parallel to the regional discussion, increasingly attention is paid to the changing situation for major cities in Europe due to their increasing influence on the national as well as the global arena. Most scholars within this research field agree that the city’s organisation and role have changed (Cochrane, 2007; Goldsmith, 2006; Clarke, 2006; Andersson and Elander, 2005). Many cities today are practicing something called *entrepreneurial city politics* referring to informal networks, the interaction between the public and private and governance (Dannestam 2009). In social science research, the concept of governance is used to describe how today’s political processes and policies are characterised by new forms and actors (e.g. Hajer and Waagenar, 2003).

Furthermore, the concept of entrepreneurial city politics makes the city out to be an important political place as it is considered to be an actor with the ability to operate as an entity and compete with others (cf González, 2006; Jessop, 1997). At the EU level, the cities’ role have been increased in order to achieve the economic goals set out by the Lisbon process which is paralleled with the first steps taken towards constructing a common urban city policy (Strömberg and Elander, 2001: 194; Tunström, 2005). This development is driven by the appearance of an abundance of more or less formalised urban networks, lobbying for city issues to be put higher on the political agenda (LeGalés, 2002).

In the Swedish context, an integration and growth-oriented entrepreneurial city policy is for the first time becoming its own multi-sectoral, governmental policy area (Dannestam, 2009: 24). Research also indicated that Swedes differ regarding their view on regions. Those in favour of larger regions tend to live in the largest city in the region, are interested in politics at the regional level, and take an interest in European matters. Moreover, there are indications of Swedes being in favour of directly-elected governments for city-regions. A recent survey carried out in the city-region of Göteborg and Umeå suggest that a clear majority is in favour of setting up an elected assembly responsible for matters affecting the region as a whole (Lidström, 2011: 30-31). These results challenge the traditional position of the municipalities as the key players in local politics.

1.1.1 New regionalism

New regionalism came about due to the development Europe has undergone the last 20 years and can be used to describe the political change behind the establishment of regional offices. The wave of globalisation and internationalisation across the world has changed the role of the nation-state. Regions have in many cases been able to develop their own institutions and political agendas (Fernández, 2000:17). However, it is foremost due to the process of European integration and the procedures of EU's regional policy approaches which have created a change within the member states' internal policies (Gren, 2002:93-94). The most prominent feature of new regionalism is the economic development strategies designed to promote economic competitiveness on the international arena. Central to these strategies are investments in infrastructure, knowledge-intensive industries and close coordination between politics and business (Fernández, 2000:17). These features are found in the argumentation made by the representatives of the regional offices and in official documents and will be discussed further in the analysis chapter.

Reasons for the development are the market's increasing lack of boundaries and the mobility of large companies, resulting in the public sector and the general welfare becoming increasingly dependent on the private sector and the economy's international competitiveness. This development is especially apparent in the EU, as the introduction of the internal market has meant that borders no longer have any legal implications for the economic movements within the Union. According to new regionalism, the main task of politics is to organise the most productive, and competitive economic actors at the most appropriate level (Fernández, 2000:17-18). This is where regions and cities come in to the picture. The sub-national political and administrative level is better positioned to pursue regional growth policies due to its closeness to the problems and challenges that arise, thereby giving it an advantage versus the state as a business coordinator and "door opener" to Europe.

Furthermore, new regionalism stresses the importance of informal decision-making as opposed to formal, constitutional decision making. Herein lays various forms of lobbying and the fact that sub-national authorities are trying to push the existing framework in order to increase their influence. It is important to stress that advocates of new regionalism do not claim that there is a "Europe of the Regions" (Fernández, 2000:18ff). There needs to be a much larger share of regions with autonomy for that to be true. The development seen today is that regions in Europe are developing within the nation state. The main idea is that some power should be transferred from the state to the regions, within the existing framework.

The state can be said to have been given the role as a "European internal coordinator and an external negotiator" (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:68, my translation). Instead of discussing the possibility of a "Europe of the Regions", perhaps a "Europe *with* the Regions" is more suitable since it rather seems to be about complex, hybrid forms of cooperation between the supranational, national and sub-national level. It is clear that the nation-state's tolerance and acceptance of regional activities outside the national territory have increased. It may be related to the cooperation within the European sphere as illustrated above, and can subsequently be viewed as European domestic politics rather than national foreign policy. A close cooperation between the sub-national level and the state level also

increases the possibility of applying to and allocating finances attained from the structural funds¹ (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001: 68-69).

Finally, one can conclude that the regionalisation process is mostly driven from the bottom-up. An example of this is that the majority of the regional offices are established through an initiative from the sub-national level and not through the active policy from the state level. Even though there still are some resistance towards sub-national actors in the EU decision-making process, and regions seem to stay within the existing political framework of the state, there are supra-national bodies within the EU that sub-national authorities can use when seeking to influence and I will elaborate further on this in the analysis.

1.1.2 The relationship between state and region

Although my main focus will be on regions and cities I would be neglecting an important part of the scholar debate if I did not mention the state-centric perspective of the discussion on regionalisation. According to Johansson (2000:18) there are two main perspectives regarding the regionalisation process within the European integration debate. The first perspective claims that globalisation has reached the level and rate where it threatens to undermine the sovereignty of the nation-state. As a result of this development, regions and municipalities have gained more freedom to manoeuvre, ability to form their own institutions and even in some cases establish themselves as international actors. The second perspective questions the statement that the nation-state is losing its sovereignty and is more in line with the argumentation within new regionalism. Rather, regionalisation is seen as a demonstration of a systematic decentralisation *within* the framework of the nation-state. In other words, the nation state has made a conscious choice to decentralise powers and resources to regions and municipalities in order to achieve more effective implementation of political measures. That way, it can be argued that the nation state has reinforced its position by successfully developing additional and more progressive tools of control.

The two perspectives provide the foundation for my thesis by asking whether sub-national authorities' activities threaten conventional territorial equilibrium and are increasing their influence vis-à-vis the central state, and also whether or not they are capable of affecting policy-making. However, as I stated above, the aim of the thesis is not to discuss whether or not the state is a "gate-keeper" in the regionalisation process. The analysis is not based on the assumption of the death of the nation-state, but rather highlights the state level's relative loss of importance for the gain of other levels of government. Geographers refer to this process as rescaling (e.g. Brenner, 1999, 2004). Some researchers argue that the biggest cities are becoming actors on the European and international level (LeGalès, 2002). Saskia Sassan (2000), an urban sociologist and one of the most

¹ Within the EU's regional development policy, the so called cohesion policy, the structural funds are the EU's main tool to reduce disparities between regions and create prosperity and development throughout the EU. The structural funds are used to fund projects with the aim to increase economic and social cohesion in EU regions and improve the situation for underprivileged groups in society.

prominent in this field, even goes so far as to claim that globalisation is materialised in the so-called global cities which have become progressively more independent from the nation-state territory.

As I have demonstrated above, even though scholars might not agree on the extent of it, there is no question that there has been a restructuring of the nation-state. The previous distribution-oriented philosophy of political economic regulation has been replaced by a market-and competition philosophy (Brenner, 2004: chap 5; Jessop, 2002). It means that the state's attitude towards sub-national authorities has changed. Previous goals of territorial equalization and cohesion have been replaced by a competition policy where the goal is to highlight the most competitive places in the nation-state. Due to this, the responsibility of the economic development has been passed on the sub-national level (Brenner 2004, chapter 5). Furthermore, today the cities' political leadership consider entrepreneurial city politics as the solutions to many of the problems and challenges associated with industrialisation, financial issues, and growing social conflict (Dannestam, 2009). Therefore it becomes useful to talk about both the regions and the cities as an important and revived political space. I will therefore focus my thesis on the how regions and cities attempt to influence policy-making and policy outcomes in the EU.

1.2 Problem and Aim

In this study, I will concentrate on the debate concerning the above mentioned importance and influence of regional offices on the EU policy-process from a Swedish perspective.

There is a relatively long tradition of studying regions and the regional process, while studying cities is still a relatively new field and is receiving increasing scholarly attention. I find it interesting to further examine how both regions and cities are working to influence the policy process of the EU. Even though there are similarities regarding lobbying activities and how they work to market themselves, there might be a point in telling them apart since certain interests and issues can differ.

The aim of this study is to understand the role of Swedish regions and cities in multi-level governance, while examining how they engage in lobbying in order to influence the EU policy processes. In order to obtain a general as well as a deepened understanding of this I have chosen the following research questions:

How can we understand the role of Swedish regions and cities within a multi-level governance system?

How do Swedish regions and cities use lobbying to influence the policy-processes in the EU?

1.2.1 Delimitations

This thesis does not represent the means to an end. The regionalisation process, and subsequently the function of the regional offices, is a dynamic process. The purpose of this study is not to present a definite answer to the question of a “Europe with the regions”, but rather providing a well-founded argumentation that can contribute to the understanding of this process. Taken that the process is ongoing, the theoretical lens is used to screen the debate and focus on the influence, networks, and activities of the regional offices rather than on the process itself.

My study is limited by the extent that I have chosen to focus on how Swedish regions and cities engaged in lobbying in multi-level governance. By limiting it to Sweden, I hope my thesis will contribute to a further understanding of how sub-national authorities from a small country use its representation in Brussels to gain advantages.

As mentioned above, the thesis focuses on the activities and networking of the offices and there is no direct connection made to democratic issues or democratic theory. Making a connection to various democratic values and issues could provide an interesting perspective, but it is not what this thesis aims to explore. However, there will be discussion in the conclusion where the legitimacy perspective is considered briefly.

1.2.2 Defining regional offices

The thesis concerns regional offices as well as city offices. I think it is necessary to discuss one clarifying distinction between them before presenting the definition used in the thesis. Firstly, there is a difference in geographical size and commissioning bodies between a region and a city, and this might have implications for the offices’ activities. Furthermore, differences in geography and resources between a region and a city can influence the type of activities and missions of the offices. Although there are differences, in order for comparisons to be made the offices need to be regarded, despite the differences in their “employers”, as equivalent units.

Therefore, the definition used in this thesis focuses on the offices themselves in order to simplify the terminology. Consequently, the regional offices are defined as an instance based in Brussels which represents a particular geographical area in different states. This way, all the regional offices are included in the definition, regardless if they represent only one city or a collection of cities within a larger regional area. Hence, the concept that will be used hereafter is *regional offices*, even though some of them are city offices.

1.2.3 Disposition

The structure of the thesis is designed to convey the study's reasoning in a descriptive manner. After the introductory chapter, I will present the two theories used in this thesis separately, as well as explain how they complement each other in the type of research conducted in this study. A methodological chapter will follow, presenting the methods used in producing the empirical material as well as reflections of the method. In order to provide the reader with knowledge about regional offices, a chapter is included which explains the development and establishment of regional offices, with a special focus on the Swedish context.

The analysis chapter is divided into three sections, each one addressing the questions from a different perspective in order to provide an overall picture. In the final chapter I will present my findings and discuss the future prospects of regional offices.

2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter describes the theoretical concepts used in the study. It argues for the use of multi-level governance approach complemented by the network governance approach in order to describe how regional representations in Brussels are able to influence the decision-making process of the EU.

My study focuses on the different Swedish regional offices in Brussels and I will use the theories to determine the role regions and cities have within the multi-level governance. The main focus will be on the *vertical* and *horizontal dimension* as well as the meaning of the concept multi-level governance. The network governance approach will be used as a complementary theoretical approach to multi-level governance. The latter is useful as it can describe the interactions between the different levels within the EU by focusing on how the various goals are reached, rather on what is achieved.

2.1 The role of regional representation within the theoretical framework

The development from government to governance has resulted in new rules for all actors at various territorial levels of society. Instead of decisions being made formally in hierarchical organisations, more and more decisions are now made in different networks and through interactions between different types of actors – local, regional, national and private. However it is important to add that the formal structures have not completely been replaced, but very much still exist. Instead, they co-exist together with other informal structures (John, 2001:9).

Before submerging ourselves in the theoretical approaches we need to briefly consider the difference between *government* and *governance*. Governance is usually defined as “adoption of generally binding decisions” (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:162) and is often used as a contrast to the concept of government which is linked to the concept of state. Governance is also used in political contexts, but the institutional affiliation is more open (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:162-163) similarly to the arguments put forward by the network governance approach.

Peterson (1995:70ff) has written about networking and its impact on the EU’s policy process. He has focused on the process leading up to the decisions and claims that other actors beside the state play an important role in the decision-making. When the EU adopts a new policy, it is usually a compromise between member states and various interest groups. The EU institutions and the private

actors are quite often able to express their views in this process. In some cases, different administrative units in various member countries come together around an issue, most often due to a conflict of interest between the different administrative levels within a country making them look elsewhere for support. Networking is often part of a long course of events and the players must work together to achieve the desired results (ibid).

2.2 The theoretical approaches

2.2.1 The multi-level governance approach

According to Scherpereel (2007:23) sub-national authorities are establishing themselves at the European level, realising that EU policies affects them in many different ways. Their motives varies from applying for EU funding of various projects, to mobilising in order to ensure that local and regional concerns reach a much larger and broader audience. Even though there is a broad consensus regarding the *scope* of the sub-national authorities' activity, there is considerably less scholarly consensus concerning the *results* from the establishment of sub-national authorities.

The advocates of the multi-level governance approach (Hooghe, 1995; Keating, 1998; Hooghe and Keating, 2001; Hooghe and Marks, 2001) consider the sub-national mobilisation to be of major empirical and theoretical importance. They regard the establishment of sub-national authorities as a strong indicator of the evolvement of a European polity, where actors outside of Brussels and the conventional state departments come to play. Theoretically, these scholars claim that the mobilisation of sub-national authorities challenges the “grand theories” which exclusively focus on supranational actors and nation-states.

The multi-level governance approach was developed by Gary Marks from studies of European integration in the early 1990's. As the neo-functionalists, Marks shared the view that supranational interest groups were important in the EU decision-making process. However, what distinguished Marks from previous researchers was his view that local actors had increased their influence on the decision-making process. Previously, only the national and supranational level had been studied while Marks' also included the local level. Together with Lisbeth Hooghe he developed the multi-level governance approach to better fit the uniqueness of EU's decision-making process and started to consider the EU as a political system, rather than wanting to explain the process of integration (Bache and Flinders, 2004:2).

Marks defined multi-level governance as “a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial levels” (Bache and Flinders, 2004:3). He argued that “supranational, national, regional and local governments are enmeshed in territorially overarching policy networks” (ibid). The process

meant that some key functions were moved from the state to the EU level, while some power was moved down to the local level (John, 2001:74). As regards to processes, the approach also attempts to highlight policy-networks where there are no given partners, but where the issue rather decides the members of the network (Johansson, 2002:134-135).

As I mentioned above, the multi-level governance approach has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The *horizontal* dimension represents the increasing networking between various participants in which regions and cities are actors, while the *vertical* dimension describes how the sub-national level as an individual player interacts with higher levels. This will be discussed further in the analysis part. Furthermore, the different parts of the concept of multi-level governance indicate different aspects. Multi-level refers to the increased independence between political actors acting at different territorial levels, while governance refers to the interdependence between state and non-state actors at various territorial levels (Bache and Flinders, 2004:3).

2.2.2 The network governance approach

In the process described above, governance in the EU is characterised by negotiation processes at various levels, from the national to the supranational. Jönsson (2002:174) argues that the EU's multi-level governance suggests a shift from domination to negotiation, and networks are emerging as important structures to facilitate cooperation. As a result of this, today the citizens' interests are not only represented by the state, but other non-state actors are also competing to become recognised as legitimate interest representatives (Kohler-Koch and Eising, 1999:5-6). Sub-national authorities are today operating in wider European partnerships and networks. In the analysis I will show how Swedish regional offices are pursuing their interests by using various networks. Although multi-level governance is the main theoretical approach used for this thesis, the network governance approach is a useful complement as it implies a new organisational principal which, compared to formal organisation, are more informally structured around personal relationships (Jönson et al., 2000:99, 102-104). These informal contacts and fluid networks will be recurrent themes in the analysis.

The theoretical framework is based on various aspects of different approaches which can be seen as the theoretical equivalent to vegetable soup, and never accurate and precise. Nevertheless, by using a mix of different approaches one is able to explain the picture as whole as they can explain different parts of the same phenomenon. It must be mentioned that I do not intend to create a meta-theory. The development of the theoretical framework is solely used as an approach to explain and analyse the actions and influence of the Swedish regional offices.

2.3 Critique towards the theoretical framework

However, not everyone is convinced of the usefulness of the multi-level governance approach (e.g. Grande, 1996; Peters and Pierre, 2002). They critique and/or considerably alter multi-level governance structure by emphasising the marginality or sporadic effectiveness of sub-national authorities in the EU policy-making process. They claim that sub-national mobilisation is highly dependent on pre-existing territorial equilibriums, weak sub-national authorities are especially unlikely to gain power, and that central-states are very resilient to assigning significant powers to the sub-national levels. In other words, they maintain that sub-national mobilisation, although an interesting concept, has limited effects, and that discussions on the emergence of a “Europe of the Regions” or a “Europe with the Regions” have been exaggerated. Furthermore, there are scholars who are pessimistic about the role and significance of the regional level in the day-to-day politics of the EU (Pollack, 1995:362-3, 375-378; Jeffery, 1997: 206-209, 2000:4-6; Morass, 1997; Bomberg & Peterson, 1998:227,234). They regard the supposed influence of European regions through direct representation as a misperception and emphasise that greater influence can be achieved going via the member states, rather than bypassing them. These contradicting views can seem confusing. Are sub-national authorities efficient in their attempts to influence EU policy-making or should their activity be looked at with more scepticism? In my thesis I will test this as I explore the different channels of influence the regional representations have and how they are used.

The fact that all three levels, regional, national and supranational, seem to be linked together in formal or informal networks is especially important for the theoretical understanding of my thesis. It is not a strictly hierarchal system since actors are able to circumvent each other. Sub-national authorities for example, have established contact offices in Brussels to communicate directly with the EU institutions as well as take part in the decision-making procedures in these institutions e.g. the Commission. Subsequently, they do not have to go through the central state to convey their interests anymore. This is a significant factor in the network governance approach as it attempt to capture how policy-making works when actors at various levels are involved in shaping policies. Various organisations and network associations have been established along side with the regional representatives in Brussels in an attempt to coordinate regional and local interests and facilitate cooperation between them.

The existence of these informal contacts and relationship has made scholars turn to the network governance approach in order to make sense of the European form of governance (see e.g. Jönsson et al., 2000; Delanty and Rumford, 2005; Castells, 2000). There are structural differences between the sub-national levels regarding the access to information and policy formulation due to variation in what resources, such as finances and staff, are available to them. Nevertheless, small offices or offices from small member states make use of a variety of

different strategies to cope with their disadvantaged position, for example they create office communities or focus on specific policy fields that are important to them (Kettunen and Kull, 2009:118). However, I will show in my thesis that the status of sub-national actors and their ability to influence EU policy-making depends on a variety of factors.

3 Method

This chapter presents the method used in collecting the empirical material, considerations regarding using interviews as a primary source, as well as the process of selecting regional offices for the study.

By deciding on a method you automatically exclude other alternatives. My thesis is based on a qualitative approach, and as a method for my empirical study I have conducted an interview study with relevant officials who could provide an insight to the work at the regional offices. Before doing the interviews I made use of literature to get an understanding of what the multi-level governance and network governance approach entail and how they apply to the regional offices. Subsequently, this means that the methodological approach is primarily a deductive one since the theoretical concepts were developed beforehand and later used to understand the empirical research material (May, 2001:32).

There are both advantages and disadvantages of using the deductive methodological approach. May identifies a core problem when he states that in the deductive approach the “data collection is driven by theoretical interests, not the other way around” (2001:33). Therefore, it is important that the researcher is aware of her/his role when interpreting the data so that it is not manipulated to fit the theoretical framework. In other words, there has to be a high level of inter-subjectivity when interpreting the data. In the existing literature, I noticed a lack of empirical studies focusing on the relationship between the different types of regional offices, as well as that the existing material is often outdated. Regional offices are dynamic in the way that their structure and composition constantly change which means that an investigation conducted only a few years ago may already have incorrect information about the current situation. The South Sweden office, Sydsam, for example was undergoing a complete re-structuring of its organisation during my visit to Brussels in spring of 2010, resulting a year later in the establishment of Skåne European Office and Småland Bleking South Sweden Office. The same was happening to the city of Stockholm’s office planning for a re-structuring to be in place 2011. The former were just getting started with new staff, new responsibilities and new partners which brought about certain adjustments and challenges for my interviews. However, this dynamic culture also keeps the topic of regional representation current, interesting, and in need of studying.

3.1 Interview method

As mentioned above, I conducted an interview study with relevant civil servants at the different regional offices, as well as with a representative from the Swedish Association

of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)². The material I base my analysis on is essentially made up by these interviews, a total of nine, and is in some cases complemented by relevant official documents.

I chose to conduct interviews rather than distribute questionnaires, because the response rate of the latter is often low and the answers are one-dimensional since questionnaires does not provide the same possibilities for additional questions as personal interviews do. Furthermore, interviews allow me to make sure that the most important questions were answered, and they have the benefit of providing you with much more information. Still, the questions asked may not be the same in the individual interviews. My interview guide (which I will return to later in the text) included some basic questions I asked all the interviewees, but I also left some room for follow-up questions depending on the answers. I chose type since the aim of the interviews was to gain information about the research topic and any additional information will only enriched the analysis.

3.1.1 Using interviews as empirical material

When conducting interviews it is important to be clear about the aim (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002: 673). There are two ways of approaching interviews. If you wish to use the interviewees as informants or sources that can provide you with information on how a certain aspect of reality is constructed, literature will usually suggest that you should do *informant* surveys (Esaiasson et al, 2004: 253-254; Goldstein, 2002:669). In this case interviews are aimed at gaining access to information that would be difficult to obtain using other types of material. On the other hand, if the material instead seeks to access the interviewees' ideas, opinions, beliefs and perceptions (in other words, if the respondents are part of the object you are studying) literature will often suggest that you should do *respondent* surveys. When using this method it becomes important to capture the interviewees' thoughts on the specific phenomenon being studied (ibid).

However, in real life the boundaries between them tend to be less clear. Since I mainly wished to capture the world as such as the interviewees perceive it, the obvious choice would be to do a respondent interview (Esaiasson et al., 2004:280-283). This approach "attempts to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives" (Kvale 2007: 10, see also Esaiasson et al., 2004:289). In these types of interviews, the questions are normally specified, but the interviewer is freer to explore beyond the answers which could have a negative impact on the aims of standardisation and comparability provided by questionnaires. Subsequently, the open-ended way of asking questions allows the interviewees to answer more on their own terms and in their own words, while having defined question provides an adequate structure for comparability (May, 2001:123). Nonetheless, since the Swedish regional offices usually consists of a small work force who have specific knowledge about what the process looks like, the interviewees also became valuable informants regarding the political processes. In this case, I regard having the interviewees acting as informants as a big advantage compared to making the thesis rely solely on textual analysis of official documents. In my thesis, the aim of the interviews is to find out the staffs' thoughts and reasoning concerning the activities and development of regional offices in Brussels.

² Know in Sweden as Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting (SKL)

Furthermore, I found it to be the most useful interview method for the thesis as I was not interested in comparing statistics between the regional offices, but rather to understand their function and ambitions in an attempt to identify differences and similarities between them.

Even though the interviews are partly informant based, it does not mean that I think it is possible to get behind the actors perceptions of reality and go beyond the reality the responded makes in relationship to the researcher (Lundquist, 2007:61-67). However, this is not a concern of mine since I do not claim to determine how it really is at these offices, but rather to present a possible way of interpreting the developments. There are certain issues concerning using interviews as empirical material. There is a possibility that interviewees' reasoning is a reflection of organisation culture, or ideas about what I as a researcher want to hear. There might be a level of political consideration, perhaps minor adjustments of the truth are made in hindsight, or they might have their "own agenda" (cf Alvesson and Deetz, 2000:65-67). However, I do not considered these to be major issues as the ideas and notions presented in the text are interesting in themselves. Nonetheless, in some of the interviews I found that some interviewees in a very descriptive way illustrated how politics works, and for this reason some interviewees' statements has taken precedence in the production of the empirical analysis.

3.1.2 The semi-structured interview

There are several ways you can conduct interviews which entail various degrees of standardisation and structuring (e.g Aberback and Rockman, 2002; Kylén, 2004). I have chosen to do a semi-structured interview. The point of doing interviews which more resembles a conversation compared to doing for example a questionnaire or a text analysis, is that interviews bring interaction, flexibility, and depth of response which outweighs the disadvantages of inconsistent ordering (Aderback and Rockman, 2002:674). For this reason I have strived for a high degree of flexibility in the interview situation and adapted to how the conversation evolved.

I had a set of themes which I made sure where discussed at some point during the different interviews, but also talked about different things with different people. Many of the interviewees are experienced public speakers and are used to being interviewed and have extensive knowledge about the work carried out at the offices, as well as of the political process. At the same time they do not fall into the category of *elite* interviews (Kvale 2007:70) since they are not considered to be "leaders or experts in a community" (ibid) as for example political leaders are. They have no ideological position or responsibility for important decisions they might feel obligated to defend. Both I and the interviewees have steered the direction of the conversation.

3.1.3 Interview guide

My interviews are focused on particular themes that correspond to what I consider to be the central activities of the regional offices and city offices. Subsequently the respondents were asked to elaborate on their (1) impressions of the development of EU affairs in Brussels as well as at home, (2) impressions of the most useful partners in Brussels, (3) thoughts on collaborations with other actors, and (4) future prospects of regional representation. During the interview I tried to ask open questions, leaving it up

to the respondent to elaborate and emphasis what they found important. This way I tried to lead the interviewee towards the above mentioned themes, but not towards specific opinions. The specific questions asked can be found in the appendix.

3.2 Interview material

In 2011, Sweden had eleven regional offices in total and I did interviews with seven of them. All the regional offices were contacted, but not all of them were able to participate due to various reasons. I conducted interviews with civil servants from the regional offices of North Sweden European Office, Mid Sweden Office, Central Sweden as well as representatives from the regional offices of City of Malmö EU Office, Göteborg stad EU office, and the City of Stockholm. I have also interviewed civil servants at the department of regional development at Region Skåne³ and at SALAR. Although I was not able to include all Swedish regional offices I am confident that I have a sufficient selection of region – and city offices in order to be able to make comparisons and draw conclusions. A comparison of two or more cases is recommended to increase the validity of the research (George and Bennet 2005:18).

3.2.1 Selection of the regional offices and interviewees

The selection of civil servants for interviews was based on the ambition to interview representatives from the different regional offices mentioned above. I wanted to interview representatives from regional offices that are in various stages of adapting to the political environment in Brussels since it will provide me with an insight to the organisations' different aims, experiences, and structures which will enhance my analysis. Furthermore, I wanted the selection to reflect as a wide geographical spread as possible, as well as to have some variation in how much activity they had previously demonstrated in European issues.

The interviewees are civil servants and government officials chosen due to their formal position and are therefore not anonymous. However, in some cases they wished to see the quotes beforehand. A list of interviewees can be found in the reference list. There are not references to all the interviewees in the analysis, but since the interviews have given me valuable insights during the process they are all presented in the reference list.

I used a tape recorder during the interviews while taking notes on the side to highlight certain aspects of what was said. This way I could concentrate fully on the interview without risking missing something important, and it also allowed me to go back and hear the interview again. Using a tape recorder can be seen as an inhibiting factor (Kylén, 2004:40). However, due to the above mentioned benefits coupled with it helping me to lessening the risk of substituting the interviewee's words with my own, I find the benefits outweighing the negative effects. The interviews were conducted in

³ During the time of writing, the Skåne European Office was under the process of hiring an office manager, and therefore I interviewed the head of the office for regional development as a representative of the regional office

Swedish since the interviewees were Swedish and then translated into English. There is always the risk of something getting “lost in translation” which may undermine the reliability of the interpretations, but I am confident that I was able to translate the meanings adequately. The number of interviews I conducted was mainly determined by the availability of the interview person within the timeframe. I am aware that the facts I find in my analysis might not be sufficient for generalisations to be made. Nevertheless, I am certain that the individuals I have interviewed in their positions as civil servants are good representatives.

3.2.2 Reflections on the interview method

As I have chosen to use interviews as a main source it is important to reflect over the risk and limitations of using interviews as a primary source of information. One of my concerns regarded the time frame. Even though I knew that preparing the interviews, conducting them, writing the transcripts and analysing the material would take a long time, I did not want to do the interviews too early in my research process. I wanted to take time to read up on the topic and reflect on my approach in order to know what questions to ask. Furthermore, since I had a fairly good idea of what kind of information I wanted from the interviewees there is a risk that I might not have left enough room for open-ended questions and total freedom for them to tell me what they want. However, although I had pre-set questions I made sure to let the interviewees elaborate freely on any chosen topic if they wanted to.

It is important to recognise that the assessment made in the interviews are the personal opinions of the interviewee, and it does not necessarily mean that it is consistent with how things really are. However, I consider their opinions and assessments as very important since they all had a position where they were familiar with the aims and functions of the office. It is important to bear in mind that the purpose of my study is not to identify strategies which were used or how successful they are, but my focus is rather on how the civil servant perceived the situation and how they reason.

3.2.3 Connecting theory and method

Seen as my empirical material consists of interviews and the focus is on what is said in them, this could imply a discourse analysis approach to my research problem. However, it is the experiences and understanding of the interviewees in connection to the context of the broader regionalisation process that make up my field of study. The material I have used is put in a certain context in my analysis, and therefore it is in this context I understand it. The point of my theoretical discussion is to create a framework which will help me to assign meaning to the material. It might not be possible to draw any general conclusions from the findings in my analysis, but they will hopefully contribute to the understanding of the role and impact of regional representation in EU’s policy-making process.

Using my material requires reflexivity on my part as I had to rely on my personal frame of reference when preparing the interviews. Hence, I find it important to reflect and question my own frame of reference during the research process as it helps me in keeping an open approach to the information. Seen through a reflective and interpretive perspective, it is not always easy to determine what the facts are and what my

interpretation of the facts is. In my methodology chapter I have clarified how I have approached and interpreted the sources, thereby making it clear which reflections are made by me and the interviewees, as well as what the facts are.

4 Regions

So far we have introduced the regional discussion as a concept and an analytical perspective. The purpose of this chapter is to give the concept of regions and regional offices a clearer definition regarding its background, contents, and development as well as putting it in a Swedish context.

In the mid 1980s, a new way of thinking about regions and regional development began marking a huge development in the European political sphere. Previously, regions had been controlled from the top-down and had little to say in political matters. However, the change that took place meant that the regions were starting to become actors on the political arena. Much of this change was a result of the Europeanisation process pushed by the EU who was a strong advocate of a supranational regional policy (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:53-58). The regions started to develop cross-border cooperation, and networking was an important factor of the new policy.

4.1 Defining the region

There are different ways of defining a region within the academic world. Regions are understood to be located at the sub-national level, i.e. between the local and national levels of administration. Regions appear in different forms and shapes, and there are differences in institutional and governmental purpose and capacity which reflect the structure of the national state⁴. This thesis will use the definition put forward by Gren (1999:12) who claimed that a region is “defined as a territorial unit [...] and acting as a framework for economic and political action”. However, the amount of existing regions depends on how you count. Lidström (2011:23-24) counts a total of 1400 sub-national regions across the EU, although this includes all the various regional entities located between the national and local level. Taking into account only the immediately sub-national entities, he still counts some 700 units.

As mentioned above, there is a variety of regions. In 1994 Noralv Veggeland presented a useful definition of different types of regions which have been helpful in discerning the Swedish regions from other regions in Europe. He divided them

⁴ Gren (1999: 11ff) has presented a useful and informative summary of the ongoing discussion regarding different definitions and notions of a region. The EU also has its own definition of a region, the so called NUTS system. It is part of the definition, but not used as the definition in this thesis.

into the three following types: functional, administrative and cultural (Gren, 2002:15).

Firstly, the functional region consists of already existing geographically divided units gathered around specific issues. In this case, a common interest may be the basis for a legally binding inter-regional contract. Usually, a functional region is an interconnection between different countries (ibid). A good example of this is the Øresund region which is the border region between Sweden and Denmark and consists of Skåne on the Swedish side and the island of Sjaelland, Lolland, Falster, Mon and Bornholm on the Danish side⁵.

Secondly, the administrative region is intrastate which means that one or several responsibilities are given to the regions. In the mid 1990s the Swedish parliament decided to grant a trial period for the establishment of the regions of Skåne, Västra Götaland, Gotland and Kalmar (Gren, 2002:15). That meant that when they were formed in 1999, the responsibility for health care and regional development was handed over to the new organisations. The task concerning regional growth and development was on trial basis until June 2010 when the Swedish Parliament decided to make the program permanent for Region Skåne and Region Västra Götaland. The law governing this came into force on the 1st of January 2011. This law also applied to Halland and Gotland as regions with corresponding function and tasks as those of Skåne and Västra Götaland, making their status as regions permanent⁶.

Lastly, the cultural region includes among others Scotland, Wales, and the Basque Country. These are example of regions which are partially self-governing and/or demanding independence. So far the EU has resigned to support the demands for autonomy for the cultural region, but rather believe they should remain within the nation state. The regions I have focused on in my thesis belong to the category of administrative regions, and I will therefore leave further discussions on functional and cultural regions to other academic writings.

4.2 The establishment of regional offices

The physical presence of an office in Brussels is considered necessary in order to attain the informal information that is only available in the corridors of the EU institutions, despite the fact that the cost of lobbying in Brussels can be very high. Due to the new conditions emerging on the European arena which involve more negotiations, networking, and alliance-building, much of the work in EU lobbying consists of finding useful contacts and partners in an attempt to increase their influence (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:57-58). This insight to the establishment of the regional offices in Brussels is important for the thesis since part of the analysis

⁵ Information found on the Øresund committee's web page www.oresundskomiteen.org (accessed 2011-06-15)

⁶ Information found on Region Skåne's webpage www.skane.se, region Västra Götaland www.vregion.se, region Halland www.regionhalland.se and Gotland www.gotland.se (accessed 2011-06-22)

will focus on how the regional and city representatives work to gain advantages from their presence in Brussels.

4.2.1 The development of regional offices in Europe

The past three decades have seen an explosion of regional offices set up by sub-national governments in Brussels. Birmingham city was most likely first with establishing an office in 1984 closely followed by the German Länder, and 14 years later there were about 200 regional offices in Brussels (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:63-64).

The establishment of regional offices has taken place in three stages (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:65ff). The first wave took place during the 1980s when the EU's largest member states, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, and France set up offices in Brussels. The first wave happened as a result of the deepening Europeanisation process brought on by the Single European Act, the internal market and the Maastricht process. The second wave came in the early 1990s when Sweden, Denmark and regions of former East Germany opened up offices, and it had to do with the reformation of the structural funds in 1989-89, the enlargement process caused by the re-unification of Germany, and the EEA agreement. The third wave took place in the late 1990's and can be described as a steady stream of up-started offices. In 1996 there were five Swedish regional offices in Brussels (*ibid*) and today there are more than twice as many.

The Commission's partnership arrangements have been a leading force behind the establishment of regional offices (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:64). The almost explosive rate of the establishment of regional offices is also strongly connected to the greater regional autonomy within the nation-state. Many regions have realised that the problems they face can also be found at the European level. Subsequently, this argues for the advantage of having an office in the centre of European policy-making process (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:148).

Today there are about 300 offices from nearly every member state. Despite their continued growth, some academics still question their influence, and hence the usefulness of these offices (Hooghe and Marks, 1996; Bomberg and Peterson, 1998; Jeffery, 2000; Marks et al., 2002). However, Moore (2008:522) points to the rational of establishing an office and claims that no reasonable actor would waste resources by investing in something that does not give anything back in return.

Before further discussing the establishment of the Swedish regional offices, it is important to look at how the regional development process relates to the nation-state's ambitions, and to what extent it can be seen as an expression of the sub-national will. The general pattern is that sub-national foreign policy, or para-diplomacy, was initially met with scepticism or was even vigorously opposed by the national governments (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001:66-67). In Sweden, the government seemed to be caught of guard by the regions' and municipalities' activism towards the EU and was not fast enough with formulating specific rules concerning the establishment of regional offices. Initially, there was moderate

enthusiasm towards this development, and there are no examples of the government actually encouraging such establishments. In some cases it can be argued that the government through *landshövdingar* (provincial governors), indirectly worked against the establishment of regional offices. However, in the absence of a restricting regulatory system, the regions have been able to develop their own role and tasks (ibid).

4.2.2 Swedish regional offices

The thesis examines the regional offices' tasks, assignments and efforts concerning influencing the policy-making process in the EU. At the time of writing this thesis there are eleven Swedish regional offices; Central Sweden Brussels, East Sweden, Göteborg stad EU office, Malmö stad EU Office, Mid Sweden Office, North Sweden European Office, Skåne European Office, Småland Blekinge South Sweden Office, Stockholm Region, Region Västergötland in Brussels, and West Sweden.

There are both similarities and differences between the regional offices. The most obvious difference is perhaps if they are tied to a single city or to a larger geographical area. Most times you can tell the difference by looking at the name, but it might be interesting to look at who the "employer" is. Two types can be identified among the regional offices. In the first type, the office is run by a partnership of various organisations and actors. Examples of this are East Sweden, Mid Sweden, North Sweden, Småland Blekinge South Sweden, and West Sweden which besides representing the local and regional authorities also represent universities and even chambers of commerce, as in the case of North Sweden⁷. Moreover, Göteborg stad EU office represents different public utilities and publically owned companies. The second type is acting on behalf of local and regional authorities such as county councils or county administrative boards. Examples of this are Central Sweden Brussels, City of Malmö EU Office, Skåne European Office, Stockholm Region, and Region Västergötland in Brussels⁸.

This difference in the employer described above makes out a certain pattern, where the larger region's management is made up by assemblies and cities' management by individual institutions or departments. This correlation may be the result of the diverse geographical factors, but there are gray areas regarding what should be considered as city or a region. There is not always an equal sign between the office and the city, as in the case of Stockholm, and therefore it is rather the commissioning bodies that decide what type of office it is. There are different conditions between the various offices, but as shown below, their purpose, activities and resources are nonetheless in many ways similar.

⁷ Information collected from the regional offices' web sites: www.eastsweden.org; www.midsweden.se; www.northsweden.eu www.smalandbleking.se/brussels; www.westsweden.se; www.goteborg.se

⁸ Information collected from the regional offices' web sites: www.centrawestsweden.se; www.malmo.se; www.skane.se; www.sstockholmregion.org; www.vgregion.se/brussels

As I described above, the establishment of the Swedish regional offices happened through different waves and has undergone different phases. West Sweden and the then existing collaboration between municipalities and county councils in South of Sweden called Sydsam, were first setting up offices in Brussels in the years 1993-94 (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:65ff). In the following years leading up to the millennium shift, several regional offices were established; East Sweden, Stockholm city, Mid Sweden, North Sweden, Central Sweden, and Malmö city. Initially, the offices were installed as an early warning establishment, but today they have various tasks⁹:

- collecting information
- attainment of subsidies
- establishing and promoting contact with other regions
- representing and promoting the region at the European level
- representing the office within the region
- lobbying

Over the years some of the offices developed into more lobbying facilities, especially when the offices acquired more staff and competencies. It is connected to the notion that lobbying follows information gathering, since the domestic level need to be well informed in order to be able to positioning themselves. This development is evident with the Swedish regional offices as well. A major development took place during the years 2008 up until present day. Göteborg stad was first to set up its own office in 2008, separate from West Sweden. The reason was to be able to focus more on their specific interest areas and be more actively involved in lobbying (Interview, Marx, Göteborg stad). Furthermore, the region of Västragötaland established an office separate from that of West Sweden in 2010. That same year, Sydsam ceased to exist. Region Skåne decided to leave the partnership and open up its own office, Skåne European Office, in order to focus more on its specific interest, promote contacts, and compete for EU funds for important research and development projects (Interview, Persson, Region Skåne). As a result of this its former partners opened a separate office, Småland Blekinge South Sweden Office. When Stockholm first opened an office, they chose the private option by engaging a Swedish lobbying firm stationed in Brussels (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:59). However, they have since then undergone a significant reorganisation, and Stockholm Region European Association began formally in January 2011. The organisation is the result of a reorganisation and liquidation of the economic association Stockholm Region European Committee who was active in Stockholm, Brussels, Warsaw and St. Petersburg between the years 2000-2010¹⁰.

⁹ Information gathered from the interviews with the representatives of the different regional offices in Brussel carried out during 2010-2011.

¹⁰ Information attained from Stockholm Region European Association webpage www.stockholmregion.org (accessed 2011-06-22).

The different types of Swedish offices located in Brussels are likely to, although they largely in place for the same general reason, exhibit further differences in their activities. Thus, this is an interesting to keep in mind for the upcoming analysis, since differences in geographical and political aspects may contribute to the understanding of the network and cooperation constellations the regional offices are part of.

5 Analysis

The analysis will be divided into three separate parts, examining the regional offices' activities and functioning from different perspectives in order to provide an overall picture. In the first part, the regional offices' lobbying is presented in a multi-level governance system. The second part looks at how the offices attempt to influence the policy process in the EU, and the last part examines their efforts to influence the EU institutions.

5.1 Lobbying in a multi-level governance system

Jerneck and Gidlund (2001:104) identify four main components in lobbying and argue that “lobbying is a communication process, the lobbyist is an actor with own interests, the receiver is defined as a political actor (a politician/ civil servant) and the purpose is to influence the decision in a specific way” (ibid, my translation). The important features of the lobbying process reflects the dynamics of the process; the chosen moment to act, who to target, and how to do it, contemplating whether the office should act alone or in interaction with others. The way the lobbyist chose to work shows that lobbying is a communication process in which the lobbyist seeks to be seen as an actor in the political process, preferably by providing information or bringing forward an opinion. The idea is by influencing the decision-makers and their knowledge of the subject, the lobbyist may guide the direction of the policy towards the desirable result. Hence the key features are information and ideas (Jerneck and Gidlund (2001:104).

Much of the above stated empirical material is recognised in the lobbying activities of the regional offices.

“In the case of lobbying, it is important to know who you’re targeting. Who is the recipient of the lobbying? Is it the one making the decisions, or the person who writes legal proposals, or someone who needs information concerning a specific matter and so on. So when lobbying, you’re always thinking “ok who is actually going to read this, who should strategically be the sender?” Is it important that Malmö stad is the sender, is it important that it says Malmö- Gothenburg-Stockholm as a sender, or is it more important that it says Eurocities, or maybe it’s better if all three are included?” (Interview, Nord, Malmö stad, my translation)

Finding other regions or actors to cooperate with is a recurrent theme in the interviews, as well as a prominent feature in the lobbying process:

“It’s a matter of finding the right person to influence, no matter the level. It’s not the boss of the different DG’s¹¹ who writes the proposals, they have others to do that for them. So you need to think about “who is actually handling this matter and is there anyone else who also is interested in this matter”? You try to find allies from issue to issue. Some you collaborate with all the time, others are more fluid and the collaboration depends on the issue. I think working like that is the best way to influence. But running around and nagging...it’s more reassuring to gather other actors and say that we together have this opinion in the matter. Strength in numbers so to speak” (Interview, Andersson, North Sweden, my translation).

The quotes illustrate the considerations a lobbyist has to do, but also shows how the lobbyist strategically choose the recipients and partners. This is also confirmed by the different regions’ and municipalities’ strategic documents regarding how to conduct their international work. For example, the City of Malmö, Gothenburg city, City of Stockholm, Region Västergötaland, and Region Västernorrland to mention a couple, their international strategies and policies state that their mission is to make use of, and affect the areas which can lead to good development for the region or the municipality (represented here by the city)¹².

Lobbying can be described an impact tool and most often is of the persuasive nature. Mixed forms of strategies which are both persuasive and forceful are common. Jerneck and Gidlund (2001) mostly focus on regional lobbying, but I claim that their study is useful for also understanding how cities are engaged in different lobbying activities.

Put simply, lobbying consists of *up-stream* and *down-stream* lobbying. Up-stream entails long-term lobbying, and is the one that requires the most resources. It is foremost about trying to influence the EU’s regulatory system, structure, and processes. The purpose of lobbying can differ. It includes attempts to influence the EU’s constitutional structure and the development of the organisation, as well as trying to influence processes with the intention of accommodating a specific region’s interests. Ways of lobbying varies from defensive to blocking, and the purpose can also be to change or to preserve a certain state (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:106). In the context of up-stream lobbying, the local and regional level try to influence the design and content of the proposals coming from the Commission. It is important to be involved in the process at an early stage in order to be able to influence what will later affect the local level.

Below, I will describe how the different regions and cities in my study have used up-stream lobbying, and will be followed by a section describing the down-stream lobbying activities. The international strategy -and policy documents of the different regions and cities will be helpful in examining the sub-national authorities’ ambitions regarding lobbying. International strategies are found on different political levels, and in Sweden it is not unusual for municipalities to have their own. However, for the purpose of this study, I have selected the existing international strategy- and policy documents that correspond to the interviewed regions and cities represented by the regional offices¹³.

¹¹ DG is short for Directorate General for the European Commission

¹² Strategy documents from the different regions and city municipalities found on the respective web sites. For more information, see the list of references at the end of the study.

¹³ **West Sweden:** Region Värmland, Västra Götalands regionen, Region Halland. **North Sweden European office:** Regionförbundet Västerbotten. **City of Malmö EU Office:** Malmö stad. **Mid Sweden Office:** Regionförbundet Jämtlandslän. **Central Sweden Brussels:** Region Dalarna, Region Gävleborg, Regionförbundet

5.1.1 Up-stream lobbying

As mentioned above, the regions and cities have produced strategies regarding the planning and execution of their international work. All the representatives of the regional offices did not explicitly state they were engaged in lobby activities, but in some of the strategies we can detect how the regions and cities conduct up-stream lobbying.

“Goal-oriented international efforts which require patience, perseverance, long-term thinking, and determination will add competence, knowledge, and experience in different areas” (Strategy document, Region Värmland, 2009, my translation).

“The international efforts should be characterised by long-term thinking and forward planning” (Strategy document, Malmö stad, 2006, my translation).

A similar line of thinking can be found when discussing international cooperation and networking.

“Region Dalarna’s EU/ international collaborations should be linked to the needs regarding the development and monitoring of different issues, and should generally be based on mutual exchange of experience and knowledge. Important factors for cooperation are long-term thinking, determination, and precision”(Policy document, Region Dalarna, 2009, my translation).

“The issue at hand and the benefits for the city should be the determining factors in the selection of partners and membership in organisations and networks”(Strategy document Stockholm stad, 2008, my translation).

“The Örebro Region must work strategically to extend and deepen the international contact networks, as well as the construction of a shared network in order to obtain knowledge for the region, implementing ideas in the region, and affect decisions at different levels” (Regionförbundet Örebro, strategy document, 2009, my translation).

The recognition found in the international strategies stating that regional and urban growth is affected both by direct and indirect influences, events, and legislation in other countries around the world is evident in all of the strategy documents. For this reason, it can be claimed that the sub-national authorities find it important to be able to influence international processes and national applications which might affect them at a later stage.

“Approximately 75 % of municipal, county and regional activities are affected by EU decisions. Therefore, it is important to be involved in networks, informed about why decisions are made, and act jointly and affect them together with other regions in Europe” (Strategy document, Regionförbundet Örebro, 2009, my translation).

“Much of the legislation that has a direct impact on the city’s activities originally derives from the EU. Therefore, Malmö stad should adopt a pro-active approach to the development in Europe and the opportunities that European integration provides the municipality. The administrations should conduct analyses of the different areas where there is, or will be, European legislation which may affect the municipality in the present or in the future” (Strategy document Malmö stad, 2006, my translation).

It becomes clear from the interviews that if the lobbyist is going to be able to influence decisions and initiatives in the complex EU structure, it is important to monitor many areas and actors simultaneously. Literature on lobbying emphasises the importance of early lobbying efforts. It is significant to enter the process at an early stage when the Commission initiates a legal proposal. In other words, the earlier you enter the decision-making process, the more you can affect the outcome which will give you a significant advantage (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:118). This claim is confirmed by my interviews. The regional offices that are involved in lobbying activities try to influence a legal proposal at the earliest stage possible. This is achieved by responding to referrals, by actively participate and influence in different networks, or through direct contact with the Commission. On the question of how best to influence, the response was:

“Regarding the EU’s decision-making process, it’s still the Commission that have the right to propose laws, and if you are in contact with a civil servant while he’s writing on a proposal, your chances of getting something in the proposals are pretty ok. If you manage to get something in at that stage, there’s a pretty good chance that it still will be in there at the final stage. The later you enter the process, the harder it is to influence.” (Interview, Marx, Göteborg stad, my translation).

The representatives of the regional offices also mention the importance of lobbying action towards the Swedish national government as a way of influencing, since the Commission require the member states to hand in a so called National Action Plan concerning certain areas of EU policies¹⁴.

“The national perspective is often forgotten and people often think “EU, we have to try to influence the Commission from the regional side”. But issues can be found on various levels and phases, and in some phases it’s more important to influence the Swedish stance in the matter [...] We’re trying to influence the departments that handle our interests and get our opinions across, and after that we can send signals to the Commission and the Parliament what we think on the issue. If we can’t influence

¹⁴ A National Action Plan is an annual report written by the member states which entail the guiding principles of various policies, e.g. employment and social affairs. (www.ec.europa.eu, accessed 2011-07-04)

the government, we turn to the Commission and the Parliament. But sometimes it's more important to work towards Stockholm than towards Brussels, but that aspect is often forgotten" (Interview, Persson, Region Skåne, my translation)

How are we to understand the sub-national authorities' up-stream lobbying activities? The interviews suggest that the regions and cities are developing into independent actors separate from the state. In the past, the state was the sole actor, but due to the regional and urban development process, it has been joined by new players in the multi-level governance system. Marks added the sub-national level in his study on multi-level governance where previous studies only dealt with the national and supranational level (Bache and Flinders, 2004:2). The multi-level governance approach describes the evolution from the state acting as a "gate keeper" toward regions and cities virtually becoming independent actors. This view is also reflected in the international strategy- and policy documents:

"In Europe there is multi-level governance, where the regional level has an obvious role in the democratic process" (Policy document, Västra Götalandsregionen, 2009, my translation)

Regions and cities as independent actors is something that is reinforced by their ability to apply for project funding from the structural funds. This leads us to down-stream lobbying which, in contrast to up-stream lobbying, regards utilising what is available rather than creating new terms. The focus is usually on the application of rules and regulations within the EU, which among other things entails using the existing financial framework and instruments. Another example is when the region or the city participates in negotiations by providing knowledge on a specific matter which ultimately improves their future and/or possibility of receiving the desired support. The difference between up-stream and down-stream lobbying is not always crystal clear, and hybrids often occur (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:107).

5.1.2 Down-stream lobbying

Down-stream lobbying is the most common form of lobbying and is used by virtually all the regional offices. As mentioned earlier, this form of lobbying focuses on the already existing legal framework and the opportunities it entails. Sub-national authorities have little to gain from issues concerning the EU's constitutional structure. However, other issues that may be of interest to them such as environment, cohesion, and social policies, can be handled successfully by the regional offices (Marks et al., 2002:16). Hence, the role of the regional offices is to support, inform, or point out shortcomings in the reasoning regarding various policy matters. Subsequently, the time perspective is important in down-stream lobbying as well, in order to calculate future developments and anticipate future reactions (Radaelli, 2006:69). By being well informed and receive information at an early stage, the sub-national actors can prepare expectations on what an EU

directive will contain and act accordingly in an attempt to strengthen their competitiveness and domestic position.

According to the interviewees, the best example of downstream lobbying is also the most treasured part of the cohesion policy – the structural funds. Many of the regional offices appear to be active applicants for funding of various projects. More specifically, being part of *pilot* project is another feature of the time perspective regarding regional offices activities. By participating in pilot projects, the sub-national actors become aware of the financial outcomes and by testing new technology in advance, they are better equipped to implement possible future EU regulation in a particular area which will limit the adaptational costs.

“We help with project applications as well, but it’s not like we are the ones writing them. The municipality has had maybe 200-300 EU projects a year since 1997, so for almost 15 years now. There’s a very high general level of competence regarding international and European issues within the administrations. There are people at each administration that have been in contact with EU projects in one way or another. They usually only contact us when they need help with something, like getting in touch with someone” (Interview, Nord, Malmö stad, my translation).

“We can help developing ideas for different EU projects [...] There are no projects that are 100 % funded by the EU and it’s also necessary that they are pilot projects, and that they bring something new to the table. There’s no point of doing a project which have already been done, it’s important to have a new way of thinking about the issue at hand. It must also add value to Europe which means that what you do within the project could also be useful in other part of Europe, and could be implemented there as well” (Interview, Sundström, West Sweden my translation).

According to the above mentioned interviews, the sub-national authorities are to varying extent and ways involved in different EU funded projects. This is an example of the horizontal dimension where the EU is able to influence the everyday-practices of the regional and local administrations as they become more aware of the opportunities provided by the EU. Through the structural funds, the Commission is able to spread its values without having to use legislation.

The existence of down-stream lobbying can also be found in the international strategy- and policy documents.

“The international efforts should be conducted jointly by the county’s actors and add value to the citizens as well as to the businesses” (Strategy document, Region Gävleborg, 2010, my translation).

“In its mission to be a growth engine in Skåne and the Øresundregion and ensure a positive growth trend for all the citizens of Malmö, it is of outmost importance that its international efforts make the best use of and influence the opportunities for Malmö’s development” (Strategy document, Malmö stad, 2006, my translation).

Pilot projects are part of a method called benchmarking where different strategies that various actors have used in order to identify the factors which has had the most successful outcomes. The EU sometimes allocates fund to those applying this method for identifying and spreading “best practice”. For the sub-national actors, the goal seem to be to receive informal advantages by being involved in a strategy at an early stage as well as receive financial support for implementing policies that are considered to be beneficial to them. The interviews as well as the excerpts from the strategy documents show that the local officials are trying to make use of the already existing structure and framework by cooperating with institutions, organisations, and other regional or local actors in order to provide the best opportunities for development and growth for the region or city. Nonetheless, there are other ways to lobby which will be illustrated in the two following sections.

5.2 Influencing the EU’s policy process

5.2.1 Different types of lobbying activities

There are different ways for regions and cities to conduct lobbying. Either through their international strategies and Brussels offices, or they can cooperate with other regions and cities in different networks. All of the regional offices are involved in various networks, but the networks differ depending on if the regional office represents a region or a city.

The majority of the regions are members of the following networks; SWEREG which is the network for the directors of Swedish regional offices and members of the Swedish EU representation responsible for regional affairs, the Assembly of European Regions (AER) which is the largest regional network in Europe with 270 member regions from 33 countries as well as 16 interregional member organisations, and Conference of peripheral and maritime regions (CPMR) which is a regional network consisting of 161 coastal regions from 28 countries and includes 200 million people. The most prominent network which the regional offices representing cities are members of is Eurocities¹⁵. Common for these networks are that they all work with advocating the needs and opinions of the regions or the cities, and are conducting lobbying activities directly towards the concerned EU institutions. Rotterdam is an interesting example of a city which is able to influence directly. The city is one of the founding members of the

¹⁵ Information gained from interviews. For more information regarding the networks, visit the following websites: SWEREG: www.swedishregions.eu AER: www.aer.eu, CPMR: www.cpmr.org and Eurocities: www.eurocities.org

Eurocities network, has their own lobbyist, and considers lobbying as their primary task. Furthermore, the city's mayor is also a member of the Committee of the Regions (Heinelt and Niederhafner, 2008:179-180).

This clearly illustrates the regions' and cities' ability to influence within multi-level governance. It shows how they, without communicating with the national government, have direct contacts with EU institutions and networks. It suggests that they do not see the need to run everything pass the state, but find it just as natural and easy to contact the targeted group directly.

What are we suppose to make of this? The theory explains it as the *vertical effect*, i.e. when the sub-national level affects the supranational level. Similarly to Rotterdam, the city of Gothenburg also has a civil servant stationed in Brussels to conduct lobbying. Sebastian Marx describes his role as a representative for Göteborg stad as follows:

“We have seen that by being indirectly represented down here, we have not been able to influence legislations in a satisfactory way. When it comes to projects, information, and education, the work has been good, but regarding to legislation and influencing, or so called lobbying, we have seen that we haven't quite been able to promote Gothenburg as a city, as one of the players in Europe, showing what we're good at, and discussing legal proposals with decision-makers so that they don't go contrary to what we want [...] We established an office in Brussels so we could influence, highlight problems, and suggest solutions” (Interview, Marx, Göteborg stad, my translation).

After presenting the general idea of how regions and cities conduct lobbying in different ways, a deepened discussion of the regional and urban lobbying in various networks is carried out below.

5.2.2 Networking

Networks and networking appear to be an important part of the regional offices' operations. Participating in and building networks are important in order to influence, but also to be able to make use of each other like the network governance approach argues. In order to influence the EU's processes, it is essential to join other regions or cities with similar goals and opinions. The exchange of experiences concerning “best practices” and informal conversations are prerequisites for lobbying activities. In many cases, these rather small offices have a limited ability to act alone. At the same time, there is a political support regarding cooperation with other actors in various issues and projects.

“[...] the multi-regional cooperation should continue and be strengthened” (Strategy document, Regionförbundet Västerbotten, 2007, my translation).

Malmö takes it a step further by explicitly stating in their international strategy document that the strategic impact will be more successful if the city chooses to ally itself with various network including local, national and international cities.

“Malmö stad’s role as an international player and metropolitan will be strengthened by the city’s representation on various international arenas where there is an opportunity to influence issues which is of central value to the city of Malmö” (Strategy document, Malmö stad, 2006, my translation).

Thus, the concept of strength in numbers seems to be an accepted and strategic solution for the regional offices as they can achieve better results when collaborating with others with similar goals and ambitions within a particular area. A variety of associations and organisations have been established through networking, and networking has become somewhat of the basis for the regional offices’ operations in Brussels. I have mentioned some networks above, e.g. Eurocities, AER, and CPMR. However, the regional offices are not equally involved in all the different networks all the time. Again, it is the issue at hand which decides the type of engagement as well as which network to use.

“The networks are used differently at different times. We don’t use all of them all the time. It depends on the situation and the issue which network is easier to use, where it will go a bit faster. Or when we feel we need more information, we use a larger network with more members” (Interview, Nord, Malmö stad, my translation).

Regarding networks and collaboration, it is importance to understand that although the Swedish regions and cities cooperate on many issues, it is as common for them to establish collaborations with other European regions and cities. When it comes to collaboration, it is not geography that decides the partner, but rather the specific issue.

“In the case of lobbying towards EU institutions, it’s best to cooperate with others, preferably have an international dimension to it and collaborate with other European regions, Finland and Germany for example. When you’re trying to influence the Parliament for example, if you’re part of a network of regional offices, you try to find the same structure with both Finns and Germans. It might be better to contact a Polish parliamentarian than a Swedish, depending on the issue and what department they belong to” (Interview, Andersson, North Sweden, my translation).

“We cooperate with other regional offices as well, depending on the issue. It doesn’t have to be just Swedish regional office, but also other regional offices. So, I would say we’re starting to look for other partners to cooperate with, depending on the issue we’re dealing with. I think the regional offices are great door-openers when doing this” (Interview, Brandelius-Johansson, Mid Sweden, my translation).

Furthermore, one aspect brought up by the representatives of the regional offices involved in lobbying efforts was that it is important to have a clear and defined

position in order for the lobbying to be successful. The reason for this is that the Commission is interested in the regional and local levels' expertise, and only the regional offices which provide this are successful in their lobbying efforts. If the regional office is not able to supply this, the influence will be low if any.

“The most important thing is to know what you want, knowing what you're willing to do, and knowing what you want to communicate” (Interview, Marx, Göteborg stad, my translation”).

The civil servants at the regional offices receive a large amount of invitations daily. It can be official conferences and seminars focusing on various regional issues, but it can also be happenings of a more fun character such as openings, movie viewings, and concert events. The results of both official and unofficial arrangements are that they provide the civil servants with opportunities to monitor current affairs or projects, as well as look for and “be seen” regarding possible projects in the future. In other words, they have the chance to find potential partners or being discovered by others who recognise corresponding aspects in their region or organisation.

“There's a lot of conferences and things that you can attend, and it's not like you go because the conference is cool, but more because you think there will be people there that may be useful, so you go there to network and talk to them. A conference or a seminar can be a place that can be used for something completely different than what the conference or seminar actually is about” (Interview, Andersson, North Sweden, my translation).

Networking between various sub-national authorities is what the multi-level approach refers to as the *horizontal dimension*, which refers to the increased interaction between them. Thus, it can explain the growing need for cooperation in order to influence the higher levels. Hence, it may be reasonable to conclude that an increased cooperation between region, between cities, as well as between regions and cities, is crucial for them to be able to pursue fruitful lobbying.

5.2.3 The importance of contacts

Social contacts can be found everywhere, and lobbying is no exception. The network governance approach argues the importance of personal contacts (Jönson et al., 2000:99, 102-104) and it is also pointed out by the interviewees as out as an important factor when lobbying. Moreover, social and informal relationships between representatives of regions and cities in Brussels are very useful when it comes to the benchmarking activities described above. The best way to influence a decision at an early stage is through social contacts in various EU institutions (Interview with Marx, Andersson, Sundström and Brandelius-Johansson) . The regional offices contact other Swedes as well as people from other European countries. Again, it depends on the particular issue. Attempts to influence can be

made either by *direct contacts*, that is to go directly to the officials or politicians, or *indirect contacts*, where you go through various other networks or agents instead.

“You always have to try and find the right person for the specific issue at hand. And if it turns out to be a Swede, that just great and helpful” (Interview, Marx, Göteborg stad, my translation)

“I think you usually have to start with the informal way. I need to figure out who I’m going to try to influence, what is the best way to do that [...] I think it’s very smart to use these informal routes, listen to what is said, and then move towards the top. After all, that’s where the decisions are made” (Interview, Brandelius-Johansson, Mid Sweden, my translation).

“By using personal contacts can get you very far no matter the direction or level” (Interview, Sundström, West Sweden, my translation).

Sometimes it can be difficult to determine when there has been a direct influence by the sub-national authorities since regions and cities often are members of networks together with others. Jerneck and Gidlund (2001:124) distinguish between policy networks that are broken up after an issue is resolved, and policy communities which are based on long term relationship between parties with shared ambitions. These differences can also be found in the networks of the regional offices. Networks such as SWEREG and AER, where the Swedish regions are members, can be seen as a long-term relationship where they work toward a common goal. In the case of the Swedish major cities, the Eurocities network is an example of a long-term relationship built around policy similarities, while policy networks often arise due to various pilot projects.

However, cooperation is not always a popular option. Jerneck and Gidlund (2001:124) argue that it is unusual for regions to collaborate when it comes to financial support from the structural funds. The reason is because it causes a competitive situation, a zero-sum game. The complexity of the issue is that sub-national authorities cooperate regarding policy issues, while competing for funding at the same time. In some cases, although they disagree on policy issues, they find themselves working together in projects, possibly concerning another subject. Nonetheless, this aspect is recognised in one of the interviews:

“We can cooperate with Gothenburg and Stockholm when it comes to a certain policy issues and then we create a project to apply for funding. But then Stockholm and Gothenburg might not be our partners, Malmö might be doing something together with Munich, London or Helsinki. Then we compete with different projects for the same funds” (Interview, Nord, Malmö stad, my translation).

Nevertheless, as described above by the interviewees, trans-national cooperation between regions in various projects is becoming increasingly common. The reason for this is that the Commission prefers to allocate funds to projects with an

international dimension since these projects will offer solutions which fit other European countries as well, subsequently helping to develop Europe further. However, this provides an interesting dimension to the discussion on the regionalisation process and the consequences of multi-level governance. How are we to understand the competition between regions and between cities, or maybe even competition between regions and cities? Has the increased influence gained by the cities made it into a competitor for the region?

“No I don’t necessarily think there’s a competition between regions. It can occur, but in most cases we think the same at the regional level, and then you become stronger, both at home and in Brussels, when you can work together” (Interview, Persson, Region Skåne, my translation).

“In the case of Region Skåne’s Brussels office, we’ve had a great relationship from the start and we continue to have a good relationship. But we’ve only started to cooperate. There are things we can collaborate on even if Malmö stad and Region Skåne don’t always think alike. We work together in some large projects regarding public transport, transport and some other things. Some of it is EU funded [...] But we have different priorities. They care about for example health care, research and development, maritime security, regional water quality, and we care about things at the local level like schools, parks and so on. [...] Region Skåne has an office in Brussels with their priorities, just as they had with Sydsam. Sometime we work together, and we keep each other informed. But we as a city lobby for a more diverse variety of issues and policies than what a region does” (Interview, Nord, Malmö stad, my translation).

My study did not find any facts to support these claims. When asked about elements of competition, the interviewee choose to highlight collaboration and mutual dependence in the interaction between them.

5.2.4 The relationship with the Commission

The Commission has changed the possibilities for the sub-national authorities to influence as the sub-national actors and transnational networks have increased their presence in Brussels. One example of this is when the Commission introduced the “White Paper on European Governance”¹⁶ which is based on five guiding principles; involvement, openness, accountability, responsibility, and cohesion. The Commission has put forward other suggestions on ways to increase cooperation between the EU and the sub-national levels. Regarding policy issues, the Commission should have contact with the regional and local actors while at

¹⁶ More information regarding the paper can be found at the Commissions website: http://ec.europa.eu/governance/white_paper/index_en.htm

the same time respecting national laws (Kern, 2007:15). Thus, these changes have led to an increased possibility for sub-national authorities to gain access to the EU's decision-making process. The reason behind this development is most likely because the Commission considered it necessary to increase contact with regional and local actors because they are the ones implementing the proposals. Expert help, information from the civil society and businesses, and the sub-national levels have become more important (Kern, 2007:15). This is also clear to the interviewees:

It may sound a bit utopian, but the reason that the EU funds projects in education, IT, environment and so on is because they want the experts found at the local level to push EU forward [...] There results of these projects are to be used when moving Europe forward" (Interview, Sundström, West Sweden my translation).

Another reason for the Commission to listen to the regional and local actors is that they have territorial skills. The sub-national actors are connected to the local level which makes them important partners. Additionally, regional and local actors often possess democratic legitimacy, therefore it might be in the Commission's interest to work with them (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:121-123).

"I find that the Commission is interested in learning more about what we're doing in the region and in various regional networks. That's the feeling I get when we meet people from the Commission. They want to know and they listen. But they also want to know *how*, how are you going to do this, and what do you need to implement it? I think it's good, because that way we interact and communicate. I can't say how it will be in five or ten years from now, but from my perspective, I think they will want to know more and more about the regions think in different matters" (Interview, Brandelius-Johansson, Mid Sweden, my translation).

Furthermore, the relationship between the Commission and the sub-national authorities can be described as mutual dependence, which means that they depend and benefit from each other. The sub-national authorities may provide the Commission with important information about local conditions and suggestions on how the proposals can be adjusted in order for the implementation to run more smoothly. They can also act as "watch dogs" for the Commission which means that they will supply the Commission with information about the implementation process. The latter is not only useful for the Commission. By having a constructive cooperation with the Commission, the sub-national authorities can receive support if they come in conflict with the national governments on what the proposals should look like.

The empirical material presented above makes regions and cities out to be independent actors. This is also supported by the multi-level governance approach which was developed as a result of the initiative of the Commission to include regional and local actors. By doing so, the Commission opened the door for sub-national authorities and allowed them to make room for themselves as well as made it possible for them to influence directly. What are the consequences of this?

Does this mean that the state's powers have been reduced, or does it just mean that the state has a new play mate? As I mentioned in the section regarding the relationship between the state and the sub-national level in the introduction chapter, some researchers argue that the state's influence has declined, while others claim it has a new role. Les Gáles (1998:486) argues that the state's central role may have declined due to networks and multi-level cooperation, but that does not necessarily mean that the state has disappeared. The main challenge for the state is rather to get used to acting together with other territorial levels.

We now understand how regions and cities lobby in different networks, and we have also deepened our understanding of the relationship between the Commission and sub-national authorities. The following section will explain how the regions and cities lobby toward various EU institutions and the difficulties with lobbying.

5.3 Influencing the EU institutions

According to Jerneck and Gidlund (2001:111) the Commission is the institution most often targeted by the lobbyists. The interviews I conducted show that the regional offices focus most of their lobbying efforts on the Commission and the European Parliament (EP) followed by the Committee of the Regions (CoR), and less so on the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the Council of Ministers. This section of the analysis describes the factors behind the lobbying efforts as well as challenges with lobbying.

5.3.1 Lobbying towards the Commission

The main reason for focusing the lobbying efforts on the Commission is because it is the institution that initiates and prepares drafts on legal proposals. Moreover, the Commission is also in charge of the structural funds, which are highly sought after by the sub-national authorities. They contact the Commission in order to try to influence the decision-making processes in a way that is beneficial for them (Heinelt and Niederhafner, 2008:174). The interviewees all put the Commission highest on the list of recipients for lobbying and, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the particular issue is an important factor when deciding where to focus the lobbying efforts. If the issue concerns some sort of trans-national region such as the Øresund region, the main focus is on the Swedish national state, while other matters require lobbying towards EU institutions through a network. This becomes clear in the interviews:

“It depends on the issue. It's very much about what the issue is about. There are many, for example the broader policy issues, where it's important that Göteborg stad have a position, not only towards the EU institutions, but perhaps towards SALAR

in Sweden, or through Eurocities where we as a city can work actively to try to incorporate our views”(Interview, Marx, Göteborg stad, my translation).

“Some issues are raised at the national level, but issues that’s cross-border in nature such as Region Skåne- Region Huvudstaden- Region Sjaelland, perhaps are better highlighted in EU because similar partnerships can be found there”(Interviews, Persson, Region Skåne, my translation).

The statements above provide us with another piece of the puzzle and deepen our understanding of how regions and cities conduct lobbying efforts within multi-level governance. Other studies have established that the Commission is an obvious target for sub-national lobbying efforts due to its monopoly on initiating legislation. However, what have come forward by the interviews conducted in my study, is that the specific issue matters concerning where to focus the lobbying efforts as well as what network to join. The flexible web of networks where the particular issue decides the members is something that multi-level governance and network governance approach highlight.

Today there are thousands of advisors working for the Commission which means new opportunities for the lobbyists to influence, and it is an opportunity they are quick to use. It is common for representatives of the sub-national authorities to be experts in policy processes since they possess useful knowledge of the local conditions, seeing as they are the ones implementing the decisions (Heinelt and Niederhafner, 2008:175).

“If you want to influence, you need to influence the writing process. First you need to find the official who work with the issue, if it’s about the regional policy or infrastructure for example. Then you build up a relationship, not a friendly relationship, but a professional relationship. They are often very keen on getting information, because they don’t know everything. Take a Spaniard who works with infrastructure issues for example, he knows nothing about the conditions in North Sweden, but they want to know in order to do a good job. So it’s important to build relationships where you just don’t demand things, but where you also deliver. You need to provide them with a good groundwork for a proposal so they can do a good job. The more often and the better groundwork you give them, the better results you’ll get yourself”(Interview, Andersson, North Sweden, my translation).

Hence, I argue that regions and cities are important actors in policy networks, which process and shape future EU policies.

5.3.2 Lobbying towards the European Parliament

The EP has become an important institution for regional and local representatives as it has gained more power and influence in the decision-making process. Lobbyists pay attention to the various committees as well as to the members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:113; Heinelt and

Niederhafner, 2008:175). The Parliament makes amendments to the proposals and ultimately the decisions. In order to do so, the MEPs need information that helps them assess the legislative proposal put forward by the Commission. This information can be, and often is, provided by the sub-national authorities and the offices representing them.

“The Parliament becomes important once the proposal has been brought to the table. That’s when they get to have opinions on the proposal, make some amendments, and critique it a bit. That’s when we contact it. We mostly make contact with the Swedish parliamentarians but also with others, and we say “now when you’re about to look at the proposal we want you to know that we think these parts are bad for these reasons, and these parts are good because of this and that”. At stage two of a proposal the European Parliament is very important as they deal with the final proposal from the Commission”(Interview, Holm, SALAR, my translation).

As with the Commission officials mentioned above, the EP’s civil servant also need to be informed regarding the local conditions, and the local and regional representatives can be helpful to the often overburdened MEPs. Furthermore, the EP has worked for the empowerment of regions, and their demands led to the establishment of the Committee of the Regions. The EP has also signed the much noted interpretation of the subsidiarity principle, stating that the decision should be taken where they are most useful, but also by those that are most affected by the decision (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:114).

This illustrates how the regional and local representation is an important resource for the MEPs. The EP seems to be somewhat dependent on help from the regions and cities to cope with the daily work. This new role is most likely due to the increased workload of the MEPs and the civil servants. In other words, there seems to be a co-dependence between the sub-national authorities and the EP. This illustrates the argument I have made throughout this study of how the different levels work together within a multi-level governance system.

The EP has increased its allocation to the regional and local level, and therefore it might be fruitful for the lobbyist representing regions and cities to stay in touch with the different departments that handle the issues of interest to the sub-national authorities. The cooperation with the EP as well as with the MEPs can be important in order to push the ambitions and aspirations of the sub-national territories. It can also increase the EP’s legitimacy to have a close connection to the regional and local level where their electorate can be found (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:115).

5.3.3 Lobbying towards the Committee of the Regions, the European Court of Justice and the European Council

The interviewees have slightly different views on the importance of the Committee of the Regions. On the one hand, it is described as an obvious partner as it represents all the regions, and examples are given where the Commission and

Parliament has taken the Committee's views into consideration when making a decision.

"The Committee of the Regions' role is to make referrals on proposals from the Commission before the Parliament and the Council then decides. The idea of the Committee of the Regions is that before deciding anything, you want to know what the effects will be on the local and regional level. Therefore, the Committee of the Regions try to present these as clearly as possible [...] That's where we come in with our experts at home who produce information and suggest amendments which make the referrals better" (Interview, Holm, SALAR, my translation".

On the other hand, there is some scepticism regarding how much actual influence the CoR has among the interviewees. It is probably because the Committee has no formal decision-making power, but is more of a consultative body.

"The Committee of the Regions is a very special organisation and of course we cooperate with them. We also have people from Gothenburg who are members of the Committee of the Regions, but it's evident that the Committee has limited powers. It's good to use when it's about general issues, but not as useful when it comes to a very concrete legislative process. They only have consultative status. Today it's obvious that the Committee of the Regions is listened to more, especially in matters regarding the future cohesion policy, or when talking about if the role of the local and regional level should be stronger, secured, or altered in any way. Then it's obvious that the Committee of the Regions' opinions are an important basis for the discussions in the Parliament or in the Commission. But when it comes to directives, then the opinions of the Committee of the Regions don't matter as much as in the broader issues. It doesn't hurt to be in contact with the Committee of the Regions, and it's a good institution to use, but its' obviously not as important as the Commission or the Parliament" (Interview, Marx, Göteborg stad, my translation).

There will probably be an increase in the lobby activities toward the CoR in the future. It will most likely come from those regions that are unable to influence regional and local representatives back home. Subsequently, there is talk about internal lobbying which means lobbyists are trying to affect their own institutions. The nature of the contact between the sub-national lobbying actors and the regional offices are more of a continuous dialogue, rather than explicit lobbying (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001:117).

"The Committee of the Regions has in different ways become more powerful due to the Lisbon Treaty. They still haven't got any formal decision-making power, but I still feel that the Committee of the Regions now have a completely different status, and the same goes for the regions" (Interview, Brandelius-Johansson, Mid Sweden, my translation).

There was little mention of cooperation with the Council of Ministers by the interviewees. This is probably because it is difficult for the representatives of the

regions and the cities to influence the Council. Instead, the focus of the lobbying activities is directed towards the Swedish government.

“The Council is perhaps the only institution that we are not lobbying towards directly. The Council is “Sweden’s institution” so to speak, where the nation-state is active. Of course we try to influence Stockholm, sometimes directly through SALAR, and sometimes through various business organisations that the companies owned by the municipality are part of” (Interview, Marx, Göteborg stad, my translation).

Finally, the interviewees did not mention any lobbying activities towards the European Court of Justice. However, the ECJ may be relevant to regional and local actors since the Court has certain powers, such as monitoring the activities of the EU bodies and institutions. The ECJ is particularly important when it comes to the future application of the subsidiarity principle, as well as other issues which directly concerns the sub-national levels (Jerneck and Gidlund, 2001:117).

Nevertheless, these lobbying efforts directed at various institutions, EU and national, illustrate one of the core arguments of multi-level governance which I attempt to demonstrate in the study, which is the vertical dimension where all the different territorial levels interact in order to influence policy decisions in the EU.

5.3.4 Difficulties with lobbying

It is not always easy for regions and cities to conduct successful lobbying efforts, since the ability to influence a proposal significantly decreases after the Commission has decided on a proposal. As I illustrated above, it is important to enter the decision-making process as early as possible in order to be able to influence. The latter becomes even more important for sub-national players who want to achieve something constructive. Studies show that many representatives enter the process at a later stage. Jerneck and Gidlund (2001:120) go even further and claim that cities are more reactive than proactive, which means they respond to EU initiatives, rather than are part of designing them. However, as I have shown in the previous sections, that depend entirely on the regional office. In Sweden, some of the offices most active in lobbying efforts are representing cities. Tommy Holm explains how difficult it can be to influence the decision-making process:

“It can be difficult to enter the decision-making process at an early stage due to insufficient resources and manpower. We are a rather small office here in Brussels, and we can’t be everywhere at the same time. We have contacts in the Commission, but it’s not always easy to know everything that’s going on, and when you finally find something out you want to influence, somebody else might already been there and amended the proposal” (Interview, Holm, SALAR, my translation).

In conclusion, literature stresses the importance of entering the decision-making process at an early stage in order to influence the policies, and this view is confirmed by the representatives of regional offices. Some of the offices are actively lobbying towards different institutions in order to get their opinions included in the proposals before they are presented. Other offices seem more to react to the presented proposal by proposing amendments which may or may not be taken into consideration. The regional offices which are taking a more proactive stance are usually those which have been there longer or have become more specialised.

6 Conclusion

This section presents the results of the thesis. The two main themes; the role of sub-national authorities in multi-level governance and the lobbying activities will provide the structure of the conclusion. It will be followed by a third section discussing the possibilities and problems with lobbying activities in multi-level governance as well as the fourth part which rounds up by discussing the future prospects of regional offices.

Sub-national authorities have since the 1980s been establishing offices in Brussels in order to be close the policy-making process which will ultimately affect them. The aim of this study has been to examine how the Swedish regions and major cities are working in order to influence the EU. In order to present my findings I will return to the initial questions which have guided my analysis.

How can we understand the role of Swedish regions and cities within a multi-level governance system?

How do Swedish regions and cities use lobbying to influence the policy-processes in the EU?

Sub-national authorities and multi-level governance

My study illustrates how the regional offices included in my study are involved in various lobbying activities, although the extent and focus varies. The most evident example of this is how they use various networks when lobbying. The multi-level governance approach refers to this as the *horizontal* dimension. It is the particular issue that decides which network is most useful to use. Moreover, by introducing the network governance approach, I tried to illustrate how the sub-national authorities are using other European partners by establishing and being part of social and institutional networks. The regions are part of various networks, for example AER and CPMR, where they can collaborate with others with similar ambitions and opinions in order to be more powerful. The cities most often use networks involving other major European cities, like the Eurocities network. The thesis shows that it is the Commission or the national government that most often are the recipients of lobbying efforts. The similarity between these networks is that the issues promoted by the network are usually general and not specific to a certain country, or the conditions of a particular region or city, e.g. matters concerning the environment, transport, social policy, public health or education.

As I mentioned above, the sub-national authorities have the option of cooperating with others, and this is also true in the Swedish context. The cities can choose to cooperate with regions, for example the city of Malmö can collaborate with Region Skåne and Gothenburg can cooperate with the Region Västra Götaland. In this type of cooperation, the city and the rural areas work together and try to influence the national governments. There are also examples of transnational cooperation, for example the Øresundregion and the Baltic Sea Region. Here the members have two options, either they can come together and focus the lobbying towards the national government, or they can turn to the EU where the knowledge regarding transnational cooperation is well established. My study indicates that the reason for using networks usually is because lobbying requires resources and it is rather expensive to conduct fruitful lobbying. Allying with others reduces the cost of lobbying as well as makes them more powerful as more actors are taking part in the lobbying effort.

Moreover, the Swedish regions and cities also conduct individual lobbying efforts towards specific institutions, which is an example of the *vertical* dimension. This aspect of lobbying is mostly found in the situations when it is important that they are the sender, for example when applying for financial support from the structural funds regarding a project. The vertical dimension can also be found when regions and cities individually attempt to influence the Swedish national government to take their specific conditions into consideration.

The results presented in the thesis correlates to the main argument of the multi-level governance approach, that the Swedish regions and cities are independent actors who interacts with other political actors on different territorial levels in order to influence different processes in the EU. Furthermore, the concept of governance includes the cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors on different territorial levels. Moreover, the network governance approach also highlights the use of personal contacts and networks and explains the occurrence of Swedish regional offices using networks to pursue their interests. The former aspect is an interesting development since some of the international strategy- and policy documents explicitly state that collaboration ought to be developed with non-governmental actors such as businesses, as long as it is in the best interest of the region or city. However, how these partnerships actually work is unclear and varies between the different offices. However, some regional offices work for and together with business, most often publically owned companies. It is an interesting observation, since the sub-national authorities are known to cooperate with a variety of non-governmental actors in their national settings.

Lobbying efforts and activities

The interviewees have pointed towards a major development in the Swedish regional offices. Some of the regional offices have concentrated their efforts on direct lobbying, trying to gain early access to the decision-making process in

order to influence. Other offices are still focusing on spreading information regarding matter such as informing about application deadlines to people at home, explaining and demonstrating about how the EU affects them as well as could be of use to them. They attempt to influence by answering legal proposals after they have been drafted rather than try to influence the content before it is proposed. A focus on direct lobbying demands more resources and clearer priorities, and has led to that certain regions and cities have established separate offices in Brussels.

These attempts described above is referred to as *up-stream* lobbying, where by keeping up to date, the regions and cities can be one step ahead and be prepared before a legal proposals has been passed. They can work individually, but most often they collaborate with others in order to become a stronger and more influential actor. The key is to gain early access to the decision-making process since it usually is easier to influence the proposal at that stage. Although not all the offices are involved in up-stream lobbying, all of them provide examples of *down-stream* lobbying activities where they are utilizing the already existing framework of the EU, especially the structural funds in order to gain informational advantages by being involved in a strategy early on as well as gain financial support for implementing a policy which is considered to be beneficial to them.

One important conclusion is that it is the particular issue which decides who the sub-national authorities will focus their lobbying efforts towards. The Commission appears to be an important receiver, since it is the institution drafting the legal proposals and the one responsible for the structural funds. Furthermore, the study argues that the Commission is also interested in the knowledge and skills of the sub-national authorities which points towards a mutual dependence. Although the theoretical framework does not include the aspect of “by-passing the state”, I claim that the finding of this thesis illustrates how the relationship between the Commission and the sub-national authorities is an example of this phenomenon. Similar contact can be found with the EP and the Council, although the latter was discussed extensively by the interviewees. In other words, the regions and the cities are actors in EU’s multi-level governance system. However, they take on different roles as they sometimes act as “watch dogs” for the Commission by informing them on the implementation process. They can also provide material which might help the Commission drafting functional proposals. Moreover, the study also shows how the sub-national authorities sometimes are independent actors and at other times are parts of a larger network.

Possibilities and problems

In the final section I wish to round up by discussing the questions that came up while writing the thesis, the limitation of the theoretical framework, as well as reflections on future prospects for the regional offices.

I started by asking about the consequences of sub-national authorities becoming increasingly international? What does it mean for the nation-state, do

they reduce the state's power or do they coexist? Firstly, the theoretical approach does not support the claim that the sub-national authorities' power has been strengthened while the nation-state's influence has decreased. Today, the regions and cities are independent actors, but that does not mean it has happened on behalf of the nation-state. Rather, the multi-level governance approach claims that the different levels interact in a way never seen before. This is true to some extent, but it is also evident that regions and cities are becoming increasingly influential. However, I was not able to discern any damaging competition between them, but rather benefits of cooperation. I do not claim that the sub-national authorities are equal players to the state. However, the fact that they have gained influence in areas which affect the regional and local levels cannot and should not be denied. Consequently, it has become increasingly difficult for "Average Joe" to determine who has the power to make decisions. Is it sub-national level, the state, the EU, or maybe all three of them? This can be perceived as undemocratic for the citizens, as tangled network governance makes accountability difficult.

The above discussion leads to the question if the EU's decisions will become more legitimate if the regions and cities are involved in the process? The most logical answer to that question is yes, the legitimacy will increase if the sub-national level is allowed to shape the areas which affect the every-day life of the citizens. A study (Lidström, 2011) has shown that a majority of citizens living in larger cities are in favour of setting up an elected assembly responsible for local and regional matters.

What happen to those regions and cities that lack the resources to lobby? This poses an obvious problem since it is mainly large a resourceful regions and cities which are able to conduct fruitful lobbying. The smaller regions and cities are left with the option of going through organisations and focus their lobbying attempt towards the state, which demonstrates the unbalance in the ability to conduct lobbying activities.

Future prospects for regional offices

Predicting the future is not easy. However, my studies and the interviewees indicate that the regions and the cities are becoming increasingly influential within the EU. All the representatives of the regional offices argue that the regional offices are here to stay. The main development seen today is that the regional offices are becoming more specialised. I think this is perfectly illustrated in the following quote:

"We are more specialised now. We have gone from being very general the first couple of years, and now the office is more focus on the issues that are of interest for us [...] Zlatan doesn't have to play defence, it's enough that he attacks" (Interview, Andersson, North Sweden, my translation).

The multi-level governance approach can to some extent explain the new role of the regions and cities. I have also complemented the theoretical discussion with the network governance approach in order to describe how the sub-national authorities use social contacts and networks to influence. However, it might be interesting to use the approach to describe how the regional offices use networks to influence more specifically, the success rate of this, and also what effect they have on the Europeanisation process. Another interesting approach is the legitimacy and demos aspect. It could be interesting to investigate if the sub-national authorities' involvement in the EU, e.g. through various projects affects the way people regard the EU and helps to reduce the democratic deficit in some way.

Furthermore, there are plenty of possibilities of making different types of comparisons. One alternative is to compare the different major cities in Sweden, and examine how they work to influence the policy-making process in the EU. There have also been some interesting changes with the establishment of new regional offices in Brussels, such as Region Skåne European Offices, Stockholm Region, Småland Blekinge South Sweden Office, and Region Västra Götaland in Brussels. It would be interesting to discuss the learning process, as well as examining the different phases the regional offices have undergone leading up to today. In other words, the subject of regional representation is still a fascinating topic, and there are many aspects which might be interesting for future scholars to study.

7 Executive Summary

Regions, and later also major cities, have been establishing offices in Brussels since the early 1980s and today there are over 160 regions present. New-regionalism explains this development as a result of the impact the globalisation process has had on the role of the nation-state. According to new regionalism, politics today are more focused on strategies to promote economic competitiveness on the international arena such as investments in infrastructure, knowledge-intensive industries, and a close cooperation between public and private. The sub-national political and administrative level is considered to be better positioned compared to the state when dealing with regional growth policies in the areas mentioned above due to their closeness to the issues and challenges which might occur. Similarly, many cities are today involved in something called entrepreneurial city politics which refers to informal networks, interaction between the public and private, and governance. It is therefore interesting to study how both regions and major cities function and act toward the national as well as supranational level.

The regional offices have a variety of tasks, but they all share the same clear mandate: to lobby for their regions (Marks et al., 2002). The establishment of the offices and the influence of regions in general have been studied before. However, this study goes one step further by focusing on the lobbying efforts of not only different Swedish regions, but also by the representatives of the three major cities in Sweden, Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm. Having an office in Brussels does not automatically mean that they can influence. This study analyses how the Swedish regional offices in Brussels attempt to gain influence over the policy process in the EU, by asking two key questions. Firstly, *how can we understand the role of Swedish regions and cities within a multi-level governance system?* And secondly, *how do Swedish regions and cities use lobbying to influence the policy-processes in the EU?* The analysis and discussion focuses on the lobbying efforts and set-up of institutional structures as a mean to achieve influence.

The theoretical framework is made up by the multi-level governance approach and is complemented by the network governance approach in order to analyse the sub-national authorities' functions and activities in the various territorial levels. The benefit of using more than one theoretical view is that they will cover more bases, provide an explanation to various aspects of the phenomenon thereby providing an overall picture. The multi-level governance approach introduced the idea that the local level is an influential actor along with the national and supranational level in the EU polity. The approach argues that the different levels are engaged in continuing negotiations and are part of overarching policy networks. As a result of the interaction between different territorial levels, some power has been transferred from the state level to the EU, as well as from the state

to the local level. The multi-level governance approach also highlights policy networks where the choice of partner is decided by the issue at hand. As mentioned above, the network governance approach is used as a complement to the multi-level governance approach and is useful when describing how sub-national authorities are involved in European partnerships and networks and how they use these to gain influence. The networks are more flexible and dynamic by nature which allows for more informal structuring around social relationships, which is an important factor in the lobbying activities of the regional offices.

The thesis is based on an interview study where seven out of the eleven Swedish regional offices are included; Central Sweden Brussels, Göteborg stad EU office, Mid Sweden Office, North Sweden European office, Malmö stad Brussel Office, Stockholm Region and West Sweden. Furthermore, an interview was conducted with a representative of Region Skåne discussing the establishment of the Skåne European Office and a representative of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)¹⁷. The interviews were semi-structured which allowed for the pre-set questions to be complemented by follow-up questions. The benefit of using interviews instead of sending out questionnaires is that the former allows for more flexibility and depth in the responses which leads to a richer and more accurate analysis. The interviewees were all civil servants at the regional offices. Some of them were the office managers at the time, but all of them possessed a high degree of knowledge about the office's activities and ambitions. The aim of the interviews was to gain knowledge about their perception, ideas, and notions in order to create an overall picture of how they work, and subsequently the function and tasks of the regional offices. In addition to interviews, the empirical material also consists of official documents entailing the regions' and cities' international strategy/policy.

In order to answer the two research questions, the analysis was divided into three parts discussing how to understand the efforts and activities of the sub-national authorities in multi-level governance, the attempts made by the regional offices to influence the decision-making process, and their lobbying efforts towards the EU institutions.

Regarding the first research question, how to understand the role of Swedish regions and cities in a multi-level governance system it becomes clear that the state is no longer the sole actor on the international arena. Due to the regional and urban development, sub-national authorities such as the Swedish regions and major cities have become independent actors which are involved in attempts to influence the policy-process, so called up-stream lobbying. The reason for this is to influence the policies which inevitable will affect them at a later stage, thereby cutting the regions' or cities' costs for adaptation. This also provides the sub-national authorities with an informational advantage, where by being able to formulate expectation on an up-coming EU directive they are able to strengthen their own competitiveness and domestic position. There is also example of down-stream lobbying where the sub-national authorities use the existing framework

¹⁷ Known in Sweden as Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting (SKL).

rather than try to create new conditions. The most common example of this is the structural funds where sub-national authorities, most often in cooperation with others, seek financial support for various project. Pilot projects often involves a benchmarking exercise where various actors' strategies concerning a specific challenge or problem is compared in order to identify the factors which have led to the most successful outcomes. Hence, the sub-national authorities are able to receive advantages by being involved at an early stage as well as attaining financial support for implementing policies considered as beneficial to them.

Cooperation and networking is a recurrent theme in all the interviews and illustrate the claim made by the network governance approach that sub-national are invested in wider European networks, which in turn are increasingly build around social relationships. Networking is an important factor when trying to influence since it is often easier and better to be many working towards the same goal when trying to influence the decision-making process. The specific members and the participation in various networks, differs from time to time. The regional offices often collaborate with other Swedish actors, but the interviewees argued the benefit of being part of trans-national networks. It is the particular issue, not geography, that decides who to cooperate with.

The second question asks how the Swedish regions and cities use lobbying to influence the policy-process. When it comes to lobbying the study shows that two factor are of outmost importance; time and expertise. In order to be able to influence, it is important to gain access at an early stage when the Commission is initiating a legal proposal. The earlier you enter the process, the easier it is to affect the outcome. The Commission is the prime recipient of the regions lobbying efforts due to its power to initiate legal proposals and allocate the structural funds. However, the interviewees also presented lobbying efforts towards the EP, the CoR, the ECJ and the Council. In the case of the Commission and the EP, the regional offices are often used as a door-opener and source of expertise. Both institutions are interested in knowing more about the regional and local conditions in order to put forward functional proposals. The CoR is considered an important institution as it represents all the European regions, but the lack of lobbying efforts toward it could be explain by the fact that it is still merely a consultative body. Furthermore, the interviewees mentioned little about lobbying towards the Council, mainly due to the fact that it was regarded as the arena for the Swedish government. Therefore, the main lobbying efforts were directed towards the national government instead. In order to be successful in their lobbying efforts, there is a need for a clear and defined position, or expertise. If the sub-national level is less interested or cannot forward an opinion, the office can only exert low influence if any. The study illustrates how additional Swedish regional offices have been established as a result of the region or city defining their priorities and ambitions and therefore have opened more specialised offices.

To summarise, these various lobbying efforts illustrates the core argument in multi-level government by demonstrating how different territorial levels interact with each other, both on a vertical level between various institutions on the EU and national level, but also on the horizontal level through the participation in various networks.

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East Sweden
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Mid Sweden Office
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Appendix: Interview questions

1. How would you describe the expectations of your organisation's members regarding trying to put forward comments/influence decisions/ policy in the EU?
2. How would you describe the office's opportunity to influence decision-making in the EU?
3. How would you describe your relations to the EU institutions? Who do you contact (politicians, civil servants, the Commission, the Parliament, the Council, the Committee of the Regions)?
4. Who or what institution does the office mostly try to affect (directly or indirectly) and how? Are there established contacts of specific individuals/institutions in Brussels which you usually try to influence?
5. What channels do you think is most effective to use when trying to influence/make opinions?
6. Do the office collaborate with other regions/cities and if so, in what way?
7. How do you view the regional offices' position/role evolve in the future? How do you see you own office function and tasks develop in the future?