



LUND UNIVERSITY

In the heart of the matter

-a political discourse analysis of the process of regional enlargement in South Sweden

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Preface

An internship with a political party in Region Skåne was the starting point for analysing the subject of which this thesis deals with. The opportunity to understand and observe the political discourse of Region Skåne's elite in three months raised questions concerning the regional development project in South Sweden. Main focus was on questions considering factors that could contribute to the process itself. Who could be identified as the key figure? What external and/or internal incentives could be found when discussing the past, the present and the future of regionalisation in Sweden with leading politicians and experts? What were their main concerns? How could they see themselves working in 2020 with regional politics?

The aim was to interview approximately ten politicians and experts but after been through some of the interviews a so-called snowball sampling started and left me with eighteen. This could have continued for months because questions were answered but more developed over time.

I am very thankful to everyone who agreed on being interviewed, for his or her availability and helpfulness in my research. Although the answers are more complex than I first thought one could argue that ambition lies at the heart of politics.¹

¹ Joseph Schlesinger's theory about political ambition: 1966 in Borchert, J. & Stolz, K., *Regional & Federal Studies Introduction : Political Careers in Multi-level Systems*. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 21(2 2011),

Abstract

This thesis aim is to understand the ongoing regional development in South Sweden by focusing on how the regional enlargement is exposed in the discourse of Region Skåne's political elite. The material is based on eighteen interviews with the political elite and analyses a discursive transformation of the factors that could contribute to the political process of enlargement. These factors require further and more detailed research to gain better understanding to what extent and how the project is situated within this discourse. Nevertheless, based on interviews conducted with politicians and experts within the political discourse of Region Skåne and operationalized through the method of political discourse analysis and content analysis three major factors are discussed. Firstly, important for this process is the Swedish governance structure where the regional level is weak and the state is not working to promote regional development. Consequently, regional political actors are working for the ability to take action by focusing on regional enlargement hence power is one factor that structure this process. Secondly, a deconstruction of the rhetoric of the political actor's arguments showed that future challenges such as an ageing population, infrastructure, public transport and environmental politics are seen as important and accordingly demand cooperation between municipalities over county levels. Moreover, due to unwillingness of major actors in discussing identity and culture, it may be argued that the far right discourse on identity and culture – i.e. the discourse based on an excluding rhetoric - has conquered the political discourse in this area. Thus the actors actualizing far right discourse have better chances to influence debates on normative aspects of identity and culture.

Abbreviations

C	Centerpartiet (Centre party)
CPR	Committee on Public Responsibility (Ansvarskommiteén)
EU	European Union (Europeiska Unionen)
FP	Folkpartiet Liberalerna (People Party Liberals)
M	Moderaterna (Conservatives)
SD	Sverigedemokraterna (Swedish Democrats)
RPP	Regional Pilot Project (Regionala Pilot Projektet)
V	Vänsterpartiet (Left Party)

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1. Introduction. The Regional Project

'There is a genuine injustice in Sweden today with the region of Västra Götaland, Region Skåne and Stockholm, that have completely different possibilities than the rest of us. They have political and economical muscles the rest of us can only dream about. Unless we can develop new and strong regions, there is a clear risk that the development dimension and all resources will be concentrated in these areas. Sweden as a country needs a regional development in order to get a balanced and a healthy economic growth. When the state opened this ketchup bottle as happened in 1997 with the pilot regions, then there is damn well not any turning back again. Then everyone must be given the same opportunities. '

-Interview with Peter Hogla, 2012, director of regional council Södra Småland

This quote, taken from an interview with the director of regional council Södra Småland Peter Hogla, displays the problematic issue of regional governance and regional space in Sweden. On the one hand it illustrates the growing indifference in the Swedish regional division but also the attempts of county councils to expand their mandates in order to develop regions in terms of self-interests. The committee on public responsibility's (CPR) report from 2006 states three criteria that are important for a regional enlargement and division, namely, size, distance and identity. Nevertheless, Region Skåne already fulfilling these criteria as an existing region is working towards further enlargement despite the lack of agreement within the parties. Region Skåne's motives behind the regional development in South Sweden are the key subject in this research.

In 2009, the Swedish government gave directive to investigate the state's regional administration division. The outcome is to be published in December 2012. Consequently and as a response to the demand given by the state's investigator Mats Sjöstrand, the politicians within the regions and county councils started to gaze into the future. Who should we negotiate with and why? Region Skåne and the county councils of Blekinge, Kalmar and Kronoberg already collaborating in a few areas decided to become partners in a regional formation. Although there was a strong lack of consensus internally as well as externally between the political elite, the declaration of intent in forming a South Swedish region was signed and agreed in November 2011 with hopes that it will lead to a partnership and an application for a South Swedish region in 2019. Thus this presupposes that there are strong driving forces and powerful politicians supporting this project. Hence, the issue of forming the South Swedish region can be seen as complex and controversial since it divides parties on all levels. Civil servants and politicians working within this project have called the South Swedish regional project a political strategy. This political strategy needs attention. If realised, the south Swedish region would have 1 770 523 inhabitants in total and the mandate in the areas of healthcare, public transportation and to

some extent culture. Accordingly, this regional enlargement project, from an already existing region to including three counties, would become the biggest region in Sweden with Region Skåne as the biggest partner. Whereas the county council Kronoberg, Blekinge and Kalmar are not on their own fulfilling the criteria of forming a region, Region Skåne is a region since 2000. Arguably, the motives and end goals behind this project differ in relation to all partners, however in this thesis Region Skåne serves as a case study. Due to Region Skåne's already well-established entity as a region with cross border cooperation with Denmark in Öresund Region and its profoundly geographical area, in this context the end goals and motives need research. Thus the aim is to understand what could be the motives behind the development of a south Swedish region by asking the people behind the project, the regional politicians.

A Political Discourse Analysis

On the basis of the political discourse in Region Skåne and in relation to political ambition, regional identity and culture, I intend to analyse the political actors' claims and motives considering regional development in South Sweden. My aim is to critically view this current Swedish regional debate by analysing interviews and the discursive representations of arguments made by the regional politicians and experts. The focus is on the political actors in Region Skåne and the pros and cons of a further regional development in South Sweden. This will be conducted on the basis of a hypothesis articulated with a sharper regional policy and a deeper cooperation between municipalities, regions are increasing their power in relation to the state that can have the consequence the state is reluctant when it comes to enlargement processes in Sweden. As a result, parties and politicians on different levels are divided; it could be seen as a question outside ideology with identity and power as important factors.

-The question this thesis deals with: what are the motives/driving forces contributing to the process of a regional construction in South Sweden with a focus on the political discourse of Region Skåne?

1.1 Limitations

The aim is to understand and explain the process behind the project of regional development in Region Skåne with a focus on the political actors in the mentioned region. Thus other actors within this project i.e. Blekinge, Kalmar or Kronoberg are not studied. Furthermore, the focus is on a political discourse to involve only the politicians and experts working with the project. Nevertheless, politicians are not the only actors within this discourse. As in any discourse, there are numerous actors and recipients who are participating within this project i.e. organisations and companies etc. However, based on awareness that the public is influencing the decisions on another level one can argue that the project is in a political stage where the direct influence from the public can be seen as limited. Moreover, the political discourse of this research includes only the politicians and civil servants within this context of this project i.e. people who are participating in political actions and may influence this process by political decision-making. Reasons for including experts and civil servants and not only focusing on politicians, is to estimate if the picture and the nodes which can be identified when interviewing politicians can be seen as relevant to the wider picture. However, in order to understand the reasons behind Region Skåne's involvement a few interviews were taking place with politicians and experts within the council of Kronoberg and region council Södra Småland. Furthermore, the aim of this thesis is to contribute to the regional debate by looking at the political discourse and bringing questions about causes of regional development further, not to predict the outcome or draw any conclusions on how it should be done. Moreover, it could be used as an indicator for the structural process of regional development but not on the structural agency level. Much work has been done on regionalisation on a European level and on regionalisation in Sweden in relation to decentralisation and democracy. This is not the issue here although some references in this field are discussed in the literature review. Accordingly, it is to understand and elaborate on the process of regional enlargement within the region itself i.e. the bottom-up perspective in relation to actors. The aim is not to concentrate on the outcome of this regional project and emphasise the democratic idea behind region-building, as is the case in the work made by P. Blomqvist and P. Bergman (*Regionalisation Nordic Style : Will Regions in Sweden Threaten Local Democracy ? 2010*) Nor is the aim to understand the region-building from a historical perspective

(Pontus Tallberg & M. MacCallion.²) Furthermore, it is not to understand the globalisation process and the EU's role in the regionalisation process in Sweden. Moreover, in an attempt to understand the political pros and cons of a future enlargement, examples of the political discourse are limited to the discourses exposed by politicians within Region Skåne and Kronoberg as well as civil servants and experts working within this field.

1.2 Research design and Research Questions

The significance of this study for theory could be seen as an expansion of existing theories of regionalism in Sweden. Hence, the results could be seen as constitute of an “extension of theory”. (Marshall & Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 2011:71) Due to its descriptive nature and use of practical arguments as the main material, the results can be placed in the context of discussing the costs and benefits of this contemporary regional project. Thus one could argue that this study adds a new dimension to the ongoing debate considering regionalisation in Sweden. Firstly, the focus on political actors within region Skåne and experts on the subject are distinctive. Secondly, when discussing the process of an ongoing regional construction such as the South Swedish region, the aim is to contribute to a new perspective.

This analysis is conducted as a qualitative study where deep interpretation of the material is essential. Political discourse analysis and content analysis are the two methods used. Hence the study suggests a triangulation of methods and is constructed as both quantitative and qualitative in nature. (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:43) Moreover, triangulation of methods serves as a conceptualisation of “trustworthiness” within this research. (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:40) When using content analysis, the frequency of words and categories are analysed in relation to numbers. These numbers are identified and tested in accordance with the political discourse analysis. (PDA) Although, the categories are the choice of the researcher, due to the method of content analysis, the categories structure the research that gives this research high reliability. The categories must for this purpose be clear and simple. (Fitjar, R.D., 2009:68) The PDA is based on Fairclough & Fairclough's approach (Fairclough, I. & Fairclough, N. *Political Discourse Analysis: A method for advanced students: 2012*) and focuses on combining critical discourse analysis with practical

² Further discussed in chpt 2.3

argument analysis. Hence, the practical arguments within the political discourse are dialectical as they are focused and analysed in relation to agency, claim, goals, means-goals, values and counter arguments. One advantage with this type of method has to do with the theoretical sufficiency i.e. the theories and categories are well intertwined. The findings is discussed and applied to existing theories within the field of regionalism, however the reflexivity and critical engagement in the findings are essential. (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:220) The aim of this research is twofold. First, it aims to understand the process behind the development of a south Swedish region for the purpose of viewing this as a pilot project in Sweden. Secondly, after identifying these motives and end goals based on the political actors the arguments based on theories in relation to political ambition, network, culture and identity have been analysed.

This thesis will deal with the question of regional development and political ambitions with a focus on the political discourse of Region Skåne. Hence based on discursive arguments derived from interviews conducted with the political elite in Region Skåne the research questions are as follows:

-What are the main factors / driving forces contributing to the process of a future regional construction in South Sweden with a focus on the political discourse of Region Skåne?

These working questions will be dealt with throughout the thesis:

- How frequently does the political elite in Region Skåne and Kronoberg present words to expresses regionalisation as a positive vs. negative process?
- How frequently does the political elite present words to expresses regional identity and regional culture?
- How frequently do the political elite present words to expresses region vs. state?
- What are their motives and goals?
- What are their claims for action?
- What circumstances are shaping the agents goals and actions?
- What could be identified as means-goals?
- What values are guiding the goals and actions of the political elite?

Thus the material consisting of eighteen interviews with the political elite will serve as the main material. By focusing on a political discourse analysis and a content analysis, the discursive arguments that are being used to justify the project are analysed in relation to theories regarding political careers, regional identity and culture. This thesis is outlined as

follows. First a theoretical framework is presented with concepts, context and literature review considering the regional debate in Sweden and the way in which this literature is conceptualised and used within this thesis. Continuing by presenting the methodological toolkit and how the concepts and theory are operationalized within the theoretical framework. Moving beyond but still integrated with theory and method, for the purpose to address the issue of this thesis the following chapter 3,4 deals with the analysis and further research. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn based on the obtained research.

2. The context of the debate on regional development. Theories, concepts and literature review

2.1. Global context and regional processes in Sweden

Although the extent of the pace of regional development differs in all European countries, European integration and globalisation should be seen as crucial variables in the regional development process in all European countries. At a macro level the EU is an important factor in the process of regional development. The European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) which was introduced as an instrument in 2006 for a smoother regional and city cross border cooperation is just one example of how the EU is working in a positive manner towards the regional process and something which Joakim Nergelius et al are discussing in their report *Europeiska grupperingar för territoriellt samarbete*, (2010). Moreover, the EGTC is an example of how regions have become more influential. However important on a macro level nevertheless in an analysis of a specific country it might not be sufficient enough. Rune Dahl Fitjar, a senior researcher at the University of Stavanger, argues that the academic debate has mainly focused upon European integration and globalisation as an influence on regionalisation. (Dahl, 2009:15) For this reason it is essential to look for other variables and actors contributing to regional development (Dahl, 2009:15). Although political power might be a factor on its own, the public opinion would not be convinced if this were the only reason. In addition it is important to look for the end goal of a regionalist movement with actor's ambitions and motives. (Dahl, 2009:15) Dahl proposes the use of four operational measurable: cultural distinctiveness, globalisation, European integration, party systems and economic development. (Dahl, 2009) Following Michael Keating (2003, *The new regionalism in Western Europe*), territory is important and should be linked to ambitions towards regional mobilisation and political representation. (Keating, 2000:9) Based on the link between territory and identity politics, Keating argues that Europe have seen the rise of a 'new regionalism'. (Keating, 2000:2) Regionalisation process is not the end to territorial politics but a reshaping or reconfiguration of territory with regions gaining more importance as one level in a multi-level system of governance.

Due to the qualitative nature of this research the context in which this project is taking place, i.e. the political discourse of Region Skåne, must be understood and discussed. The

motives and end goals that are structuring the action of the political elite are significantly influenced by the context of the regional debate in Sweden. (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:91). Accordingly, this study is situated within the regional context in Sweden and the regional project of the South Swedish region. Albeit the setting is focused on the political discourse in South Sweden, regionalisation on a European level is important and structuring and is additionally included. Traditionally much of the academic focus lies on regionalisation in Europe and the state vs. the region in a multilevel governance. Arguably, the main focus of this research, the region, the actors and the process from within which is shaping the outcome, are still not a very well developed academic area.³ (Fitjar, R.D., 2009. *The Rise of Regionalism: Causes of Regional Mobilisation in Western Europe* Taylor & Francis. P. 2)

2.2 Definitions of the core concepts

Defining the term *region* can be problematic. Due to its diverse meanings depending on country and in relation to regional governance, economic and cultural territories or economic units it demands distinct clarification. (Fitjar, R.D., 2009:2) Nevertheless, since the term in this research is used in a political discourse and implies the image of Sweden as a unitary state, in a broad definition regions are seen as meso-level sub-state authorities. A meso-level sub-state is thus ‘[...]an intermediate level of government between the locality and the centre’ (Sharpe, L.J., 1993. *The Rise of meso government in Europe*) Secondly, regions in this thesis are seen as socially constructed and should be defined with the regional government structures as the starting point. (Fitjar, R.D., 2009:3) Furthermore *regionalism* is a strategy for political elites ‘to augment their power vis-à-vis the central state [...]’ (Fitjar, R.D., 2009:3) in accordance with Dahl, the regional government structures determine the resources of the political elite. It should thus be seen as ‘[...] where their efforts at building a regional identity must begin.’ (Ibid) Having defined the term region the concept of *regional enlargement* needs to be addressed. The committee of public responsibility’s report (Nordregion & Eurofutures, *Sveriges regionala indelning - om tillväxtperspektivet får råda Ansvarsfördelning på regional nivå : hur kan den se ut i*

³ Further discussed in the literature overview.

praktiken?, 2006: 8) suggests three criteria that together predetermine a new regional division in Sweden⁴:

- Size: The region must be sizeable enough to carry out the responsibilities demanded for implementing growth policies and it needs both center and periphery. Moreover, a large region ensures better opportunities of strategic investments, international positioning and specialization and training in their own organisation.
- Distance: The region must be large enough but at the same time small enough to form a coherent regional center with an arena for public policy and regional collaboration. However, the demand in size and distance can be compromised with having more than one center.
- Identity: Identity is important on many levels. Since cross-sector decisions require anchoring, there should be a sense of community within each region as a basis for political promotion to be developed. It is advantageous if the regions are based on already established political regions, interaction patterns, or other identity-based conditions that people can identify with.

According to the CPR, if these criteria are met the regional enlargement will be advantageous. These criteria are important in adapting policies to meet local conditions and needs. This could be problematic in terms of a very large geographically and culturally spread region. (Committee on public responsibility's (CPR), 2006:8⁵) Accordingly, political support and mobilisation of resources needs to be taken into account by the political elite when developing new regions. A *regional identity* can furthermore take many expressions. However, in relation to Dahl Fitjar 'The concept of regional identities refers to the feeling of belonging in a particular region. (Dahl, 2009:3) Regional identity adds to the national identity and forms "a part of the package". (Dahl, 2009:3) Furthermore, regional identity may be discussed in relation to the concept of "imagined regional community" where the imagined regional identity plays an important role in structuring the region building by regionalists promoting the regional development. This politicisation of regional identity is called *regionalism*. Regionalism occurs when political actors are claiming a regional population, based on identity, economical advantages or common

⁴ Author's translation from Swedish to English

⁵ Author's translation from Swedish to English

interests, to advance as a group. (Dahl, 2009:5) According to Dahl, ‘[...]you may or may not be able to choose whether to have a regional identity, you do have to choose whether or not to be a regionalist. Working to promote a region entails action, and any action is the result of choice. ‘(Dahl, 2009:5) *Regionalists* are thus the political elite who promote the regional layer of the government in order to gain political and economical autonomy for the region. (Dahl, 2009:5) The *political elite* in this sense is defined in terms of power, agency and ability to take action. Thus, people who have power within a society, in this case include people who have political power within the region, individuals within businesses and academics in the region. (Dahl, 2009:7) These elites have the ability to influence and take action to construct the political and economical development. (Dahl, 2009:7) The political discourse is defined by the actors i.e. the politicians utilizing discursive resources. (Dijk, T.V., *What is political discourse analysis?* 1997:12)

“Politicians in this sense are the group of people who are being paid for their (political) activities, and who are being elected or appointed (or self-designated) as the central players in the polity.”
(Dijk, 1997:12)

Following Fairclough & Fairclough, a political discourse analysis deals with political issues and is analysed critically with the use of practical argument. Thus this thesis deals with what is inside the political discourse and the arguments that are being proposed, what politicians are saying outside the context is not political in this sense. (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012:18)

The regional project in South Sweden is a *political process* in the sense that it ‘[...] is the overall term that categorizes complex, long-term, sequences of political actions. Governing, legislation, opposition, solidarity, agenda-setting, and policies are among the prototypical aspects of such political processes.’ (Dijk, 1997:17) The ability to *take action* is structured by the capacity of power. In this thesis *power* is discussed as a “source of agent’s reasons for action.” (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012:112) The exercise of power can be seen in relation to the concept of deontic power. Power is a claim; it ‘[...] provides the agent with reasons for action.’ (Ibid) Moreover, all political power is deontic power and involves ‘rights, duties, obligations, authorizations, permissions, privileges, authorities and so on.’ (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012:112) The relationship between power and legitimacy is furthermore important because in a deontic reasoning, action is provoked by

status function and acceptance or recognitions. Accordingly, politicians usually build their arguments upon this sort of desire- independent reason. (Ibid)

2. 3 The Regional context. The Case of Region Skåne

Region Skåne consists of thirty-three municipalities, all of them are within the same geographical area, meaning that the region includes various actors from each municipality. Consequently, the mandate which regional politicians have is limited and regional projects are hard to realise. The letter of intent that was signed between the involved counties and region Skåne in November 2011, can be seen as the first phase in the project of a South Swedish region.

'Region Skåne, County Council Kalmar, the Regional Council in Kalmar, Council Blekinge, Region Blekinge, County Council Kronoberg and Regional Council Södra Småland intend to form a common region latest on January 1, 2019. This should be preceded by an extensive development work in order to reach participation and influence in the region.'

(Protocol Region council, Region Skåne 2011-12-09)⁶

An agreement was signed but at present (2012) the decision cannot be seen as grounded in all parties thus there are still politicians in all parties who want to keep the door open for alternatives and still negotiates the outcome hence one could argue that ideology is not important in this question. Due to the weak regional level in Sweden, regional politicians have little power in comparison to politicians on a governmental level. Thus, the regional level can be seen as less favourable for politicians. According to Jan Åke Björklund, the government's coordinator in the regional pilot project in 1997 and involved in both Region Västra Götaland and the project of forming a region in Norrland, the core part of the success of regional projects are related to the motives by the politicians. (Interview with Jan Åke Björklund, 2012) 'It demands strong politicians who are eager to work for this project to become reality and who are working hard in creating engines. These engines must continue chewing after the implementation phase.' (Björklund, 2012).

The government's support is equally important, and according to Björklund it depends on leading politicians at the national level. Due to the parliamentary politicians' disagreement, the present-day strategies are proposed from the bottom-up perspective i.e. from regions and county councils themselves. (Björklund, 2012). Although the conservatives (M) are in

⁶ Author's translation, Further discussed in chapter 5.

favour of regional development in Sweden, many consider them as avoiding taking responsibility for the regional level. Thus the regional politicians must deal with issues of regionalization by themselves. This, according to Björklund, means that the future of the regional government structure in Sweden comes down to that party which is currently in power. Although all parties are rather passive, the opposition with the Social Democrats (S) in lead, claims to work in favour of strong regions if they get parliamentary power in the election of 2014. (Ibid) Anders Olshov, CEO at Öresundsinstitutet, confirms this picture and argues that for the centralized Swedish government, Skåne is the most difficult part to control. (Interview with Anders Olshov, 2012) The government can be seen as divided in the question of regional development due to Skåne as a strong actor at the national level. According to Anders Olshov, the economically strong Skåne in alliance with Copenhagen would be the only part of the country that could challenge Stockholm. With this in mind, how important is the interplay between the political actor's power and ambitions for the regional development?

2.4 Regions and Regional development: Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

Situated within the fields of political science and European Studies with regional and federal studies as the main approach, the theories discussed in this chapter contribute with different aspects to the theoretical framework with common denominators that are implemented within the research. First and foremost, the ontological point of departure is the social constructivist approach to regionalisation. It connotes that development of regions is a kind of construction, and this, in its turn are constructed. Thus presupposes that actors and agency are the essence of this process simultaneously structured by the outcome. Following Josefina Syssner, a constructionist understanding focuses on the process of cultural practices and objects and how they are constructed thus seen as open, flexible and changing processes. (Syssner, J., 2009:442). Hence, the constructionist approach is suitable for approaching regional culture and identity. Secondly, another important ontological position is acknowledgement of multi-level governance, as the main arena for the interrelations between all levels of the state, region and local settings. Although it did not gain any significant role in the regional debate, another denominator is the view of political actors as important for the implementation of policies. The epistemology of this research is structured around the political actors and their motives.

Based on previously theories, which within the theoretical framework considering the role of political actors for the regional development means:

- Political actors shape the concepts and the idea of ‘regions’. (Boye, P., 2011)
- They determine interconnectedness and social inclusiveness of the regional network. (Herrschel, 2011)
- The ambitions of actors are shaping the outcome of the regional development. Starting point is often regional identity and regional culture. (Dahl, 2009)
- Due to the career interests and professional politics of regional politicians, being in between the state and the local, the ambitions are not so much linked to a ‘specific institutional perspective’ as to career ambitions. (Borchert & Stoltz, 2011:37-41) Consequently, political actors ambitions shape the outcome of policy-making.
- Political actors promote the cultural stereotypification, and hence contribute to the regional development and the competition between regions for economical means. (Syssner, 2009:439)

Depending on the regional map and the political actors ambitions, a region might or might not have the capacity to develop. The capacity to develop is also structured around the link between the region and the state. Dahl argues that the economic situation of the region in relation to the state is crucial due ‘[...] the rational calculation of costs and benefits of mobilisation [...]’ (Dahl, Fitjar, 2009:) Thus, in the context of the regional process in South Sweden, the region can be seen as being shaped by economical centre, political centre and political actors. The Swedish ‘regional mess’ (McCallion, 2010) within the government structures can explain and contribute to the political actor’s motives and goals. In Sweden in contrast to many other European countries, the process of regionalisation has been slow and the Swedish government tends to be seen as reluctant towards internal regional development. Thus the Swedish regional level is weak and at present it is only the parliament and the government that can make cross-sector decisions. (Committee on public responsibility’s (CPR), 2006:8)

Tallberg and Stegmann McCallion’s work on the regional process in Sweden serves not only as a detailed historical outline of regionalisation since the 1960s, but it delves into a critical examination of the outcome of the regional pilot projects. (McCallion, M.S. & Tallberg, P., 2008. *Regionalisation in Sweden* Sant’ Anna School of Advanced Studies) According to McCallion & Tallberg, the regional pilot projects (RPP) in 1997 could be

seen as an approach for the government to give democratic anchorage to regional development. (Mccallion & Tallberg, 2008:5). Meanwhile, in some counties responsibilities were moved from the county assembly board to region councils (regionförbund) or a regional assembly (regionstyrelse). Arguably it became more democratic with indirectly or directly elected politicians. (Mccallion & Tallberg, 2008:5) In the case of Region Skåne, politicians are directly elected and it consists of a regional assembly whereas Region council South Småland and Kalmar County have indirectly elected politicians taken from the municipalities involved. The new RPPs gained political power and mandate in the area of infrastructure and transport, EU funding allocation and tourism i.e. in long development strategies. (McCallion & Tallberg: 2008:5). The RPPs were only meant as pilot projects but Region Skåne and Västra Götaland were the two regions who became realised, the rest are either regional development councils⁷ or regional county administration board responsible for the regional planning. The many failed attempts with different regional projects⁸ thus make it clear that the Swedish public power can be seen as centralised. Arguably, and at the same time it could be seen as having the shape of an hourglass. (Mccallion, M.S., 2008. Tidying Up? “EU”ropean Regionalization and the Swedish “Regional Mess.” *Regional Studies*, 42(4), pp.579-592.) This ‘dual level’ of governance consists of a comprehensive central level and a strong local level with municipalities, leaving county councils and regions somewhere in between. (Mccallion & Tallberg, 2008:4) Thus the administrative level is divided and consists of a strong state centric level and a strong administrative local level. At the regional level the county administration board, municipal association and central state agency are sharing the work. (Mccallion, M.S., 2008:580) In relation to this, based on jurisdictional borders, cross-county border cooperation and different institutions, the regional administrative level is unclear and according to Mccallion could be seen as constituting a regional mess (Mccallion, M.S., 2008:580). Based on the ‘regional mess’ and Sweden’s dual system of governance, Tallberg & McCallion concludes that Sweden’s potential new regional map should include 10-14 new regions. They continue by arguing that if only a very small number of regions would develop, the result would instead be a merger process of municipalities and a more centralised state. (Mccallion, M.S. & Tallberg, P., 2008:12)

⁷ Regional development councils can be seen as the outcome of the RPP and is placed, having little power, in the middle between the state and the local.

⁸ The North region which failed to be realised in 2010 is one such project.

2.5 Concepts of Culture, Identity, Network and Actors

Concepts of culture, identity, network and actors are viewed as important for regional development and discussed further in this chapter. They are derived from the theories and accommodated within the epistemology and methodology of this research.

These concepts and the OECD reviews are important in the making of the region. As proposed by Boye (Boye, 2010), region building can have the consequence that political actors bring forward concepts that are flattering for the region and hence they claim that a regional development might be based on these concepts. Moreover, the use of culture and identity in the regional political discourse might tell us something about the 'stereotypification' (Syssner, 2011) of the region and the way in which political actors claim the right to regional development. Herrschel's theory (Herrschel, 2011) explains the region's prosperity as determined by network and actors' social inclusiveness. Consequently, both geography and the political actor's motivation can be explained by the concept of periphery and marginalisation.

Examining the role of OECDs Territorial reviews importance in policy conception and regional development, Petter Boye, sees regional institutionalisation as a part of the process of regionalisation. Region concepts are embedded in strategic processes of regional platforms. (Boye, P., 2011, *The Role of OECD Territorial Reviews in Policy Conception and Contemporary Regional Development*) This "evolution of region concepts" influence the way in which people (actors) act i.e. the expectations of the future of the region influence the actors and the thus the outcome. (Boye, 2011:118-119) Over time these institutionalised concepts are transformed into competencies within the regional platform thus the region concepts are not only the starting point but also the product of it. Actors shape the concepts, which have the consequence that the concepts change accordingly to new experiences of the actors. (Boye, 2011:118-119) Boye takes Öresund regionalisation as an example, where Region Skåne as one of the actors, shaped the concepts that derives from theories, local structures and archetypes, concepts that today are core parts of Öresund region's image. (Ibid) This process of conceptualisation in regional development can be linked to Josefina Syssner's (Syssner, J., 2009. *Conceptualizations of Culture and Identity in Regional Policy*) work on regional identity and culture. Syssner contributes to this debate by identify the conceptualisation of culture and identity by the political elite in the making of the region. (Syssner, 2009:438) Focusing on two regions,

Norrbottnen in Sweden and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany, Syssner finds that stereotypification is an important part of the policy discourse on identity and culture and the political discourse support [...] a belief in the existence of ‘genuine’ or ‘authentic’ regional cultures and identities.’ (Syssner, 2009:441) The regional culture, based on stereotypical identity and place bound history, is used as an element in the making of the region. According to Syssner, although culture and identity are seen as important ‘for the competitiveness of the region’, as a means in regional development cultural recognition is not however a driving force for the regional making. Instead the region’s idea of a prosperous economic future is the fundamental reason. (Syssner, J., 2009:452) Drawing on documents published by the political elite in each region studied, Syssner concludes that regions can be seen as competitors for economic means. Political actors promote the cultural stereotypification and by this contribute to the regional development. (Syssner, 2009:439) Hence, one could argue that the cultural aspect of regionalisation can cover one side of the problematic. However, in the political discourse of regional project in South Sweden, with its fusion of one region and three counties and with different conceptualisations of historical and regional culture, one has to take more calculated political ambitions into account. Following Dahl, (2010) regionalism might to some extent be regarded as a political movement set in place when actors face changes or challenges ‘with rational processes driving the politicization of regional identities.’ (Dahl, 2010:17) However, the question is whether all regions and political actors have the same possibilities?

Tassilo Herrschel, co-director of the Centre of Urban and Regional Governance (CURG) at the university of Westminster London, argues that two more levels need to be taken into account: the bounded space and the actors’ network. Based on the concept of state-periphery and by looking at peripheralisation and marginalisation, Tassilo Herrschel (Herrschel, T., 2011. *Regional Development, Peripheralisation and Marginalisation-and the Role of Governance*) explores the regional development in Europe and brings the role of actor and network to the forefront. Accordingly, periphery and centre has long been equivalent to geography. However, Herrschel develops this argument further by arguing that it should also be based on actor networks and “social connectivity among policymakers”. Hence, the way in which periphery and marginalisation works are connected to the policy makers’ implementation of policies and use of power. (Herrschel, 2011:86) Displaced from the bounded spaces, the “new” patterns of governance are by

Herrschel seen as '[...] open, flexible, non territorially defined, network based, informal.' (Herrschel, 2009; Jones, et al, 1997 in Herrschel, 2011:86) Due to this governance, metropolitan areas or urban centres will produce regions having both the construction of clusters and the geographical area as well as the 'inter-urban functional relationship'. (Herrschel, 2011:87) Herrschel argues that cluster network and other forms of grouping are a result of these linkages. In this context, inter-personal, inter-institutional linkages and power relations are of high importance and can determine whether or not actors are included and involved in policy-making. Consequently, exclusion of some actors is based on their marginalised position: both geographic and through social one. (Herrschel, 2011:86) The work of the political scientists, Jens Borchert and Klaus Stoltz (Borchert, J. & Stolz, K, *Introduction : Political Careers in Multi-level Systems*, 2011) brings this argument further. Noticing that the importance of political careers for the functioning of multi-level systems of government has gained little attention, Borchert & Stoltz claim that the impact political careers and ambitions have for inter-institutional linkage and territorial levels are of high importance. (Borchert & Stoltz, 2011:) Drawing on an extensive research based on different European countries, Borchert & Stoltz argues '[...] political careers and the ambitions guiding these careers are inextricably linked to the institutional opportunity structures provided by each political system. (Borchert & Stoltz, 2011:110) In a multi-level system, regionalisation and Europeanization have made way for new types of career patterns and added a whole new (regional) level in some countries. Consequently, the political career patterns and new possibilities structures the ambitions of the political actors thus could change the whole institutional level. (Borchert & Stoltz, 2011:108)

This chapter have pointed to regional development in Europe as a recurring theme within the academic debate with the EU and globalisation as distinctive variables. However as pointed out, territory, conceptualisation, regional identity and culture, bounded spaces, actors network and political ambitions should be seen as crucial. Although, the extent of research in the area of regionalisation in Europe and Sweden one could argue that what is missing is the focus on how political actors contributes to the regional development from a bottom-up perspective by analysing the discursive representation on end-goals and motives. Hence, the main focus of this research- the relationship between the political actors, their motives and end-goals in structuring the regional development- could contribute to the regional debate.

3. Methodology of the Study

3.1 Material, Sampling and source criticism

The analytical framework is structured around concepts derived from the theories discussed in previous chapter and operationalized through the data and the method of content analysis and political discourse analysis. Thus the concepts Conceptualisation-Culture- Identity-Network and Actors are important for this analysis. Political actors are seen as the starting point for this research hence the material derives from semi-structured interviews with eighteen regional politicians and experts within the field of regionalism in Sweden. After the process of transcribing, the material consisted of approximately one hundred pages. As the interviews were conducted in Swedish, all material had to be translated by the author. Furthermore, the material needs to be taken in the context of the subject hence a generalisation about other regional development are not possible or intentional. Also, the choice of material and interview candidates was inevitably subjective. Moreover, the lack of statistics can be seen as negative from a critical point of view. However, the subject's contemporary and unique character as well as the qualitative nature of the research makes it valid. A pre-study for this thesis that started with an internship with a political party in Region Skåne has been important for the data gathering. Based on observations and participation in meetings and other occasions, the initial stage of the study and observational notes were important in understanding the network between the different politicians within the discourse and as a starting point for the sampling and contextualisation of the study. The sampling of the material is based on the process of snowball sampling. This comes down to an aim for flexibility within the research so as to be open for 'key figures' within the discourse. (Marshall & Rossman:2011) The limitation of research bias was another reason why snowball sampling was useful in that the sampling was structured around these key figures and not on the researchers pre-assumptions of the research.

Criteria used for selection of politicians:

- One politician from each party within Region Skåne
- Member of the regional assembly
- Member of the board or in some cases a part of the regional development board.
- In cases with politicians outside Region Skåne it was based on their connection.

Criterion based for sampling civil servants or experts:

- Working within Region Skåne or close relation to the work in Region Skåne.
- In any way involved in the project with a regional enlargement.

3.2 Collection of Interviews

Interviewing the elite can be rather problematic, due to practical reasons such as their availability and busy schedule but also in relation to pressure on the researchers skills. (Lilleker, D.G., 2003. *Interviewing the political elite: Navigating a potential minefield.*)

The expertise that I was trying to unfold and take part in was sometimes not easily accessible, at other times it was just as if pressing a button and the information was there. This was at times frustrating but also very exciting. The people that I had the possibility to interview were always well prepared and keen on the subject. Important to understand is that these interviews were taking place three months after Region Skåne and Kronoberg, Blekinge, Kalmar signed the agreement about collaboration, if possible, in 2019. This was an advantage because it was in the beginning of the process and people were up to date about the project. Everyone but two responded within a few days on my email and were flexible enough to give me an interview in one of the four weeks that I had planned as my interview weeks. Most of the interviews took place in Malmö or Kristianstad at the offices of Region Skåne but also in Växjö, Lund and Ljungby. I decided early that the questions should be emailed a couple of days before hand to the interviewees. (see appendices 1. with name , date and place) This was an important part of the validity of the research. When they were well prepared the result was a deeper conversation on the topic. The interviews took approximately 45-60 min and were recorded. Often the interviewees after the last question was answered concluded with another 5-6 min in addition to what had previously been said. In this sense the conversation was actually most interesting in the end. In order to get the wider picture of the process and the motives behind an enlargement, the conversation started with a more general or macro level discussion and with open-ended questions. (see appendices 2) This was due to getting to know the respondent and to understand the person in front of me before asking more ‘sensitive’ questions about their role within this. A few questions were for this reason not included in the interview guide, which before hand was emailed. This was in-depth questions considering democracy, legitimacy and identity. Another reason was that I did not want them to prepare a speech in relation to these questions.

3.3 Methodological considerations

A ‘triangulation of methods’ (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:252) serves as a way to ensure a strong and grounded analytical framework hence a content analysis is combined with a political discourse analysis. (PDA) In order to identify the concepts that are most frequently used by the political actors and how political actors conceptualise regional identity and culture, the process of category generation included with the method of content analysis has strong advantages. Although of a quantitative nature it suits the qualitative approach and the limited use of statistic material. By using the programme ‘extract words, 2012 MAC’ the frequency of each word is counted and compared with the accuracy of all words. Thus, my pre-knowledge and assumption of the material is not in conflict with this part of the analysis. The categories of which the analysis is based upon are not a part of the selection of material hence the interviewees were not in control of the text. The weakness of this method however is the span of inferential reasoning hence the analysis and interpretation of the material is not transparent. The most frequent words and phrases were put into categories. This was mainly due to the risk of limitation of the material and for the reason of an open and flexible approach to the material. Since the aim was to have an open approach towards the material with the idea that it should “speak for itself” this method had advantages in its natural limitation of perspectives.

In order to understand the material derived from the content analysis three questions have structured the analysis as discussed in chapter 4.

- How frequently does the political elite in Region Skåne and Kronoberg present words to expresses regionalisation as a positive vs. negative process?
- How frequently does the political elite present words to expresses regional identity and regional culture?
- How frequently does the political elite present words to expresses region vs. state

PDA in this research serves not only as a method but is also important for the theoretical framework and as an ontological approach. The foundation of this research can be seen as based on discourse analysis as a method and theory, a complete package. (Jorgensen, Marianne W; Phillips, Louise J, 2002, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* p. 4) The approach towards PDA is based on Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough’s method of political discourse analysis in combination with practical argument and critical perspective. PDA in this sense combines a critical perspective on politics with the use of practical arguments as the basis for analysis. The advantage is that the claims and motives as

proposed by the political elite is analysed through a dialectical approach i.e. a dialogue with speech acts in which the acceptability of the claim is tested. (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012:54-55) Furthermore, by making an argument reconstruction (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012:139) and cluster the outcome one could identify the claims for action, the circumstances, goals, mean-goals and values that were guiding this project.

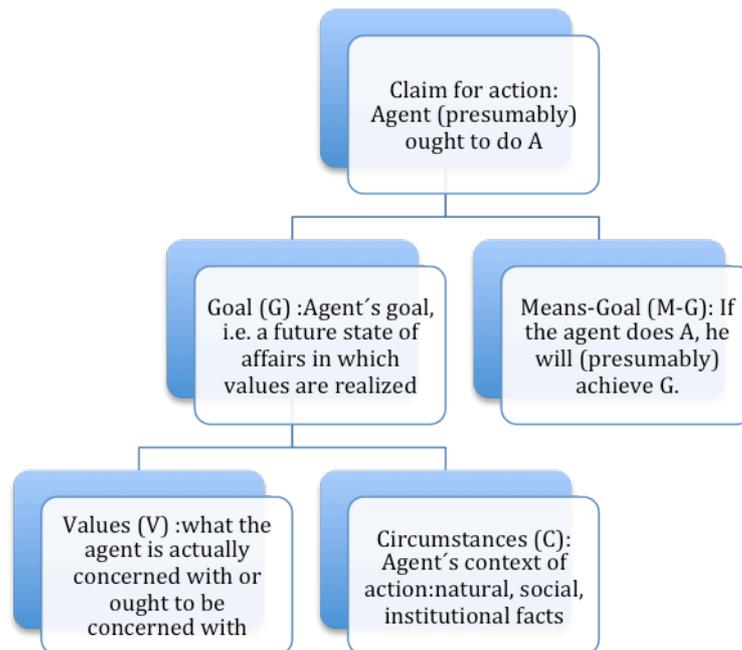


Figure 1.6 explains the structure of practical argument based on Fairclough & Fairclough's approach. (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012:45)

Based on PDA and in order to analyse the process of a regional development in south Sweden, the intention was to identify the main factors/driving forces by answer these research questions:

- What are the claims for action?
- What circumstances are shaping the agents goals and actions?
- What are the goals?
- What could be identified as means-goals?
- What values are guiding the goals and actions of the political elite

4. Content analysis and discourse analysis of the collected material. Discussion and findings

4.1. Content analysis and political discourse analysis

By interconnecting the theoretical framework with the methods of political discourse analysis and content analysis simultaneously; this chapter aims at answering the research questions posed in previous chapter. Thus, the intention is to apply the findings and categories from the content analysis with the deconstruction of the practical argument analysis. (see appendices 4) Firstly, based on the content analysis these categories were most frequently used within the political discourse.⁹

- Healthcare
- State vs. region
- Infrastructure
- Environment politics
- Identity, culture
- Economics
- Education
- Power

These categories were structured around words that have similar meaning attached and clustered together these words indicated the frequency of categories. (See appendices 3) As can be seen, words that are most accurate are traced back to healthcare, the state vs. region, infrastructure, environment politics, culture, education, the Swedish state and power. Accordingly, within the analysis the categories derived from the content analysis is organised around the deconstruction of the arguments as expressed by the political elite in relation to claims for action, the circumstances, goals, mean-goals and values that were guiding this project.

4.2 Claim for action: Politicizing the regional enlargement

The claim for action can be seen as grounded in the letter of intent agreed by all involved actors in November 2011, the actors' visions of the region based on the 'imaginaries' and important key figures network. Thus the rightness of this claim is supported by costs and

⁹ For more detailed information see appendices 3.

benefits of this claim i.e. pros and cons of forming a region. (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2011:144)

'Region Skåne, County Council Kalmar, the Regional Council in Kalmar, Council Blekinge, Region Blekinge, County Council Kronoberg and Regional Association of Southern Småland intend to form a common region latest on January 1, 2019. This should be preceded by an extensive development work in order to reach participation and influence in the region.'
(Protocol Region council Region Skåne 2011-12-09)

The word intend marks the strategy as being vulnerable and open for alternatives and it could be seen as indicating a rather weak commitment in relation to the project. The last sentence assumes that this is the beginning of the process. Arguably, the date 'latest on the January 1, 2019' however is the time set for the goal. The hesitating attitude towards the partnership was also evidently in the interviews. Most interviewees were positive in terms of collaboration however very few believed 2019 to be the year it would be realised. Nevertheless, on the question 'How do you think the Swedish regional map will look like in 2020? Almost everyone believed that there would be stronger regional development, most interviewees argued between 6-9 regions in Sweden at that time. Here it is important to note that the CPR made a report in 2006 suggesting that Sweden needs 6-9 regions in order to become more efficient on a regional level thus the interviewees might have based their answers on this report. (Committee on public responsibility's (CPR) 2006) However, what is interesting is the common view on the regional level as becoming more prosperous and powerful, but at the same time hesitate towards the own regional project. The early stage of the project and the internal divergences consider this project in different parties could contribute to the negative view of the outcome also circumstances¹⁰ of which none is in control of could contribute. Nevertheless, the claim in itself is based on the political elite's ambitions and visions for the regional development.

Following Dahl, the regional political elite is politicizing the idea of a regional enlargement due to the beneficial outcome and the circumstances that are shaping the region to change. (Dahl, 2009:17) One could argue that the claim for action is structured around a fear of being marginalised in the 'periphery'. Following, Herrschel's theory on periphery and marginalisation, the way in which periphery and marginalisation works are

¹⁰ Further discussed in relation to circumstances shaping the discourse.

connected to the policy makers' implementation of policies and use of power. (Herrschel, 2011:86) Networks are a crucial determiner in the prosperity of the region and where actors 'social connectivity' has gained an important role. It is not only due to the geography of the region where Region Skåne has a strategic place in South Sweden with the bridge over Öresund as a link to Copenhagen hence a strong 'inter-urban functional relationship'. (Herrschel, 2011:87) According to Herrschel, the position a region holds is also due to the political actor's networks 'the inter-personal level' thus strong politicians having a high position within the network with high ambition tend to work for expanding the regional development. Based on the interviewees' responses these 'key figures' within the political discourse of Region Skåne and the regional project can be identified as Pia Kinhult (Chairperson regional council, Region Skåne M) and Susanne Frank (Director County council Kronoberg (M)). At a rather early stage in the interviews, most interviewees proposed Kinhult and Frank as leading figures or driving forces in the project.¹¹ Both are holding high positions in the county or region of which they represent. Moreover, they are politicians within the Conservative party Moderaterna (M) that is holding the governmental power in Sweden- a party that has been criticised for not taking any responsibility for the regional level. (Interview with Jan Åke Björklund, 2012) Thus this can imply that this is a question outside ideology, on a national level the Conservatives is regarded as reluctant towards a regional level however on a regional level the regional politicians are in favour of regionalism. This is not only evidently in the conservative party, with an exception of the Swedish Democrats (SD) where the national level and regional level corresponded, all parties within the regional board were seen as split internally in relation to this question. Thus if its not based on ideology, what could be seen as the glue?

The claim towards a regional development could be argued as based on regionalists' calculation on power and economical for a more prosperous region and own political careers. Following Dahl, regional developments are often based upon regionalists, politicians who are working to promote the region based on calculated pros and cons. Working to promote a region entails action, and any action is the result of choice.

¹¹ Due to the limitation of this research, there might be more key figures in the other counties that are important for this development however within the discourse of Region Skåne, Kinhult and Frank were mentioned as key figures and Mats Sjöstrand in representing the government's report thus structuring the visionary outcome on the regional project discussed more below.

‘Regionalists are thus the political elite who promote the regional layer of the government in order to gain political and economical autonomy for the region.’ (Dahl, 2009:5)

Following Borchert & Stoltz, the political ambition and careers opportunities can be linked to the institutional structures of the political system. Hence, political ambition structures the political system on more than one level. In this case, politician’s ambitions can have the consequence that the political system change in accordance with the structure of opportunities provided by the state within the system of governance. This in turn structures the outcome of the project in that it demands a well-established network of actors and an inter-urban-functional relationship.

Another claim as expressed within the political discourse is that it ought to come from the bottom-up perspective i.e. the agent (the actors) are being pushed in the direction of preparing for future challenges. 98% of the interviewees saw the benefits of a stronger collaboration between counties and municipalities as a preparation for future challenges regarding health care, an ageing population, demands on infrastructure and power relation to the state. In a simplified matter ‘We ought to do this because the future is pointing in this direction.’ Thus the claim can be seen as based on what the region could be like. On the one hand, it is grounded in the reality (discursive representation) on the other it represents ‘imaginaries’ on how the possible (non-actual or not-yet-actual discursive representation) world could be like. (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012:103) A future possible world in turn gives the actor power to act thus it is empowering as can be seen in the following quotes:

- ‘In the future, small counties will find it difficult to maintain expertise in many areas.’ (Interview with Vilmer Andersen, 2012 (V))
- ‘I think one of the reasons of starting this project has to do with the importance of being prepared for the future.’ (Interview with Katarina Erlingsson, 2012 (C))
- ‘The regions are becoming increasingly important because some have begun to form regions and then the rest of us must follow the best as we can.’ (Interview with Susanne Frank, 2012 (M))

Although used as a claim for the project, the ‘imaginaries’ as future visions could also be linked to the goal premises of the regional project more discussed further below. However,

the semiotic representation of the actual world should be related to the circumstantial premises. (Fairclough & fairclough, 2012:104)

4.3. Context and circumstances: Region vs. the State

In relation to the context the globalisation aspect is important but is not extensively mentioned by the political elite as something essential. Thus it is hard to measure this node without a more comprehensive research based on a macro level perspective. For this reason one could argue that in relation to the political discourse of Region Skåne, the EU and globalisation are factors shaping the regional development claim as based on the circumstances. The EU is discussed as an important part with the Region as being well nested within the EU's regional policy area. However, it is also a factor that is taken for granted. Example: everyone answered that the EU is of great importance in relation to the region in almost all areas. Six out of 18 mentioned that 80% of all decisions taken place within the region are actually based on EU directive. Moreover, nearly everyone responded that the regional size is important in relation to the EU and lobbying. But in comparison with other regions in Europe, the South Swedish Region would still be very small. Although important, within the political discourse of Region Skåne the Swedish governance structure is more discussed.

The circumstances and the starting point of this process could thus be seen as belonging to the institutional structures of the Swedish government. Thus shaped by threats and opportunities with the government's initiative and the report made by Mats Sjöstrand. Mats Sjöstrands was mentioned in 15/18 interviews and which indicates that the outcome of the report is essential for the future of this project.

'It means a lot how Mats Sjostrand's investigation ends. It has emerged from a bottom-up perspective. The risk might be that nothing happens. We work from a bottom-up perspective in order to influence Mats Sjöstrand.'(Interview with Christine Axelsson, 2012 (S))

One could argue that the circumstance (C) shapes the claim and the agent's action (A) which has the consequence that A is not completely in progress since it in the end comes down to C that are difficult to influence. The state is markedly important in this process

since the national level could be seen as being “threatened” by a strong region¹² such as the South Swedish region would become if the claim realised. As mentioned in the chapter on the Swedish regional context, the Swedish system of governance could be seen as a ‘dual level’ consists of a comprehensive central level and a strong local level with municipalities, leaving county councils and regions somewhere in between. (Mccallion & Tallberg,2008:4) Thus the administrative level is divided and consists of a strong state centric level and a strong administrative local level. This makes it problematic for regions in a development since one could argue the capacity to develop is structured around the link between the region and the state. Dahl argues that the economic situation of the region in relation to the state is crucial due ‘[...]the rational calculation of costs and benefits of mobilisation[...]’(Dahl, Fitjar,2009:) Thus, in the context of the regional process in South Sweden, the region can be seen as being shaped by economical centre, political centre and political actors. In other words the underlying factors that contribute to this project are based on a rational but at the same time constructed reality i.e. the region is a self-reinforcing project but at the same time driven by factors based on actors with agenda-setting motives. Territory is furthermore an important circumstantial premise. Based on the question of infrastructure, many of the interviewees argued for a borderless collaboration between the counties and Region Skåne or a reconfiguration of territory if following Keating. (2000). Accordingly, the argument was based on present cooperation within the area of public transport and the advantages of using the same services cross-border, both in terms of infrastructure but also in relation to healthcare and the environment. Thus the circumstances are simultaneously linked to the goals that are structuring the process. What are the goals?

4.4 The Goals. Improving Healthcare and Infrastructure

‘When the nation-state’s importance decrease and the region’s position is more prominent, politicians get more interested in taking more responsibility for the regional level but also from the community who wants to manage things by itself. We get closer to citizens and the principle of subsidiarity. The nation state is in deep trouble and people do not want one size, but they demand a choice. Then the bottom-up perspective is crucial because a strong regional identity give us possibilities.’

(Interview with Pontus Lindberg, 2012, Chairperson regional development committee (M))

¹² strong is here defined in relation to other regions in Sweden in terms of inhabitants, geographical area and thus influence capacity.

This quote from Pontus Lindberg is interesting in many ways. First, it deals with the idea that the importance of the nation-state is decreasing which is fostering an interest in regional politics. The idea is that it brings a bottom-up perspective from the citizens who wants to ‘manage things by themselves’ in this sense regionalisation and one of the goals in this project is getting closer to the citizens and the ‘principle of subsidiarity’. However, this is also one of the critiques against regionalisation in terms of threatening democracy and legitimacy. ‘Possibilities’ could be seen as structures the goals for this regional project and as a part of the ‘imaginaries’ discourse on how the world could be like if the project is successful. Moreover, the possibility of achieving a strong regional identity can be seen as a goal although this was not evidently in many of the interviews as will be discussed further in next chapter. However, based on this quote one could argue that achieving a strong regional identity would be beneficial in relation to the region vis. a vis. the state.

The goals as expressed by the political elite are mainly arranged around harmonised healthcare, infrastructure, public transport, culture and environmental politics. Most commonly argument was that the region is better capable to deal with these challenges in a relevant way. ‘The future holds many challenges. Especially in relation to healthcare because healthcare swallows many of the resources.’ (Vilmer Andersen, 2012 (V)) Another goal that is frequently discussed is by becoming a large-scale region the actors believe that the influence on the state will be improved. Thus structured around the circumstances and based on the claim as mentioned in previous subchapter, the main goal is to respond to the possibilities and challenges in future hence the project is justified in terms of the goals. Most interviewees agreed upon these five categories as being main reasons for forming a south Swedish region, healthcare, infrastructure, public transport, culture and environmental politics. Also the critics towards the project saw the advantages within collaboration in these fields. Moreover, all of mentioned categories hold certain values attached to them that will be described more in detail below. Healthcare and infrastructure were especially considered as important and most interviewees regarded the regional project as an advantage in these areas. Why? As mentioned there are already an extensive cross border cooperation within the field of infrastructure and to some extent healthcare, which many believed, should and would be beneficial if more prominent. Moreover, the respondents in Kronoberg County saw a future connection to the Öresund region as an advantage. Thus the counties that are marginalised will benefit from a

connection to the more centralised and interconnected region Skåne. However, none of the respondents from Region Skåne mentioned the regional cooperation of which Kronoberg and Blekinge are partners in, the Euroregion Baltic. This is interesting to note and something that all interviewees in Kronoberg could see as positive for region Skåne however something that was not discussed at all in Region Skåne. Arguably, the identity of region Skåne and the position as being the strongest in this partnership could influence this. The responsibility Region Skåne has as a bigger partner in this project was something that marked the discussions in many cases. Some respondents could see the partnership as being a responsibility to help ‘saving’ the poor neighbour (Blekinge). Others saw the responsibilities Region Skåne would have in a future regional partnership as the more experienced partner which will be further discussed in relation to the means- goals in next subchapter.

4.5 Regional Identity and Culture

Means-goals that could be identified have to do with the preparations and internal work that would have to be done in order to understand the pros and cons of this project. In practical argument the means-goal premise is important for the outcome i.e. the goal. (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012:144) Many of the interviewees saw the transition plan as something that could mark the outcome in many ways. Following the arguments, one of the most important means-goal was to make a full analyse of the pros and cons in relation to the project and to create project groups consisting of both politicians and civil servants starting in 2012. As touched upon, the hesitation and disagreement within the parties can be based on ignorance thus the political elite need more information about the project. In relation to the question: Do you think that you have gained enough information about this project? Many responded that the project is in a very early stage and it is hard to measure. However, at the same time the politicians interviewed are most of them in high positions within their parties and the regional board, hence one could assume that they should be the most informed if any. Regional identity is important in this context and is used as both pros and cons for this project. As mentioned, the idea of a strong regional identity is mainly in relation to the state and other regions on a political level. The regional identity can thus be seen as one of the factors that shape this process simultaneously. According to Syssner, in the making of a region the discussion about regional development and growth has its root

in the rhetoric on regional identity as a 'united whole' with a common past and future. (Syssner, 2009:444)

Nevertheless, in questions considering the identity of the Region Skåne, 10/18 answered that Region Skåne is an administrative organisation hence does not contain an identity and cannot have an identity. When asking if the county of Skåne could be seen linked to an identity, more people answered yes but did not want to develop the argument further. In the context of the Swedish election in 2010 when the far right party Swedish Democrats (SD) gained mandates in the parliament, one could argue that there are reluctance towards discussing identity and culture in the political discourse of Region Skåne. Although SD does have mandates in Region Skåne, no other party wants to collaborate or be placed within the same reasoning as them. Thus implying that the common identity and culture question could have been taken over by the far right discourse. In relation to SD and the interview with the party secretary Björn Söder, the idea of a regional identity is used as a way to exclude the other partners from the project. Söder argues that Skåne contains a 'natural identity' based on a shared history and culture. Moreover, the geographical area of Skåne has become a natural interface surrounding the common identity in Skåne. Hence, counties outside of this territory could not be included in a regional development due to 'significant differences' in terms of culture and identity. (Interview with Björn Söder, 2012 (SD)) The idea of a 'common' or shared identity based on culture and history can mainly be based on SD within this discourse. The reluctance towards being compared or mixed with the right wing party SD, creates an anti-identity and anti-culture semiotic discourse. Regional development and a common and strong regional identity is thus nothing one should talk about, as it seems making it almost impossible to even speak of identity and culture with the political elite. Nevertheless, when analysing the material, identity and culture are words that are commonly discussed within the political discourse but in relation to the publics' idea of the project. Many of the interviewees argued that due to the question of identity and culture, citizen's might have a problem with the idea of a regional development with Kronoberg, Kalmar and Blekinge. As an antidote to the identity problem, one word is frequently used: Bohuslänning. Plenty of the interviewees take Bohuslänning as an example of an identity that are still 'intact' although a regional enlargement have taken place, in other words identity and culture are not regarded as being

a problem because ‘you are what you are no matter what administration is in place’.¹³ For this reason, in this stage means-goals is more on implementing the idea on the political level. A strong regional identity would thus be important in relation to the administrative and political organisation of region Skåne.

According to CPR’s three criterion that should be leading in terms of planning for regional development, size, distance and identity. Thus one such means –goal is related to Region Skåne as the bigger partner in this project. A large region ensures better opportunities in strategic investments. Accordingly, territory and the position in which all actors can be seen as belonging to is based on network and geography. Following, Pontus Lindberg a chairperson within the committee of regional development in region Skåne, one of the challenges is Region Skåne as the ‘bigger brother’ in this process. By using a metaphor in which Region Skåne can be seen as the bear Bamse ‘big, strong and kind’ Lindberg argues that Region Skåne must make sure that its interests gets through. Moreover, if the outcome of the project would be negative then Region Skåne as the biggest partner would have to take the blame not Blekinge, Kronoberg or Kalmar. (Interview with Pontus Lindberg (M), 2012) The process of the project could be seen as one mean-goal in itself. The process is structuring the outcome in many ways. How does Pontus Lindberg see region Skåne? Firstly as the stronger partner, big and kind based on an identity of the organisation Region Skåne as being the stronger partner, a discussion that was profound in many of the interviews. This means-goals premise says that only if Region Skåne acts in a certain way (kind, inclusive, offensive) the goals could be justified. Thus one could argue that the self-image of Region Skåne is one factor that is shaping this process and that there are certain values involved in the process.

4.6 Conceptualisation

Values that could be identified and important can be linked to the self-image of Region Skåne and the concept of democracy. The citizen is seen as the starting point and in relation to the question ‘are there are any clear winners within this project?’ most interviewees respond that the citizen will gain improved healthcare and specialist medical care and better public transport. However, many responded that ‘the citizen’s would not be able to tell the difference’ it is an administrative organisation and the focus is on making

¹³ Common argument within the discourse.

the organisation more effective, operational and specialised in areas which would benefit with an enlargement thus cluster areas could develop over time. Hence linked to the concept of economies of scale, commonly referred to as an important part of this regional development, the importance of network was profound. Region Skåne was seen by many as ‘big, strong, independent, extraordinary, messy, ambiguous, integrated, skilled. The county Blekinge was mentioned in relation to ‘poor, challenge, problem, difficulties, and responsibilities’. This can be related to the concept of justice. Many argued that Region Skåne, due to Region Skåne’s profound geographical position and in terms of its network, has a responsibility to ‘help’ its neighbours and especially in relation to Blekinge.

Although marked by this ‘superior’ idea of region Skåne in this project, most people stressed the importance of ‘fairness, developing ‘ a new organisation’ on equal basis. This “evolution of region concepts” influence the way in which people (actors) act i.e. the expectations of the future of the region influence the actors and the thus the outcome.

(Boye, 2011:118-119) Thus these values can be seen as structuring the means-goals. Over time these institutionalised concepts are transformed into competencies within the regional platform. Hence, this self-image of Region Skåne can be a factor on its own due to actors as shaping the concepts, which have the consequence that the concepts change in accordance when actors gain new experiences. (Boye, 2011:118-119)

Thus, most of the focus has been on the arguments that are in favour of a regional development, this is mainly due to the research focus in understanding the driving forces contributing to this process. However, counter arguments and alternative proposals are important variables in mentioned discourse in that it can be seen as shaping the concepts and the actors. Important to understand is that counter arguments is due to the question on what could be the alternative plan if the regional project is not realised also on the outcome.

- Focus would be on a centralised state with less but stronger municipalities that are interconnected.
- Kronoberg should engage in collaboration with Jönköping and build a region in Småland.
- Region Skåne should stay as a region on its own due to its natural, historical, geographically and cultural borders.
- Kalmar should split into two parts.

- There should be a focus on establishing a close cooperation between these counties without a regional enlargement in south Sweden.

Many interviewees mentioned the last argument as a possible outcome if the report made by the government would have a negative result. This would mean that the cooperation already established would be further integrated however without harmonised taxes and services. However, if the project ends up being a close cooperation, the power that the project could have had in relation to the region's size and influence is lost and the collaboration will not be extended to include more mandates from the state. According to Pontus Tallberg, analysts at Region Skåne, a possible outcome if the state do not recognise the importance of regional development in Sweden could be a fusion of municipalities meaning a further centralised states but with less but more powerful municipalities leaving the regional level to only work in the area of healthcare. (Interview with Pontus Tallberg, 2012) According to Anders Olshov, if the South Swedish Region is realised by the government but its mandate is not extended, the regional level in Sweden will consist of health-care organisations with limited power. (Interview with Anders Olshov, 2012)

5. Political ambition at the heart of regional development

Articulated: As a result, parties and politicians on different levels are divided; it could be seen as a question outside ideology with identity and power as important factors.

5.1 The governance aspect of the regional project

Intertwined with the analysis and the theoretical framework, this chapter aims at answering the main question within this research namely:

-What are the main factors / driving forces contributing to the process of a future regional enlargement in South Sweden? Furthermore based on the hypothesis with a sharper regional policy and a deeper cooperation between municipalities, regions are increasing their power in relation to the state that can have the consequence that the state is reluctant when it comes to enlargement processes in Sweden. As a result, parties and politicians on different levels are divided; it could be seen as a question outside ideology with identity and power as important factors.

Based on the analysis in previous chapter one could argue that the relationship between the state and the region should be seen as an important factor structuring this process. Both in terms of structuring the claim towards the origin of the project and as shaping the outcome this relationship could be seen as two folded: Firstly, by initiate the investigation on a new regional division in Sweden, the state invited the political elite to bring the bottom-up perspective to the table. However, at the same time the political discourse analysis shows that the arguments expressed by the elite are mainly based on a hesitation towards its own project. The internal disagreements on the project's outcome and process could be one factor contributing to this which could furthermore imply that ideology and party politics should not be considered as structuring the process of development. Moreover, the calculated pros and cons might not be considered to favour the pros. Also the idea is that the report made by Mats Sjöstrand finished in December 2012 will determine the outcome and by then the internal investigations will also be made. Nevertheless, the regional politicians do embrace the regional development in rest of Sweden, with a positive suggestion that Sweden would have around 6-9 regions year 2020 the political elite were arguing for a stronger regional level in Sweden. This is mostly based on the argument that regions will be better capable in handling the future 'challenges' than municipalities on a local level. Secondly, based on the centre-periphery theory with centre 'occupying and conquering' and periphery 'fighting and opposing', regionalism is a reaction to a centralised state with political actors structuring the process of regional development by

promoting a territorial identity. (Dahl,2009:6-7) However, based on the political discourse of Region Skåne, the regional project in South Sweden does not correspond fully with this view. Due to the rather unique situation with one region and three counties working in establishing one common region, the regional identity need to be based on other factors than territory. Except from situated in the South of Sweden, they do not have any common historical past, or common cultural identity to build the conceptualisation of the regional development on. Thus, other factors need to be taken into account when discussing regional development. The future as ‘imaginaries’ claim (how it ought to be due to what it could be) for the project could be seen as one such factor. 15/18 discussed the future in relation to challenges in the area of healthcare, infrastructure, public transport and environmental politics claiming that these areas will need an extensive cooperation in near future due to an ageing population, economical crisis and the advantages of a harmonised public transport and other services. The claim towards a regional development could be argued as based on regionalists’ calculation on power and economical for a more prosperous region and own political careers. Moreover, the strategic partnership within the Region Öresund between the Region Skåne and Copenhagen can be seen as a structural factor in that the Region Skåne within the partnership of a new regional development will be the biggest partner with a well-established organisation and a profound network. Although, most of the interviewees saw the connection between the Öresund region and the new counties as an advantageous situation for the new partners however, the new partners as important for the Öresund region was not mentioned. Another factor that surprisingly was not mentioned has to do with the EuroRegion Baltic of which the other counties, with Kronoberg’s politician Roland Gustbeé (M) as President, are partners in. Thus one could argue that the project is still in an early stage and that research on the advantages and disadvantages in becoming a South Swedish region has not yet been fully recognised. However, someone must have pulled the strings?

5.2 Political Ambition

The political ambition and key figures within the political discourse of Region Skåne is an essential part of the discussion. Arguably, in order to fully comprehend this discussion one would need to do a survey or more than eighteen interviews, however based on the outcome of the research many pointed to Susanne Frank and Pia Kinhult as important driving forces for this development. This can be linked to the concept of territory and

network. As leading politicians in respective region and county the result might not be surprising. However, what is interesting is that they are both within the Conservative party of which could be seen as not promoting regional development in Sweden. Is the political ambition in relation to regional development structured by the institutional structure? In this context, the answer could be seen as yes. This could be interesting to research further by analysing and comparing the different parties from a national level and a regional level in relation to regional ambition.

5.3 Regional Identity as a “reversed” factor

According to Syssner, political actors promote the cultural stereotypification hence contribute to the regional development and the competition between regions for economical means. (Syssner, 2009:439) Furthermore, the rhetoric on regional identity in regional developments can be seen as rooted in regional identity as a ‘united whole’ based on a common past and future. (Syssner, 2009:444) Based on the analysis within this research one could argue that the political discourse of Region Skåne does not contain this type of semiotic structures. The rhetoric on regional identity was mainly based on the citizen’s views and challenges in presenting this project to the public. Many of the interviewees could see the problematic surface in the regional fusion of three counties mixed together with the Region Skåne, however not in relation to a ‘united whole’ or ‘common past or future’. Two responded that they did not want to discuss identity and culture due to the far right party SD’s rhetoric. Moreover, regional identity does not correspond with the view of Region Skåne as just an administrative organisation. Additionally, many interviewees draw parallels to the county of Bohuslän as a good example of a preserved identity ‘A bohuslänning will always stay a Bohuslänning just as a person from Skåne will also stay a Skåning’. During the interview with Björn Söder, party secretary SD, the discussion were structured around the negative consequences with a regional development based on the Region Skåne as a ‘natural, historically and culturally united region.’ (Interview with Björn Söder, 2012, (SD)) Although the empirical material might be limited to draw any conclusions on the regional- and identity rhetoric in the political discourse, one could argue that due to unwillingness of major actors in discussing identity and culture, it may be argued that the far right discourse on identity and culture – i.e. the discourse based on an excluding rhetoric - has conquered the political discourse in this area. Thus this far right discourse creates an anti-identity and anti-culture semiotic

discourse. Regional development and a common and strong regional identity is thus nothing one should talk about, as it seems making it almost impossible to even speak of identity and culture with the political elite. Thus the actors actualizing far right discourse have better chances to influence debates on normative aspects of identity and culture. Hence, in relation to the political discourse of Region Skåne one could argue that the rhetoric is not based on culture and identity however it might still be structured around it. In relation to CPR's criterion on a successful regional planning and development, identity is important on many levels. CPR argues that cross-sector decisions require anchoring moreover it should be a sense of community within each region as a basis for political promotion to be developed. 'It is advantageous if the regions are based on already established political regions, interaction patterns, or other identity-based conditions that people can identify with.' (Committee on public responsibility's (CPR), 2006:8) Thus, one could argue that the political elite should use identity as a factor structuring the process for anchoring the project. Following Boye, (Boye, 2011) the conceptualization of culture and identity as being 'open' and 'inclusive' might become reality if the political elite is determined to talk about it. Nevertheless, one could argue that if it rather the contrary would be politicized and hidden under the surface and related to the SD's discourse, it could play in the hand of SD and structure the outcome of this project. This aspect would need more attention before one can draw any conclusions on the future aspects of the issue. Based on previous discussion a research could include a comparative research on the far right discourse and the mainstream discourse in relation to the rhetoric of identity and culture in the regional aspect. Thus analyses if the far right discourse have muted the identity and cultural rhetoric on regionalisation in Sweden.

6. Conclusion. In the heart of the matter

'If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? If one reached what they called the heart of the matter?' (Graham Greene, *The heart of the matter*, 2010)

The regional division in Sweden could be seen as marked by inequality, positions some regions and counties in the periphery whereas other stays close to the centre. There are many factors contribute to this situation. Throughout this thesis, one such factor has been argued to be the political ambitions as 'the heart of the matter.' Thus, the political actor's agenda could be seen as shaping the process of regional development in South Sweden in many ways. There are many factors that shape the process of regionalisation. On a macro level, the EU and globalisation are variables that one has to take into account that shapes the regional development in Sweden by the very existence. Hence, the region's influence on the EU has brought a new and powerful level within the multi-level governance. In Sweden however, the structure of governance can be seen as 'messy'. This 'dual level' of governance with a centralised state and a strong local level can be seen as shaping the political ambition at the regional level as a way to gain more influence and power to the region vis. a vis. the state.

The aim of this research was to consider the ongoing project of regional enlargement in South Sweden by focusing on Region Skåne's political discourse. The material that were based on eighteen interviews with the political elite, served its purpose in that an understanding of the factors that could contribute to this process were developed throughout the analysis. These factors require further and more detailed research to gain better understanding to what extent the project is structured around them within this discourse. Nevertheless one could argue that important for this process are the Swedish governance structures where the regional level is weak and the state is not working to promote regional development. Consequently, regional political actors are working for the ability to take action by focusing on regional enlargement. Mats Sjöstrand's report is seen by many politicians within the discourse as a starting point for the project and as a circumstance that will shape the outcome. Thus the argument runs that the outcome of the report will determine if the project will be realised in 2019 or not. Hence, this could explain the hesitant attitude of interviewees towards the outcome, and also lack of information important in this context. Moreover, deconstruction of the rhetoric of the political actors arguments showed that the future challenges such as an ageing population, infrastructure, public transport and environmental politics are seen as important and

demand cooperation between municipalities over county-levels. The concept of identity and culture was not used within the discourse the way in which one could presuppose- as a claim towards the regional development plan. Hence it did not correspond with the theories. Instead, the identity aspect could be traced to the far right discourse on identity and culture as an excluding rhetoric. This had the consequence that the political elite did not want to speak about identity and culture as a 'general' or developing factors contributing to this project. However, on a another level it could be seen as structuring in that the discursive arguments were very much 'open' and 'inclusive' hence working as an antithesis. Hence, this demands more and in-depth research before one can draw any conclusions, and this research can serve as a pilot study in that area. Based on the discourse analysis, conclusion can be made that a sharper regional policy and a deeper cooperation between municipalities pave the way for regions to increase their power in relation to the state. Consequently, the state is reluctant when it comes to enlargement processes in Sweden leaving the governance structure as 'messy' and unclear. As a result, parties and politicians on different levels are split in terms of regional development leaving this question outside ideology. Hence the political ambitions of regionalists and power relation vis. a vis. the state are important driving forces for the regional project. Nevertheless, the question of identity and culture as aspects of region building could be seen as being marginalized to the political rhetoric of the radical right.

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Interviews

Appendices 1.

Malmö, 2012-02-20 Christine Axelsson (S) Regional Politician Region Skåne, Member of the regional growth committee	Malmö, 2012-02-22 Pontus Lindberg Politician Region Skåne (M) Chairperson of the regional growth committee
Malmö, 2012-02-20 Anders Olshov CEO Öresundsinstitutet	Malmö, 2012-02-29 Anders Åkesson (MP) Politician Region Skåne Member of the regional board.
Kristianstad, 2012-02-28 Pontus Tallberg Civil servant, Analysts Region Skåne.	Kristianstad, 2012-02-27 Gunne Löfvgren Civil servant, regional development Region Skåne
Telephone Interview, 2012-02-21 Mats Persson, Civil servant, infrastructure, Region Skåne	Telephone Interview, 2012-02-23 Björn Söder (SD) Regional politician, Region Skåne
Kristianstad, 2012-02-28 Ewa Bertz (FP) Regional Politician, Region Skåne, Vice- chairperson regional growth committee.	Växjö, 2012-03-13 Susanne Frank (M) Chairperson County council, Kronoberg
Växjö, 2012-03-07 Roland Gustbeé (M) Chairperson regional council Södra Småland, President Euroregion Baltic	Växjö, 2012-03-03 Peter Hogla Director regional council Södra Småland
Telephone interview, 2012-03-03 Jan-Åke Björklund	Växjö, 2012-02 Richard Larsson (S) Regional Politician, Region Skåne,
Lund, 2012-02-24 Katarina Erlingsson (C) Regional Politician, Region Skåne Vice chairperson Regional council.	Kristianstad, 2012-03-05 Vilmer Andersen (V) Group leader and Regional Politician, Region Skåne
Ljungby, 2012-03-06 Ann-Charlotte Wisel (M) Chairperson municipality board of Ljungby	Ljungby, 2012-03-06 Carina Bengtsson (C) Regional Politician, Region council Södra Småland

Appendices 2.

Interview question

I will start by asking questions considering the way you perceive regional development in general. Continue by focusing on more specific questions about Region Skåne and the possible regional formation with Kronoberg, Kalmar and Blekinge.

- How important are regions for Sweden?
- Do you think that the regions in Sweden have a significant role in the EU? To the extent that they can make their voice heard or influence?
- How important is the Swedish regional representation in Brussels?
- What is your idea of a 'Europe of Regions'?
- How well informed do you feel that you have been considering the subject of 'new wider region' in relation to your party / organisation / region management?
- What do you think could be seen as the driving force/factors behind a new regional enlargement in South Sweden?
- Who would gain from a new region? Are there any clear winners?
- How do you see the future prospects for a new region in South Sweden?
- From a regional perspective, is it important to focus on regional expansion? Why? Why not?
- What are the advantages of a regional merger?
Disadvantages?
- How do you see that the optimal cooperation between Skåne, Kalmar, Blekinge, Kronoberg would look like?
- How do you think the Öresund region would be affected by a possible merger with Kalmar, Blekinge and Kronoberg?
- How do you think the business community and labor market are influenced by a new regional merger?
- Do you think that Region Skåne has sufficient resources to pursue this issue?
- Characteristics of Region Skåne? (Has Region Skåne an identity?)
- How do you think Sweden's regional division looks like 2020?

Appendices 3.

Content Analysis frequency of words attached to categories.

- Region, state, capital, Stockholm, government, governance, nation state, politics, decision-making power (137)
- Healthcare, health, health issues, health challenges (125)
- Infrastructure, public service, bus service, train service, harbour, road (s), broadband, bridge (118)
- Citizens, citizen, public, citizen's perspective, election-2014-2018, labour market, employment, democracy (114)
- Challenges, challenge, possibilities, goal, aim, cooperation, collaboration, friends, relationship, exciting, excitement, resources, welfare, experience, (98)
- Cluster, network, size, influence, influencing, opportunities, economies of scale, civil servants (56)
- Identity, identities, Bohuslänning¹⁴, Skåning, culture (48)
- Decentralisation, centralisation, municipalities, (45)
- future, prospects (45)
- Europe, EU, global, Denmark, Öresund, Germany, Brussels, Baltic region, Växjö, Kristianstad, Karlskrona, Malmö, Lund, Helsingborg, (37)
- Environment, environment programs, environment issues, environment challenges, rural areas, urban, growth, (37)
- Education, educational system, educational responsibilities, spetskompetens, administration, (28)
- People: Jan Åke Björklund, Pia Kinhult, Susanne Frank, Mats Sjöstrand (26)

¹⁴ A person coming from the region Västra Götaland and the county Bohuslän, here the term "Bohuslänning" were frequently used as an example of a successful identity fusion.

Appendices 4.

Political Discourse Analysis and selected arguments used in the analysis.

Claim: (what needs to be done)	'Region Skåne, County Council Kalmar, the Regional Council in Kalmar, Council Blekinge, Region Blekinge, County Council Kronoberg and Regional Association of Southern Småland intend to form a common region latest on January 1, 2019.' (Protocol Regionfullmäktige 2011-12-09)
Circumstances:	In 2009, the Swedish government decided to give directive to investigate the state's regional administration division. The outcome is to be published in December 2012. As a response to the demand given by the state's investigator Mats Sjöstrand, the politicians within the regions were pushed to look into the future.
Goals:	Harmonised taxes, ticket-service, healthcare cultural programs, environmental programs, education, strong region = more influence national and on the EU arena.
Means-goal:	The strategy must be fully analysed with pros and cons before an action can be taken. Moreover a plan how the transmission of the harmonised policies should be made is essential. Project groups consisting of politicians and civil servants will be arranged during 2012.
Values:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibilities • Sustainability • Democracy • Equality • Composed

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- Strong
 - Partnership
 - Power
 - Opportunities
 - Challenge

Counter-arguments and alternative proposal:

- Kronoberg should engage in collaboration with Jönköping and build a region in Småland.
- Region Skåne should stay as a region on its own due to its natural, historical, geographically and cultural borders.
- Kalmar should split into two parts.
- There should be a focus on establishing a close cooperation between these counties without a regional enlargement in south Sweden.
- Regions should not gain more power. Focus should be on a centralised state with less but stronger municipalities that are interconnected.

Dealing with counter-argument and alternatives: negative consequences of both:

- If the south Swedish region is not realised by the Swedish government, the message is clear there wont be any regions in near future. This will lead to a more centralised state or a weak state on all levels.
 - If the South Swedish Region is realised by the government but its mandate is not extended, the regions in Sweden will be focused upon health-care organisations with limited power.
 - There wont be any Småland region due to Jönköping county working on its own.
 - If the project ends up being a close cooperation, the power that the project could have had in relation to the region's size and influence is lost and the collaboration will not be extended to include more mandates from the state.
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Argument from Jan Åke Björklund:

‘The strategy at the moment is that it ought to come from the bottom-up perspective because the parliamentary politicians cannot agree upon the borders. Moderaterna said that they want it to become regions but that regional politicians must do it themselves. All the other parties are also rather passive. There is no one pulling the strings. For this reason it does matter which government is in power. All parties affirm regionalization, the difference is that Moderaterna is rather passive, the opposition has said that if they get the power in next election in 2014 they will implement strong regions. Many believe that the government does not take responsibility for the regional level. So I think it does matter which government is sitting there.’

Argument from Susanne Frank (M):

‘The regional discussion is very mismanaged by the state one could say. They have done nothing to help. They have had a lot of investigations and then what they mean now is that it has to emerge from below, but nothing is done to assist or help in this matter. The reason is simple, they want to preserve the nation state, keep a centralised state. This is not at all surprising if you look at it in different ways. Sweden is a long country, but only 9 million inhabitants. If you look at the major regions in Europe, Sweden is in the same size as one region, if at all. You can see it in different ways. The regions are becoming increasingly important because some have begun to form regions and then the rest of us must follow the best as we can.’

Argument from Pontus Lindberg (M):

‘When the nation-state’s importance increase and the region’s position is more prominent, politicians get more interested in taking more responsibility for the regional level but also from the community who wants to manage things by itself. We get closer to citizens and the principle of subsidiarity. The nation state is in deep trouble and people do not want one size, but they demand a choice. Then the

bottom-up perspective is crucial because a strong regional identity give us possibilities.’

‘‘There's another dimension, a challenge. We could be seen as the bigger brother in this context and this puts a lot of pressure on us in this process. We must act like the bear Bamse, big and strong and if you are big and strong you will have to be kind too. But we also need to make sure our interests gets through. If something goes wrong we (Region Skåne) will take the blame not Blekinge, Kronoberg or Kalmar. For this reason we need to ensure that this becomes a really good process, we want to be able to say afterwards that we were in this for real. We decided upon becoming a great region or we decided not to and know we are now best friends. Now imagine that this process ends with Kalmar being divided and Kronoberg goes to Småland. What happens to Blekinge? The state should not agree on anyone being left alone. It must not be that we are on the playground and we have divided the football team and Blekinge stands alone because nobody wants them. Then Skåne will take the blame. This should not happen. It is important that it does not happen. Then something is totally wrong in this process.’
(Interview with Pontus Lindberg, Chairman Regional development committee)

Argument from Vilmer Andersen (V):

‘The great questions are of course structured around health care, infrastructure, public transport and culture. Especially important is that regional development issues should be taken care of properly. I believe that regions are better capable to deal with these challenges in a relevant way. Health care swallows many of the resources. In the future, small counties will find it difficult to maintain expertise in many areas. Bigger regions must have all the resources they need in order to stand for high quality medical care. The length in which people commute becomes longer and the

labor market regions become larger. For this reason we also need to have a coherent public transport covering larger geographic areas than we have today. '

Argument from Richard Larsson (S):

'The driving force is health care, public transport and infrastructure. Neighboring counties are positive and Region Skåne should hop on this collaboration. Either take the step for a deepened cooperation or not be included at all. I cannot say that there are any particular politicians, but the region as an entity that initiatives the issue.'

Argument from Christine Axelsson (S):

'It means a lot how Mats Sjöstrand's investigation ends. It has emerged from a bottom-up perspective. The risk might be that nothing happens. We work from a bottom-up perspective in order to influence Mats Sjöstrand. Ever since Skåne and Västra Götaland became regions there have been plenty of study trips from other counties here in Skåne. "Oh why can't we work in the same way as you do?" We have put a lot of work and effort behind Region Skåne. The future is self-governing regions that have a mandate to do much more than today. It is the future. I think that the discussion of a south Swedish region would have come up without Mats Sjöstrand because there is a strong commitment here. However, maybe it got expanded with Mats Sjöstrand's investigation. The problem is the outcome of this report, the geographical borders, will be difficult to change. In my party, regional issues has always been an important discussion. All doors must be open even if we decided upon a letter of intent. We are so dependent on how the rest of the country looks like. Even if one looks specifically at this proposal. How would it be if Skåne stayed on its own?'

Argument from Ewa Bertz (FP)

'If we're talking outside Skåne one factor important for this project concerns Blekinge county. Blekinge is a small county

and needs help to manage its budget. The state announced that Sweden will be divided into regions, and if the counties and regions do not take the initiative themselves we (state) will draw a map. This meant that many sat down to see whom they could see themselves working with in the future. I think it is wrong that we keep the county borders, we should instead have the cities as starting points for development. Which city is close to us? I think it is important that we take this initiative from a bottom-up perspective so that we will be able to decide and not the state. It will not happen now, this mandate period, perhaps the next. The Liberal Party has not decided on a position yet. We have to get all the facts on the table, therefore, we agreed on a letter of intent. What happens to health care, infrastructure, etc? And then we need to discuss this with our 33 municipalities. Winners are those who today have a difficult time but in the long run we are all winners. Good public transport and geography play a large role. Cities that have not been attractive before gain more popularity when the public transport develops. Tex Höör and Eslöv. The close distance to large cities where the work possibilities are is important but not everyone can live there. For this reason, it will be important for rural areas and particularly to maintain a vibrant region. "

Argument from Björn Söder (SD):

'I believe those who advocate a federal EU will gain from a greater region. It is the beginning of the end in weakening the nation-state. They are the ones who have the most to gain from it. There's a big difference between southern Sweden and the very north. It is a very small population in the north. They are more or less forced to form themselves into a large region. It is to maintain a certain standard because this is difficult in smaller counties today. But I don't think that region Skåne or anyone else in the south will benefit from

this. I don't think so. However it was an advantage in putting together the old counties in Skåne and build Region Skåne and get development responsibilities from the state. Also, the enhanced cooperation with Denmark is positive. As in other border areas they have attempted to harmonize the various labor market policies. But the responsibility should lie at the state level. However, I can see the benefits in the Skåne region belonging to Skåne. The common identity, culture and history. Region Skåne is an optimal example of how a region should be like. Only the geographical way, the administration and organisation could be discussed. People in Skåne have a common identity. We talk a lot about identity in Region Skåne, the Skåne identity and culture. There is a natural identity in Skåne. Then you have the geographical surrounding the identity. The identity is based on our shared culture and history. Skåne is pretty special when compared to many other parts of Sweden. It has become a natural interface of the landscape. '

Argument from Catarina Erlingsson (C):

'The Centre Party has an old decision saying that Skåne is large enough. When we took the decision in the regional council, we said no to enlarge the region. But there are people who do not follow the party leadership in all parties. This is not a question that is easy to cope with ideologically. There are different opinions within the parties. But at our national conference we said no. We are keen that there should be a regional level because it is an important stage of development but it must come from a bottom-up perspective. We have a region here in Skåne and we find that the size is sufficient. The Centre Party nationally does not interfere in how we work on this matter. Skåne is big enough with natural borders and with a historical background. Our core argument is democracy. We have 149 members today and we cannot have more. This is evidently despite

becoming a greater region. The distance towards the politicians gets to far. Too far to our elected officials. Skåne is the right size simply. I think the reason to start this project is because it is important to be prepared for the future. To be big enough. Sweden is a small country and you have to pool resources to meet future problems that have to be dealt with. Skills development and business development related to growth. '

**Argument from Anders
Olshov
Öresundsinstitutet:**

'Sweden is centrally controlled. So the other parts are weak and fragmented into many small parts. Region formation can contribute to a better balance in Sweden, but it depends on what mandate they receive. If it is only mandate for health care, it gives no power to the regions and the usefulness of the regional level is fairly limited. Different parties have different ideas; the Conservatives at the national level believe that counties should be discontinued and that you should take it at the municipal and state level. It could thus be an important reason for not acting. The fact that you establish a regional development that only gets mandate for health care and then become eliminated completely because they are of no use. In this sense only two levels will remain, the state and the local. The other parties do not agree. It is hard to discuss the extent of regions before we know the result. '